

Pro-Line's 23 XP

Words and pictures by Anton Pretorius





Since the release of their 24-foot Dual Console in 1968, Pro-Line Boats has developed into a household name amongst many deep-sea anglers in the USA. Forty years have passed and Pro-Line are still producing crafts with the same great quality craftsmanship, fishability and impressive stability and handling. Thanks to Cape Town-based Atlantic Suzuki, who imports Pro-Line's popular (and durable!) 23 Express, fishermen can cruise our rough waters in complete harmony while doing what most men were born to do: fish!


Conditions of test

On the day of this review, the Mother City produced some magnificent weather conditions. With hardly a breath of wind the Atlantic produced a flat and azure ocean surface. Although the day was just like any other review day, I would have preferred to see the 23 Express being put through her paces in somewhat rougher seas, such is her pedigree. Being a deep-sea fishing vessel, a bigger chop or swell would have given us a better indication of her real talents.

General Impression

A noticeable aspect of the 23 XP was her smooth-looking appearance. Her big deep V hull (weighing an incredible 1 769 kg) has a pleasing, progressive shape and is accentuated by a long, singular contour. Standing flat-footed on the dock, the craft's big stainless steel bow rails and cosy, enclosed helm area immediately caught my attention.

But the best was yet to come as closer inspection while on board revealed real quality craftsmanship. The transom is manufactured from high-density foam sandwiched between multiple layers of fibreglass – making the boat particularly strong and durable.

Overall, this is a good-looking and practical boat that would be quite at home blasting through a nasty offshore chop while chasing fish, or just puttering along a quiet beach while the family seeks out a spot to swim or picnic. 





Even though she weighs a massive 2.25 tons, she didn't prove difficult to tow, launch or retrieve.



The 23 XP's sheltered pilothouse offers much-needed protection from notorious Cape conditions.



The boat's fold-out bench behind the pilot seat cleverly utilises space.

Launching and trailering

I must admit to getting a little nervous when having to launch, retrieve or even tow a boat of such magnitude. Measuring in at 7m (23 ft) and with a dry weight of 2.25 tons, it's no secret that the Pro-Line 23 XP is a hefty craft – which might be a little tough to launch. However, this was not the case with the 23 XP. Despite a towing weight of nearly 2.9 tons, Atlantic Suzuki's Isuzu 4x4 made reversing and launching the 23 XP look like kid's play. She slid off the bearers and into the water within a matter of minutes, before I could say Jack Robinson. She's certainly a big boat, but not that hard to launch.

Deck Layout

Whether you're running through heavy seas with bone-chilling spray or seeking relief from a blazing sun, the 23 XP's solid-looking, three-sided sheltered pilothouse – complete with its large tempered glass windscreen, is seemingly an impenetrable fortress protecting you from all the elements.

Our initial concern with the pilothouse design was that it might make the boat susceptible to the "station wagon effect" – pulling backwash under the hardtop. Both rain and exhaust fumes have the potential to swirl around in this area, but this did not seem to pose a problem on the 23 XP. Sliding the side-window open allowed for extra ventilation if required.

Our review boat featured two fold-out bench seats on the craft's spacious deck layout, both folding flush with the skipper's seat and transom. These seats are optional, but a great addition for those who anticipate carrying a full crew while being superb for fishing and watching your rods while trolling. Not only do both seats look good, but they are particularly comfortable, too!

The 23 XP's drainage system certainly needs a mention. Pro-Line pays close attention to getting unwanted water out of the boat – fast! The aft is deeply guttered and big scuppers fitted in each corner of the deck allows for the exit of rain or seawater back here

it belongs! The same applies to all storage compartments as well as live and bait wells. Each compartment has a moulded groove and scupper to prevent water from straying into the boxes.

Apart from the spacious deck layout, the 23 XP's V-berth cabin area offers adequate room for a couple of adults (or a couple of juniors). A Bomar hatch overhead allows for sufficient ventilation and small side windows provide adequate lighting, making it a comfortable and peaceful place to be after a long day fishing.


