

A well converted try



A BOAT AS ENDURING AS THAT ICON OF CANTERBURY rugby, Todd Blackadder, is as popular as when it first came on the market, 25 years ago. Then, the Fi-Glass Dominator was designed and marketed as an entry-level boat, by Frank Simpson of Fi-Glass Boats in Christchurch, now managed by Frank's son, Griff Simpson, and was an extended version of the Fi Glass Scamp. The Scamp was a 15-footer, a length rare in fibreglass boats today.



Please note: in 1992 when this model was tested, it was sold under the Dominator name. Since that time, we have rationalised the model range and this boat has been renamed the Firecrest.



Some of Frank Simpson's agents believed there was a niche in the market for a five metre boat, so Simpson added 16in to the Scamp hull, and called it the Dominator. "It was a cheap way of doing it," he admits, "but it made it a hugely better boat than the Scamp."

His agents were right and soon the Dominator dominated, selling about 50–60 boats a year, and the smaller Scamp range was dropped. "I've never looked on them as a big seller," says Simpson, "just steady. They never took off with a rush but 1999 was the twenty-fifth year we have been making them."

The Dominator still has the basic layout interior and small cabin, and the distinctive round bilges. "They are good, old fashioned sides that have stood the test of time," Simpson says.

The Dominator vee remains the same as the Scamp, at 17.5 degrees, which is quite deep for the length of the boat. Simpson was worried about the stability at rest so he lengthened the after monohedryn section of the hull and increased the turn down on the chines. Coupled with small planing strakes the hull changes produced a far better rough water performing boat while retaining the outward distinctive look of the Scamp hull.

Between the original shaped hull and the cockpit

deck moulding however, there has been some upgrading and it was this which caught our attention for this story.

Instead of using timber stringers, encapsulated in fibreglass between the hull and cockpit sole for strength and rigidity, the newer Simpson construction method uses a fibreglass fillet that fits between the other two mouldings, bonding them together and giving an all fibreglass bond. This stringer structure goes the full length of the boat to the bow and forms part of the two bunks in the vee of the bow.

Exotics, including Klegecell, are used on the transom in place of what used to be solid rimu.

With the newest Dominator kitted up we left the factory for the port of Lyttelton. The diesel Pathfinder four-wheel drive easily managed the boat as we wound our way up and through the tunnel.

Launching in the early morning light it was a quick sprint over to the nearest waterski lane to give this entry level boat a work out with a skier on the back. With the bridle set from cleats either side at the transom, the boat hauled the skier up on one ski quickly and smoothly.

Later, driving the boat without a skier the boat



The Fi-Glass Dominator is basic but well finished.

cornered well, although too much trim in can produce some interesting actions as the rounded chine wants to break away. Into a chop the ride was reasonably soft. Driving the boat was just as good, sitting rather than standing. The visibility was good on and off the plane. At rest it was quite stable and supported two people on the same side without listing alarmingly.

The Dominator has a timeless appeal. It is doing the same for entry level and part time boaties today as when it first came out: getting them on the water in a basic boat which has a few modern frills, and treating them kindly in all conditions. The rough water performance of these boats is legendary, showing they will get their crew home. The entry-level boat sells between \$25,000 and \$26,000 on a trailer with a 90hp engine, with upholstered cabin and swivelling seats and two bunks.

The Dominator is not CPC compliant in that navigation lights and a bilge pump are regarded as extras but the construction methods are

Specifications

loa	5.05m
beam	2.0m
deadrise at transom	17.5°
fuel capacity	tote tank (25L)
recommended hp	30 to 90
towing weight	750 Fi Glass
engine	Yamaha 90hp
capacity	1140cc
propeller	17R
retail price	\$11,241

Standard features

Easy access front hatch, anchor locker, twin pedestal seats, mechanical steering, lined cabin, under bunk storage

price as reviewed	\$25,000
base model price	\$25,000
hull price	\$11,457
manufacturer	Fi Glass Boats

boat supplied by
Mr Boats, Christchurch



The basic Dominator comes with an upholstered cabin, and two bunks, open to the cockpit.

audited rigorously alongside the building of CPC-compliant boats in the same factory. This means that the boat has its resin content weighed along with the amount of fibreglass fabric. There is a 2.5% to 3% tolerance in the weight variation on each boat. The manufacture and assembly is done in a regime of controlled temperature and humidity to

ensure the hulls are structurally stronger due to that controlled environment.

Still selling about 50 boats a year nationwide, the Dominator is still attractive to first-time buyer, and with 3,000 models built have not saturated the market – yet! Just like Toddy, popular forever down in red and black country.

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