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BOAT TEST

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Aquapro Raider 790

UNIQUELY DIFFERENT

The Aquapro Raider 790 is one of the few full cabin production RIBs on the market and gives a whole new unique look to the trailerable cabin boat scenario. Barry Thompson spent a morning aboard before the boat was shipped of to its anxious US owner.

BOAT TEST



The open bow offers great protection when anchoring and is accessed by walking on the wide pontoons.

They get bigger and they get better. RIBs or rigid inflatable boats have come a long way in recent years and today they are accepted as much a part of mainstream boating as the conventional GRP or alloy boat. However it wasn't so many years ago that RIBs were strictly for big boat tenders, divers and rescue organisations. Anything over 5m was a big boat and most were open centre consoles or at best featured small cuddly cabins.

Auckland based Aquapro International have done something to address that by introducing the first single engine, full cabin, 7.9m production RIB that is certainly aimed at filling the void between a 6m centre console and 8.5m hardtop. It is lighter - 1800kg trailerable weight - smaller and only requires one engine. Although the MD of the company is the first to admit they have been a bit slow getting the finished boat to market, they are pleased with the final product, a boat that has already undergone a lot of testing and development.

Aquapro provided me with the second boat off the line, powered by a single Yamaha 200hp 4-stroke. During the test I also had the opportunity to look over the #1 boat, which was used to develop a lot of the ideas and ascertain what worked and what didn't. Although no changes were made to the construction or external appearance of the boat, improvements were made in other areas. The seat mouldings were redesigned with stand up bolsters, a marine head

and removable back seat were included and a GRP moulding now covers the tubes either side of the cabin.

The hull was designed and built especially for Aquapro by Richard Raines of Marine Creations Ltd and features a deep 23° deadrise at the transom, with hard-edge parallel strakes running from transom to stem. There is a constant V through the after part of the bottom, with reasonably high chines and the tubes are glued to the GRP hull. The cabin top and hardtop are all conventional GRP.

The heavyweight 1650-denier fabric-reinforced Hypalon tubes are divided into five separate air compartments and Aquapro has done a neat job on virtually hiding the seams on the tubes. ("What's a denier?" did I hear someone ask. Our Technical Editor informs me that it's the mass in grams of 9000m (Yes, that's 9km!) of yarn. So that explains why 15 denier nylons are so delicate!) The tubes are tapered from a smaller forward diameter to larger sections aft. They are reasonably full amidships and kick up at the stern to keep the spray out of the transom area. The boat can be driven with the tubes fully deflated.

At 9' wide with the tubes inflated the Aquapro Raider 790 is road legal with a day permit, but if you deflate the tubes the beam is only 7'2" and within the standard maximum (8'2") width for towing. Aquapro supply a handy automatic pump, which allows you to re-inflate

the tubes to their full 20kPa (3psi) within 5 minutes.

The position of the tubes is very critical and in the Raider 790 they have been designed to run clear of the water when underway and when stationary be on hand to provide the superb stability that pontoon boats and RIBs provide.

In the rough water I found I could keep the throttle wide open and still give everyone a reasonably comfortable ride. In the NZ Propeller Magazine Poker Run a few months earlier, the Aquapro Raider 790 was the first single outboard to Kawau Island and ran away from most boats in the rough water sections.

Handling & Performance

As we had two near-identical Aquapro Raider 790s on hand it only seemed right to see if there was much difference between the direct injection 200hp HPDI 2-stroke and the 200hp 4-stroke. The most noticeable difference between the two engines is just how damn quiet the 4-stroke is. At idle, you can hardly hear it and I kept looking at the telltale to convince myself it was actually running.

Also, the two engines performed quite differently. Both were set up at the same height on the transom, with the 2-stroke running a 17" Yamaha three blade stainless propeller and the 4-stroke an identical 19" pitch prop.

The 2-stroke HPDI was noticeably quicker off the mark but the 4-stroke had the better top speed of 51.5 mph @ 6000 rpm, compared with the 48.5 mph @ 5800 rpm of the 2-stroke version.

In the choppy water around the back of Rangitoto Island I was able to give both boats a fair run. In the mid-range the Raider 790 sits like glue and with 1/2 trim it ran like on rails. Over 5000 rpm, the HPDI powered boat seemed to handle a little better, although this was probably just a matter of setup, considering that the 4-stroke powered Raider 790 had zero time on the water before I got hold of it!

Overall a great ride and what I would have expected from a boat of this size. The tubes work as they should and run clear of the water when underway and just touch the surface when at rest. They all but eliminate any spray aboard, work well as fenders and provide exceptional stability, especially when you have to go forward.

While we tested the Raider 790 with a single engine, there is also the option of twin outboards for those who want some extra performance. As yet there is no sterndrive option, but this may be included in the future.

High Cabin

The cabin moulding of the Aquapro Raider 790 is the same as will be used



on the new 9m due to be released in a few months, albeit chopped a little lower to fit onto the flat deck area between the tubes of the smaller boat. The result is a lot of internal space and head height plus a dedicated area for a head and holding tank with manual pump-out. Any water that gets into the cabin flows through to the sump in the transom. Our test boat had the optional Flexiteak on the sole of the cabin and cockpit, which at first glance looks like real teak. The advantage is you don't have the extra weight and it gives the boat a classy look. The other choice is Decktread.

The twin berths are over 7'3" long and with the infill form a massive double. If you plan to go overnighting then this is one trailerboat cabin you will not feel cramped in. Separate mouldings cover the tubes and also incorporate wide side storage trays and comfortable backrests. A Weaver hatch offers extra light and ventilation, although it's a little high to give access to the foredeck. When you need to go forward, the wide tubes provide plenty of surface area and

in fact it's a lot easier to walk around than most cabin boats. Handrails on the hardtop are well placed and the deep recess forward provides plenty of protection and safety when anchoring.

