

## Signature 502DF

Wayne Kampe | January 2012 » Regular Features / Boating /

**The Signature 502DF is marketed by the Haines Group as a smaller boat with big features and it's a description that I find correct.**

The newcomer from Wacol has an overall length of 5.25m, a beam of 2.13m and features a stack of work room complimented by many useful angling features. It's by no means a boat for the really dedicated angler: family anglers will enjoy it just as much thanks to a good degree of comfort throughout.

Peace of mind with the high-sided 880mm interior freeboard for family anglers with youngsters aboard is assured and with well-padded seating for up to five there's room to stretch out while under way.

The family big four or six cylinder sedan is also adequate to handle the (approximately) 1170kg all up towing weight.

I see the Signature 502 DF as an all rounder in many respects. Family orientated, but just as useful for three or four anglers wanting to enjoy some wide bay or offshore work on the right sort of day.

The layout is the striking thing. There is an incredible fishing area within the high gunwales of the 502DF and with a high external freeboard of some 960mm, sea keeping is fantastic, especially when the full height transom is taken into account.

### Layout.

Although a cuddy cabin design, the 502 DF has been constructed to offer as much workroom as possible with the windscreen and helm area moved well forward. The cuddy is somewhat confined, although it still offers shelter for occupants and handy out-of-the-weather storage space.

Removable bunks were floor mounted, with a well between them for comfort when seated out of the weather.

Up front when adjusting the anchor it's a simple matter to open the central section of the windscreen and the large cabin roof hatch for easy access.

A well-placed step allows you to stand right over the anchor line when lifting the pick instead of leaning awkwardly. Full marks there!

On retrieval, the rope is fed into a drained forward cabin shelf: while the craft is anchored up a neat slot in the hatch cover allows rope to be extended, as required, without the need to have the hatch open.

Well-finished modules are set up either side of the windscreen walk-through area equipped with a side grab handle, deep glove box and a handy 12v outlet. The dash layout featured paired Garmin GMI10 gauges for engine management and systems information with a Garmin 451S Sounder/GPS on a lower level, but above the wheel which was linked to hydraulic steering.

A set of switches are within easy reach of the wheel while forward controls for the 90hp Suzuki 4-stroke were side mounted in the usual manner. One thing I noted was that there was ample room for further screens on the dash.

Swivel chairs on tubular bases offered excellent comfort and support for skipper and mate when under way; the bases being large enough to contain tackle trays or simply to be used for storage of items like PFDs and the like.

I found the skipper's seat ideally positioned for driving and accessing the engine controls while at the helm: yet just as suited for standing to drive with the seat as a bolster. An optional bimini to shade the helm area was fitted to the test rig and I'd say this would be the first option ticked when an order was placed.

Handy storage space ideal for the catch, tucker or general use is located in a big underfloor tray set between the forward seating with the craft's underfloor 100L fuel tank.

### Cockpit features.

Two rod holders per gunwale side and generous cockpit side pockets both with rod racks are a feature; the pockets are near full length and as they were set off the non-skid floor you could get a toe under them if playing a big fish.

A three-person folding lounge at the transom was equipped with cargo net under it's base plus a well-padded back rest which could serve as transom coaming if fishing with the seat folded.

Other cockpit features included a locking transom door to port with boarding platform and rail handy, the engine battery is located under the step leading into the hull and a decent sized live well is on the starboard side.

### **Ride and handling.**

The Haines Group have been building dedicated fishing craft long enough to know their stuff and this heritage shines in the 502DF. Ride from the variable deadrise hull (33-21?) was both smooth, soft, and quiet thanks to an underfloor foam fill. Serious chop on the test day area was a non event, and even belting across large wash areas from passing craft did not unduly upset the smooth and very controlled ride of the 502 DF.

The driving position was ideal: thanks to the low dash set up one could either sit or stand with ease and still enjoy every bit of forward vision necessary. Hydraulic steering made driver input finger tip light and again, I reiterate, this craft would suit a beginner to boating with ease.

### **Engine Performance**

Performance from the 90hp Suzuki 4-stroke was both easy and willing. Engine ratings for this model are from 70-115hp but I saw the 90hp as just right for family use when either fishing or for tow sports.

The craft planed at 14.1kph at 2,400rpm, 3,000rpm saw 16.9kph on the GPS, 4,000rpm 41.0kph, 5,000rpm a brisk 55kph and 5,800rpm delivered 60.3kph. Test runs were carried out with two aboard plus a near full fuel load.

### **Fishability and Final Thoughts.**

With it's well-mannered ride, great stability from the 525kg deep V hull, reversed chines, well formed strakes and substantial work area this boat is extremely well suited to the novice and experienced boater alike.

With plenty of features for the angler, the 502 DF is a purpose built fishing boat that combines comfort and work area admirably. Finish is quite good in typical Haines Group standard and the package is well put together.

The rig could fish the family or keen offshore aficionados with equal ease and represents good value as reviewed at around \$47,780 (priced from \$39,999 with a smaller engine and less options) with Dunbier trailer and all options including the bimini and rear seat.

For details of your nearest Signature dealer contact The Haines Group on phone (07) 32714400, fax (07) 32714054 or on the net at [www.thehainesgroup.com](http://www.thehainesgroup.com)

## **Facts**

Technical Information.

Length: 5.25m

Length on trailer: 6.35m

Beam: 2.13m

Height on trailer: 2.30m

Hull Weight: 525kg

Deadrise: 21? at transom

Fuel: 100L

Power rating: 75-115hp

Persons: 5

Towing: Family six sedan or big four.

## **Images**



The Signature 502 DF's variable deadrise hull in action: that fine entry area made short work of chop and wash from passing craft.



Stern features are shown here, the aft seat can be either totally removed or lowered to provide more fishing room.



Even under way the degree of fishing room within the 502DF's hull stands out.



Easily managed and understood Garmin gauges are featured within the 502DF's dash layout.



Floor bunks I comfy enough for a rest or a stretch out were standard within this craft.



With our dependence on mobile phones a twelve volt outlet in the Signature's glove box makes sense.



A shelf for the anchor warp is handy at the bow; wide opening hatches allowing easy access.



Storage boxes under forward seating made sense, the tackle trays under the mate's seat an example of the use the space could be put to.



Side pockets offer plenty of storage room in the Signature 502DF.



The Signature's under floor storage area is large enough for the catch or for general use as required.