



Photos: Stuart Grant



IT HONKS

John Willis discovers a strong contender in the entry-level bowrider class, the versatile Savage 175B.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: Cold, wet and windy on a large impoundment
Water: Calm on the lee side, a little choppy on the windward side

TRAILERBOAT RATES

THE SAVAGE 175B

1 Fun factor	🏆🏆🏆🏆🏆
2 Innovation	🏆🏆🏆🏆
3 Design and layout	🏆🏆🏆🏆
4 Quality of finish	🏆🏆🏆🏆
5 Handling and ride	🏆🏆🏆🏆
6 Stability at rest	🏆🏆🏆🏆
7 Ergonomics	🏆🏆🏆🏆
8 Standard equipment	🏆🏆🏆🏆
9 Value for money	🏆🏆🏆🏆
10 X-Factor	🏆🏆🏆🏆
OVERALL	🏆🏆🏆🏆



Savage has been building boats for over 110 years, and my, my — how the boating world has changed in that time! Mention of the Savage brand recalls many fond memories of iconic names in Australian boating history. Who can forget the many classics presented by Savage since the introduction of fibreglass boatbuilding in this country? There are models such as the Surveyor, Dolphin, Marlin, Bluefin, Escort, Envoy, Ensign, Pacific, Tasman, Mako and Atlantic, to name but a few.

As for the evolution of the industry itself, most of the dramatic changes seem to have occurred in recent years, with no small number of company turnovers, buyouts and instances of restructuring. But Savage is still here, now owned and managed by Queensland firm Telwater,

“Its performance is quite exhilarating, and its nimble manoeuvrability is loads of fun.”

and some of the company’s first offerings are the new Savage 175B and 195B bowriders.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

Thunderclouds, lightning and 30kts of Antarctic gale preceded our trip to Victoria’s Latrobe Valley to meet with Terry Raymond, from Crawford Marine, in Morwell. Then it was on to the Hazelwood Pondage, a lake kept artificially warm by the local power

station, which provides up to 25 per cent of Victoria’s base load electricity.

It’s a weird image that presents itself to the unsuspecting traveller when they first come across this body of water, with clouds of steam rising from the lake on a cold winter’s day. There are pleasant surprises in store, however, as you round the western shore and discover a picturesque grassy lakefront with willow trees, islands and picnic tables, plus a caravan park and boat ramp. It’s quite a large body of water and an ideal place for water skiing, wakeboarding, or even some fishing (if targeting carp can be called fishing).

Upon their unveiling, the new Savages looked brilliant. Their rich ebony and ivory, two-toned sidepanels glistened in the intermittent winter sunshine. Savage bowriders portray a very sporty image that



Above: The Savage has a strong presentation to take on the competitive entry-level bowrider market. It looks good, goes well and comes with an aluminium trailer and full canvas package as standard. Left: There's plenty of space for carrying out maintenance in the roomy engine compartment. The four-cylinder, 3lt MerCruiser gave satisfying performance, and standard power steering was a nice touch. The plumbing, fit-up and wiring is neat, and there's loads of room for storage. Opposite page: Savage mouldings look good and the layout is conventional but appropriate. While small let-downs like a Perspex windscreen, plastic dashboard and flimsy seats are disappointing, the value for money as an overall package is quite good.

should see them make quick inroads into the very competitive bowrider market.

Both of the packages presented well, especially when you consider the competitive retail pricing. The only surprise was that both models were fitted with MerCruiser 3lt four-cylinder engines; the 175 with a carburetted TKS (Turn Key Start) model supplying 135hp through the Alpha One leg; and the 195 with the slightly more sophisticated Multi Point Injected upgrade. The MPI option is also available for the 175 (we'll keep the details of the 195B for another day. It was fitted with an amazing integrated aftermarket audiovisual system, worthy of an article in its own right).

IN AND OUT

The smaller 175B was easily launched and we quickly got down to the serious

business of fun. The smaller Savage did everything one could ask from a very well-priced package. Its performance was quite exhilarating, and its nimble manoeuvrability was loads of fun. It responded well through the standard power steering, and it even rode quite smoothly over the choppy side of the windy lake. It was a little flighty at high speeds with only one person on board, but I doubt you'll ever be able to keep the rest of the family and friends out of this enticing sports machine.