Aquapro has overcome the problem of pulling the warp and chain over the Hypalon tubes, by fixing a moulded fairlead and Ronstan stainless bow roller over the bow. If you want a fully automated system, then an extension can be fitted and an electric winch mounted on top of the big stainless Sampson post.

Dividing the cabin and cockpit are full bulkheads with a clip-on fabric cover/door or an optional two-piece lock-up door. In the port bulkhead the open storage tray is a good place for the cell phone and keys, but if you prefer something a little more secure there is also another locker to port behind a So Pac hatch.

Opposite, the moulded driver's fascia is all carbon fibre, with space provided for instruments above and a large flat area for a flush mounted GPS/plotter/fishfinder below. A compass is mounted above and there is plenty of

space around the Seastar hydraulic steering for switches and other accessories. There's even a specially moulded panel in the hardtop for the VHF. The throttle controls can be either flush or externally mounted and special ducting has been built-in to direct all the cables and wires cleanly to the transom area.

With the twin bolster-style seats of the Aquapro Raider 790, you can drive standing only, as there are no bases in the seats. However, I didn't have a problem with this, as it was rough enough on our test day to want to stand anyway. There is plenty of standing headroom under the hardtop for most people, and the Taylor Sandbrook screen was at the right height for me. If I had wanted to stay totally wind free, it was just a matter of clipping on the clears.

Behind the two forward stand-up bolsters are single seats either side mounted on double insulated ice-chests. This is something that has been especially designed for the US market, although would certainly double as a great bait storage or simple chilly bin for kiwis.

I liked the large triple lift-out seat,

The cockpit layout of the prototype featured a different seating configuration. Twin bolster seats are now standard. You have the choice of a hardtop or bimini.



Above: Twin berths in the high profile cabin with a head forward under the central squab.



Above Right: The bolster seat will also be available with a lift-up base.

which even when in place still lets you have access to all the transom and sole lockers. Fitted in place it means you have seating for five, plus the two bolsters, but it does encroach on the workable space in the cockpit. If you were planning to go fishing or diving, then the best option would be to leave it at home.

The transom lockers open to twin batteries, fuel filter, oil reservoir, bilge pump and a little extra storage. Again, Aquapro has made use of the Flexiteak to finish off the walk through transom and twin boarding platforms. An aluminium extension is bolted onto the transom to mount the outboard.

There is no underfloor storage in the cockpit as the entire central section is taken up with a 63½ gallon stainless fuel tank and naturally there are no side trays due to the Hypalon tubes. The tank sits on a fibreglass flat section that extends almost the entire length of the boat and doubles as the drain tray for water from the cabin. It also adds strength and stiffness to the central section of the hull. Rod holders can be

mounted in the aft deck area only and rod storage would be best in a rocket launcher. Generally, the best storage area is the cabin, where everything will remain dry and out of the way.

If you do get any water inside, then self-draining scuppers will rid the cockpit of virtually every last drop. On our rough excursion on Auckland Harbour we took nothing more than some spray aboard. Aquapro is unashamedly pitching the Raider 790 at the international market and in fact the day after I tested the Raider 790 it was being vacuum bagged and shipped to California, the first of a seven-boat order. However, as the only single rigged production cabin RIB available in New Zealand, there is also a local market to consider. Production will initially run at about 20 boats a year, so there will not be a lot to go around. However if you are in a position to afford an Aquapro Raider 790, go for it - I know I would!

Look soon for a new 29' version with the same cabin, but a larger cockpit and bow area and designed for twin outboards or sterndrives.

Contact:

Aquapro Raider 790

Model	Raider 790
Designer	Aquapro
Type	Cabin RIB
LOA	25'11"
Beam	9'6"
Internal Beam	5'7"
Bunk Length	7'3"
Cabin Headroom	4'11"
Hard Top Headroom	6'4"
Tube Dia Forward	18"
Tube Dia Aft	22"
No. of air chambers	5
Deadrise	23 degrees
Engine Capacity	150-250hp
Power Options	Outboard or sterndrive

Fuel Capacity 63½ Gallons
 Boat Weight: dry no fuel, no outboard with hard top and all fittings: 3425lbs
 Boat weight with F200hp and full fuel tanks: 4565lbs

PERFORMANCE

Yamaha 200hp 4-Stroke

600 rpm	3.0 mph
1000 rpm	4.5 mph
1500 rpm	6.0 mph
2000 rpm	7.5 mph
2500 rpm	9.5 mph
3000 rpm	13.5 mph
3500 rpm	25.5 mph
4000 rpm	29.5 mph
4500 rpm	36.0 mph
5000 rpm	41.0 mph
5500 rpm	46.5 mph
6000 rpm	51.5 mph

All speeds are recorded on an Eagle GPS and rounded off to the nearest 1/2 mph.

Notable Standard Equipment

Stainless steel hand holds, bolster seats

Notable Options on Test Boat

Hardtop, rear removable seat, Flexiteak sole, stainless tow posts, toilet and holding tank.

Engine

Make	Yamaha
HP	200
Model	4-stroke
Cylinder Type	60° V6
Displacement	3352 cc
Max RPM	6000 rpm
Propeller	19" stainless

Trailer

Make	Brooker
Braked	Override
Rollers	Multi rollers
Suspension	Leaf Springs
Std Features	Tandem axle, submersible lights, wind up jockey wheel, 10:1 winch.

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Boat Supplied by: Aquapro Int. Ltd