



Dickey Semifly 28

Every now and then a boatbuilder comes along who approaches hull design and construction from a different direction, and Napier-based Jason Dickey is one of them.

He started along the path as a powerboat technician, doing servicing and fit-outs for Firmans Marine of Napier for eight years before heading overseas as an engineer on superyachts. While there, he worked his way up to chief engineer before taking a year off to do his grade-three engineering ticket. Back at work on the 54m superyacht *Battered Bull*, he managed the building of tenders up to 10m long. The heavy construction of the alloy *Bull Run*, made to be towed in rough oceanic conditions, really impressed him. So he developed the concept of an aluminium fishing boat constructed with traditional ship-building techniques and featuring a semi-flybridge that would give good vision, but still allow the helmsman to be part of the cockpit operation, enabling good communication when fighting a fish.

Incorporating his overseas experience and engineering training, with wife Tristin adding a feminine perspective, Dickey Boats was set up in Napier

about two-and-a-half years ago. Jason employed one other full-timer – an expert in fairing hulls – and the company's first hull, the Dickey Semifly 28, won the open class for Aluminium Fishing Boat of the Show at last year's Auckland Boat Show. That hull has been sold and Dickey Boats is starting construction on a 10m and an 8.5m hardtop for customers in 2008.

Construction

The Semifly 28 was designed by Dennis Harjamaa, a Finn now resident in New Zealand, and built along the lines of a small-scale ship, with a 10mm keel bar, inboard girders, two stringers per side, outboard girders and a flange chine. Two more stringers run along each side. Crossways there are nine frames and three main bulkheads.

All of this longitudinal and lateral construction is interlocked and the hull laser-levelled, making for a very strong, even over-engineered, construction somewhat different to that normally used for aluminium trailerboats. This technique means no buoyancy chambers or reserve buoyancy.

The bottoms, chines and transom are 6mm, while the sides and topsides are

4mm. The Dickey Semifly 28 has very distinctive lines, with a near-vertical entry, drop-sheerline and curved transom giving it a look of classic elegance, but a style many modern designers are revisiting; look at America's Cup yacht bows, for example. Dickey explained that this concept gives a greater waterline length and more comfort at mid-range speeds. Deadrise at the transom is 18°.

The finish on the Semifly 28 is stunning. A very fair, almost mirror surface bears testimony to many hours of painstaking work and makes for easy cleaning. Jason told me that during the Auckland Boat Show there was a constant rapping sound as nearly everyone who went past tapped the hull to see if it was glass or aluminium. The hull's smooth curves are nicely offset by the cockpit deck's TekDek finish, which covers the boards and transom top, looks smart and gives a hard wearing, low maintenance, non-skid finish.

Power and performance

The test boat was pushed by a Mercruiser 320hp diesel inboard with a 21-inch prop, giving the following performance: trolling 1400rpm at 7.5



knots; cruising at 2700rpm at 20 knots; top speed 3800rpm at 34 knots. Fuel capacity is 380 litres, giving a range of 300nm at 20 knots.

The engine set-up is designed to give its best performance in average conditions, and there is virtually no load on the engine at cruising speed with the prop used. Higher speeds can be achieved with a coarser prop.

I joined Jason and Tristin at Whakatane early in January to take the Semifly 28 for a run. A good run of yellowfin ensured plenty of ramp traffic, and the distinctive lines of the high-sided hull certainly had heads turning.

We ran out over a moderate lift on the Whakatane Bar to well outside

Whale Island before putting in a few hours of trolling. There was little chop, but a couple of metres of swell in places. The Semifly 28 was a pleasure to helm; a very soft traveller and very predictable. Visibility from the raised helm position is excellent.

Anchoring

Access to the bow is easy, with nice wide bulwarks, anti-skid paint, and bow and grab rails to help. Anchoring chores are handled by a Lofrans Project 1000 winch set under the foredeck. It has helm or bow control units and a chain counter. It can drop at twice the retrieve speed – more or less a controlled free-fall – which can be important for precision anchoring. Access to the

anchor well is through a hatch in the forward bulkhead.

The anchor used is a self-launching Rocna model set in a fairlead/bowsprit recessed into the bow.

Layout

The Semifly 28 has a very high level of finish. In the forecabin the dining table seats four to five on a raised platform with backrests. The table lowers to form a large double berth – or two singles with under-berth stowage if left raised. The cabin itself is padded and fully lined, and a considerable number of recessed halogen downlights are fitted.

Coming aft from the forepeak there is a galley to port, with stainless sink



There are plenty of comfortable spots from which to watch the lures. The table in the forepeak can seat four to five adults and lowers to form a double berth. Right: The head/shower passes the design test.



The fairlead is recessed into the deck and features a self-launching Rocna anchor. The semi-flybridge was designed to give good visibility from the helm while maintaining good communication with the cockpit.

(hot and cold freshwater, 100-litre capacity, which may also be used to flush the engine at the end of a trip if no other freshwater is available) and a two-burner gas cooker. The unit incorporates locker storage and an Isotherm fridge with freezer box.