Motors and performance

The Pro-Line 23 XP has a maximum horsepower rating of 300 horses, but with two 140 HP Suzuki 4-Stroke motors (280 HP total), the performance proved to be more than adequate. And although these two beautiful, black Suzuki's with their 22' stainless steel propellers have a considerable amount of grunt and power, she also turned out to be whisper quiet.

Top-end speed is estimated at 38 knots (70 km/h) at 6 300 rpm, which is superb for a large boat such as a Pro-Line 23 XP. She also popped onto the plane within 5.76 seconds – also quick for a craft that weighs nearly 2,5 tons. Having said that, she's not built to be a high performance craft but rather designed for handling bumpy seas while getting you to your favourite fishing spot. Having sufficient power range, she'd get you to your destination in no time at all.

Handling

The Pro-Line tracks well in tight turns and its 20° transom deadrise handles nasty chop like no other. Some offshore boats offer up to 24° of deadrise, but the more modest deadrise on the Pro-Line creates a solid fishing platform, even in big seas.

The 23 XP turns sharply, nimbly and effectively. A sharp 360° turn didn't show any sign of porpoising, or losing speed, or total control. 



Each storage compartment on the 23 XP features big scuppers and deep gutters, designed to get water out the boat – fast!



The twin 140 HP Suzuki's provided the 23 XP with a top speed of 38 knots at 6 300 rpm – quick for a hefty craft.





She features an ergonomically designed helm station that has hydraulic steering and easy-to-reach controls.

She has a 500-litre built-in fuel tank, so whether you're interested in cruising, fishing or even diving – or all three – range won't ever be an issue. Atlantic Suzuki believe "The mono-hull of the 23 XP can be loaded to the brim with gear and crew, and still, she'll outperform a catamaran in even the toughest weather".

Fishability

Pro-Line is ostensibly a fishing boat company whose heritage is clearly evident in the 23 XP. It's a popular choice for serious fishermen spending long hours on the water, or the family boater whose main concern is comfort.

Pro-Line's 23 XP complements its protection with a full array of fishing-friendly features such as an illuminated 80-litre baitwell, rodholders, outriggers

generous tackle storage, 352 litres worth of fishboxes as well as six rod racks – cleverly integrated into the side panels of both port and starboard sides.

The ability to easily store your rods out of harm's way is also another indication that this vessel is designed for the fisherman which enjoys time with the family. Two small staircases on the port and starboard side lead you along the bow rails and allow you to fight a fish all the way around the boat, if need be.

Finishing touches

Standard features include a windlass anchor, bilge pump, seven retractable cleats, dive platform with integrated ladder, stainless steel cupholders, transom door, Porta-Potti with filler board, as well as digital readout Suzuki fuel, km/h, rpm, trim and volt gauges.

Optional equipment includes air conditioning, cabin table, hull graphics, curtains, remote spotlight and spreader light, folding rear and helm bench, AM/FM/CD player with four speakers, trim tabs and a windshield wiper.

Atlantic Suzuki also offers electronic packages that include Garmin Fish Finders and GPS systems as well as VHF Radio and optional 1kW in-hull transducer and XM weather electronics.

Conclusion

For the same quality manufacturing, finish, fishability and all-round smooth ride, you'd be hard-pressed to find a cheaper locally built craft of such proportion. So if your bonus cheque is causing a burning sensation in your pocket, Pro-Line 23 XP will be worth every cent!

All Pro-Line XP boats offer spacious cockpits, non-skid decking, ergonomically designed helm stations and plenty of comfortable seating that lets boaters enjoy the journey as much as the destination.

Built to handle rough conditions with absolutely no sacrifice in angling performance, Pro-Line's 23 XP also provide luxurious comfort for family boating days. And if caught in rainy weather, anglers who select a boat with the capabilities of the Pro-Line's 23 XP, the forecast will always be brighter – or at least, drier.

For more information contact Andrew Bowes at Atlantic Suzuki on 082 443 9111 or (021) 555 1977. Alternatively, you can drop him an e-mail andrew@atlanticsuzuki.co.za



At a glance

LOA:	7 m (23-ft)
Beam:	2.6 m (8.6-ft)
Towing weight:	2.9 tons
Engines:	Twin Suzuki 4-Stroke 140 HP
Top Speed:	38 knots (70 km/h)
Max Passengers:	8
Price:	R850 000