

## TIME FOR A CHANGE

# The sensible option

### Is it time to swap your thirsty planing sports cruiser for a displacement hull?

When bad news comes a-calling, the human condition insists we react, jerk our knees and generally jump around a bit. Threatened tax increases lead to discussions of emigration, sports teams lose and someone must pay – preferably by death. Now that it looks like we will have to pay road duty to use our boats on the water there are mutterings of extreme action. One of these includes trading in your 30-knot

flybridge for a 6-knot barge. That'll show 'em. But before you reach for the latest issue of 'Old Tubs Weekly', it might be worth considering why you boat in the first place.

Without question, slower displacement craft, such as steel cruisers, make sense. Life at six knots offers up some tranquil pleasures and for those looking to leave it all behind, or with plenty of time on their hands, the sedate mix of traditional



Planing sports cruiser hulls are power-hungry and thirsty on fuel

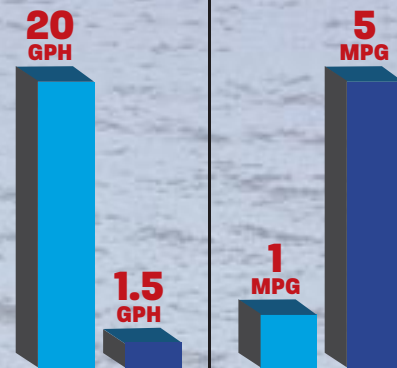


Displacement cruisers have extremely long ranges and low fuel consumption

### Fuel economy

■ Planing hull      ■ Displacement hull

Gallons per hour      Miles per gallon



Figures based on a 40ft planing cruiser with twin 430hp diesels @ 20 knots versus a 40ft displacement cruiser with a single 165hp diesel @ 6 knots

style and 'home from home' comforts will appeal. Taking a longer view, there is a certain irony that with fuel prices only likely to go in one direction (and it's not down), these old-school cruisers with their long range and low fuel consumption may be the face of boating future.

But if you've poured your hard-earned cash into GRP for the excitement of a four-hour Channel crossing or a blast up to Cowes for lunch, then the culture shock of a see-sawing horizon, or the experience of looking at the same church spire for three hours, may be a little too much to bear. Hell, you might as well go sailing!

Talking of sailing, these slower displacement craft require more planning and appreciation of the elements, both present and future. While I'm sure most of us check tides and try and make sure we are running with them, you really have to study them in depth if eight knots is your limit. Similarly you won't be able to outrun the weather, so the chances of being caught in the rough stuff are significantly increased. However, your heavy displacement cruiser may be better equipped to deal with it when it arrives.

So, it's a toss up between the thrill of speed or the thrill of adventure. Both have their place, but which one are you after?



### MBM verdict

As the figures on this page show, it's certainly cheaper to run a displacement hull than a planing one. But it's also a different style of boating, so you should make your decision based on personal preferences, not tax issues.

## THE SINGLES CLUB

Pairing up: a twin-engined craft



Going solo: a single engine installation



# Double trouble

## Are twin-engined craft really more desirable?

Changing your boat need not mean you have to change how you boat. If you own a twin-engine craft, one option is to switch to a single-engine set up. This should be a thought for owners of slower speed vessels, or indeed those who simply choose to cruise at slower speeds.

But the question is most important for buyers in the 30-foot sportscruiser market. For owners of fast craft between 28ft and 32ft, a single installation would not only mean a lower initial price and a significant drop in running costs –

fuel, servicing and maintenance – but you might find that performance improves.

Due to the current crop of outstanding 30-foot sportscruisers, we have stacks of figures to back up the claim that one engine can be better than two. See the test data below as an example.

### Less is more?

Time and again we have found that the twin engine boats at this size are less dynamic, with

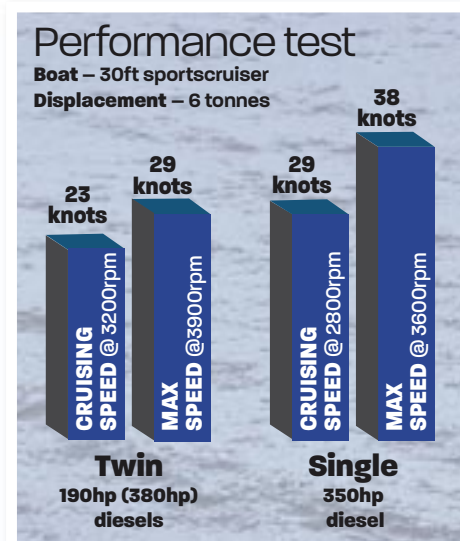
lower fuel economy figures and so shorter cruising ranges. So, why are manufacturers offering twins if they don't stack up? And, moreover, why are we paying more money for a less competent craft?

Well, it's not the builders' fault. Many will launch this size of craft in a single engine guise; it allows them to state a lower cost price and higher speed figures, so why not? But these are seldom the high sellers. Instead our hankering for twin throttles commands the market – so it's our fault.

The reason for our love of all things twin is well documented. Aside from the ego boost of simply having two throttles (the two exhaust pipes theory) you get easier, more controlled close quarter manoeuvring and perceived enhanced safety at sea – two props give you better chance of making port, should one get snagged or fuel become contaminated.

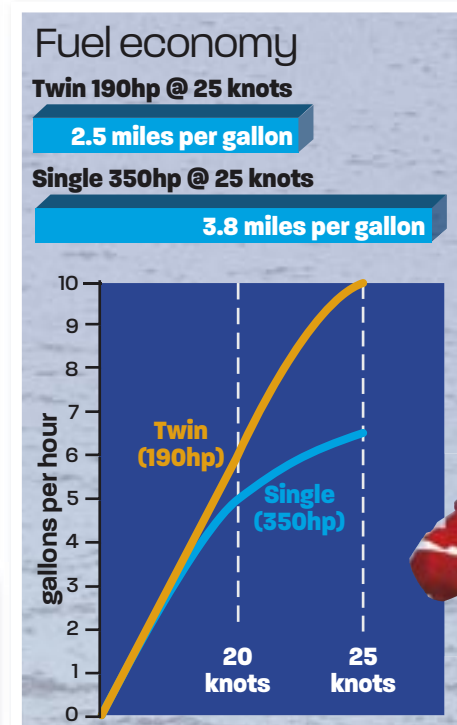
The argument for handling is fair, though a single-engine boat with a bow-thruster is a doddle to handle given a bit of time. The safety at sea issue is more interesting. A snagged propeller or blocked raw water intake is a common problem, and a twin installation obviously gives you the chance of limping home. The same goes for losing a drive belt, and without question your basic service knowledge and spares inventory needs to be better on a single engine boat.

The issue of dirty fuel is less plausible, as most of the boats we are talking about have just the one fuel tank, leading to two dead engines instead of one. >>>



### Servicing costs for a 30ft sportscruiser

- Single 350hp: annual service approximately £500 plus £300 for sterndrive. Total: £800
- Twin 190hp: annual service approximately £400 per engine plus £300 per drive. Total: £1400



### MBM verdict

A lower purchase price coupled to cheaper ongoing running costs makes this a real alternative for some. Less close quarter control is a reality, but singles are lighter and faster, and for some owners this could be the time to leave twins behind.