A wardrobe-style locker next to the galley can be used to hang clothes, lifejackets and wet-weather gear, and there are deck hatches that give access through to the hull in multiple spots. The main switching unit incorporates battery-voltage meter and Majestic sound system.

To starboard is a shower/toilet unit, which passes my design test (my theory is that when most boats are designed, the shower and toilet are crammed into whatever space is left at the end, so if the toilet and shower are comfortable to use, the rest of the boat will be well-designed, too).

The shower is drained by a 500gph Rule pump. A 40-litre holding tank is

fitted for the head, the basin has a pull-out shower nozzle, and three dry-storage lockers are set into the side. There is also hatch access to the wiring in the back of the steering console.

The space under the semi-flybridge, from which the boat gets its name, is well used by a double berth behind the companionway, with two stowage lockers at the foot.

Out at the helm position, the raised semi-flybridge gives the helmsman and passengers great vision without compromising communication. A large dash on the passenger side provides storage, while a non-skid mat also cuts glare on the inside of the 'screen. A fold-down polycarbonate hatch makes the cabin lockable.

The boat features a unique double console, with the forward console housing the engine instrumentation and the rear one a flush-mounted Raymarine C120 multi-purpose display, as well as the VHF, autopilot,

switching and anchor controls. All wiring is high-quality BEP/Hella, and the stainless helm is fitted with a knob, which is great to use when berthing.

The gas-shock helm seat and teak footrest are very comfortable, and a stainless BBQ can be mounted on the back. Two passengers are catered for by a bench seat. Side stowage of the gas bottle makes for easy access and good venting. Mounted on the back of the bridge are two fold-down bench seats and a step up onto the bridge. Water and fuel ports are set into the deck just behind the bridge.

In the centre of the cockpit is a riser for the engine box, which is used to house a large padded-top chillybin and the mount for the game chair. Building the stern out over the stern-drive unit allows a full walkaround deck. Down in the engine well are the AGM start and house batteries, along with one of the two 1100gph bilge pumps.

For this build, Jason went for a soft



The galley unit offers a hot and cold freshwater sink, gas cooker, fridge, and plenty of stowage.



The area under the bridge is fitted with a double berth. Building the rear deck out over the stern leg allows a full walk-around cockpit.

top; a pipe frame with canvas top and clears to the 'screen enable good vision and ventilation, but a hardtop version is also available.

Other fittings include: multiple Talon gimbaled drink holders; cockpit spotlight; dock water and shore power links; bow rails for tying down an inflatable tender; and an outward opening cockpit door. Customised layouts are available.

Fishability

Jason Dickey is a keen fisherman, and the Dickey Semifly 28 is built for fishing, especially blue-water work. The diesel Mercruiser is great for trolling and raising fish. Decks are self-draining, with a slight camber to two pairs of scuppers. As mentioned, the engine is full walk-around – great when playing fish; the padded gunwales and toe recess are further aids in this area.

There are two plumbed under-deck live-bait tanks in the stern corners, nine through-gunwale rodholders, and a seven-position rocket launcher that is easily reached from the deck. A fold-up bait-station fits two of the rodholders on the transom, or it can be tucked away underneath. Visibility is great when trolling and there are plenty of comfortable spots from which to watch the lures.

A gamechair fits a mount on the engine box, and storage of lesser fish is in the movable 120-litre Waeco Iceberg fibreglass fish-bin that sits on the engine box. Racks for gaffs and poles can be built in under the storage side pockets; freshwater and saltwater washdown hoses are fitted, as are outriggers. An outward opening transom door makes pulling big fish aboard easier, and fold-down cleats remove

one more line trap. This boat has no built-on boarding platform (so it backs down better), but one can be fitted on request.

A very comfortable boat to fish from, with all the bells and whistles.

Trailer

With a 2.8m beam, the Dickey Semifly 28 fits into the 'overwidth' category, but this is really no big deal these days. The hull was carried on a braked, tandem-axle Alpine alloy trailer made by Metal Works Innovation. This is a heavily-built, cradle A-frame design that uses high-density polyethylene-plated benches rather than rollers. A dual-ratio manual winch was fitted, but hardly needed, as in practice the boat was easily coasted onto the trailer. Zinc coated leaf-spring suspension is used, along with submersible lights and wind-down bow stand. The tow weight of the big rig is 3450kg, dry and empty of extra equipment. Jason has regularly towed the test boat from Napier to Whakatane to fish.

All-in-all

This is a solidly constructed, beautifully finished maxi-trailerboat fitted out to a very high standard. A pocket battleship of a boat that drives like a comfortable launch – great to fish out of and stay away aboard. If you are looking for a boat in this league, the Dickey Semifly 28 is definitely a hull to consider. 



The Alpine trailer uses benches rather than rollers to support the hull.

Specifications

LOA	8.5m
Beam	2.8m
Deadrise	18°
Recommended HP	250-350
Engine	Mercruiser 320hp Diesel
Propeller	21" pitch
Fuel Capacity	380 litres
Fresh water	100 litres
Sewage	40 litres
Trailer	Alpine Alloy tandem axle
Key-turn rigs from	\$270,000
Price as tested	\$335,000