Crawford Marine replaced the standard 19in propeller with an 18in four-bladed version that gave very good grip in high-speed turns. It liked full trim for the most part, which indicates that it should have no problem carrying extra weight in the bow. It has a conventional bowrider layout with, as Terry describes, "a love lounge at



On the plane...

- ✓ Looks great
- ✓ Nice decals
- ✓ Attractive mouldings
- ✓ Sensibly priced
- ✓ Sporty performance
- ✓ Good storage
- ✓ Drinkholders and grabrails

Dragging the chain...

- ✗ Flimsy seats
- ✗ Plastic dash

ON THE WATER



the rear and good deep freeboard.”

The helm is quite presentable, but lacks the finesse of many rivals, although its simplicity is quite appealing and reflected in the price. The plastic dashboard leaves a bit to be desired in such a high quality market, and while the passenger side glovebox and Perspex windscreen are quite serviceable, they lack the finished quality found in some competing models.

With a tilting sports-steering wheel the 175B was reasonably comfortable to drive, but I was a little unsure of seats with no side support, and they seemed a little flimsy. The flip-up bolster seats of the larger boat were far more acceptable.

INVITING INTERIOR

Both boats feature inviting, attractive, thickly cushioned upholstery. I was pleased to see that the interiors have a full fibreglass liner with clip-in marine carpet too, and very good storage throughout. There are huge storage areas in the engine bay, more under that love seat, good sidepockets, a big skilocker in the floor and more access under the bowrider cushions.

There's no separate anchorlocker, but there is enough room under the front seat for the ground tackle. For customers who regularly anchor, I'd recommend talking to their dealer about some minor options to make the job a little easier and less messy where muddy anchors are concerned.

The rear platform is moulded into the boat and combines a fold-down ladder for access during summer watersports. Savage supplies a full canvas package consisting

The 175B is the smaller of two Savage bowriders currently available. It turns like a skateboard but won't leave you with the cuts and bruises.

of a tonneau cover, bimini and bow cover as standard equipment. Both boats feature pop-up mooring cleats, optional CD/AM-FM/MP3 system with waterproof speakers, navigation lights, bilgepump and blower, battery isolator, hydraulic steering, two-tone gelcoat, ski hook, 85lt fuel tank and a stainless steel rubrail around the gunwale.

Telwater packages the boat with an aluminium trailer with American-style “bunks” replacing our more familiar rollers. The plumbing and fit-up is very tidy in both packages, and the laminate feels quite strong and well finished. There's underfloor positive flotation, but no foam.

THE WRAP

The 175B felt good on the water and provided me with a fair thrill factor, even in the cold conditions. It turned really well with the engine trimmed right down, and ploughed through the small chop with comfort, no rattles and little spray. It cruised comfortably at 25kts (46.2kmh) and achieved a top speed of 36.5kts (67.6kmh) with only the driver and a passenger on board.

If you want a versatile sports funboat for general family watersports, as an entry-level bowrider the Savage 175B is certainly worth consideration. Its sporty looks will certainly make you the envy of your local pondage. 🚤

SAVAGE 175B BOWRIDER



HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: ... \$34,990 (ex Crawford Marine)

GENERAL

Type: Moderate-vee monohull
Material: GRP
Length (overall): 5.2m
Beam: 2.25m
Hull weight (estimated dry): 785kg
Towing weight (estimated): 1350kg

CAPACITIES

People: 7
Fuel: Approx. 85lt
Rec. HP: 135
Max HP: 135 (four-stroke)

ENGINE

Make/model: MerCruiser 3.0lt TKS (Turn Key Start)
Type: Four-cylinder, naturally aspirated four-stroke
Rated HP: 135
Displacement: 3.0lt
Weight: 288kg with Alpha One Leg
Gearbox ratio: 2.0:1
Propeller: 18in four-blade aluminium

MANUFACTURED BY

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