

# **Boat Review for PowerPlay 56**

## **“Fifty Fifty”**

*Story and pictures by Bruce Hodgens*

"Fifty Fifty", the latest 17 metre (56 foot) power cat from PowerPlay Catamarans has just arrived in its new home in the Dominican Republic after a very successful showing at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show in November. Once again PowerPlay Catamarans have produced a boat that not only handles well and has great fuel economy, but is beautiful and spacious inside as well.

As with all PowerPlay Catamarans the construction is impeccable. The hull and decks are built with Duflex planks (end grain balsa with unidirectional cloth) and knitted fabrics with epoxy resins. All boats are built to commercial offshore survey standards in accordance with the USL code. Furniture is constructed using Duflex Honeycomb sheets to minimize weight and thus increase payload capacity. Customisation of the interior layout is possible and encouraged.

The well designed boarding platforms at the rear of both hulls give easy access from the dock especially if the boat is reversed in. Access to the boat from a dinghy onto the wide platforms is also easy because the boat is kept into the wind and waves. The extra thick rubbing rail on the overhanging platform prevents the boat from being damaged by the dinghies. Radial stairs lead up to the cockpit level passing through a stainless steel and Perspex gate which can be closed when at sea to prevent people wandering out the back.

The most impressive addition to this new PowerPlay boat is the large game-fishing deck blended into the already spacious cockpit area. Thirteen square metres of extra deck area is plenty of room to pull in those big ones or to sit around at the end of the day and talk about the one that got away. This boat was fitted with a luxurious Pompette 80 kilogram game chair. However, for those of you like me who are not the fishing type, a table and chairs can be fitted into this area for the perfect alfresco dining experience. The under cover cockpit area is the same as the previous 2 PowerPlay cats; large and practical. There is a L shaped seat across the forward cockpit area and a large lounge seat across the back. All have ample storage under the seating. The stainless steel and teak ladder on the port side leads up to the fly bridge.

The fly bridge has full headroom and has been fitted with clears for all weather protection. The helm is on a centre console fitted with a top quality radar screen, a chart plotter, a fish finder, a second CD player, an autopilot and the standard Yanmar engine controls and instruments. The three person helm chair is not only incredibly comfortable but also has a built in 36 litre drawer refrigerator, making the beer cold and close.

The fly bridge is well lit and there are spotlights forward for night docking or anchoring. The bimini hard top houses the aerials, radar dome and solar panels (if fitted) so they are well out of the way. There is a huge amount of seating in this area with a large U shape seat that wraps around the front and another around the back. This is a very popular place to be especially when underway on a hot day.

Three steps lead you up to the side decks from the cockpit. The high stanchions and safety lines make you feel very secure. As with all PowerPlay Catamarans the toe rail is an added safety feature. The toe rail is formed by having the deck set down 50 mm which prevents you from having to rely on the safety lines to stop you falling further if you slip. The stanchion bases are all composite, as are the docking cleats. This greatly reduces the risk of leaks through the deck fittings. The wide decks make it easy to negotiate even in rough seas. Stainless steel stanchions and rails continue all the way across the front of the boat and combine with the trampolines giving a large, safe area out the front.

The trampolines are laced rope and are nice and tight. What a great place to sit or lay and watch the waves roll by. However the standard feature on the foredeck that really draws a crowd is the Jacuzzi! It is quite deep and has seating all around. It is the perfect spot to cool down at anchor with a glass of champagne and some good company. It was definitely the draw card at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show last November.

There are plenty of lockers across the front of the bridge deck area for ropes and chains. The anchor winch is set in a locker to make the deck uncluttered and safe. There are 2 enormous lockers on the forward section of the hulls with floors at about 300 millimetres above the water line. The hatches have very good seals making it an excellent place to store diving gear and any other toys that are required.

The brief from this owner was for a 2 cabin layout with one side solely for his personal use, and an open plan in the saloon/galley area. Comments at the boat show from people entering through the sliding doors into the saloon area, was how large and luxurious it was. The same layout as the 1250 was used but this time finished with cherry wood timber veneer, leather trim and upholstery and synthetic granite bench tops. The effect is spacious and stunning.

The galley is on the right hand side as you walk in and includes a built in convection microwave oven, a two burner electric stove and ample cupboard space. There is a small day fridge under the bench with a large double door fridge/freezer in the starboard hull for extra supplies. On the port side is the entertainment centre with a flat screen 18 inch TV, DVD/CD player, bar and ice maker. The forward part of the saloon has a very comfortable and attractive leather semi circular settee with a large table to one side. Visibility through the large wrap around laminated glass windows is good and the large rear window and wide door opening gives this area a very open and airy feeling. There are small opening hatches but this whole area is air-conditioned if it gets too hot outside.

The whole port hull is for the owner's use. There is a shower and toilet aft with total access to the engine room. The engine room is very neat and large (due to the 2 cabin layout). The engines are covered but are easily accessible when the cover is removed. The genset is also situated in here. Moving forward through to the owner's private cabin there is a lovely seating area where you can escape the crowds and relax in air-conditioned comfort. The queen size bed runs across the boat with ample head room so you can easily sit up in bed to read. The carpeted steps on either side, makes it very easy for either person to get in or out of bed. The ensuite is through a forward bulkhead door and is very roomy and practical. The finish is white 2-pack paint with cherry wood trim. The forward layout on the starboard side is a mirrored version of the owner's side so the guest don't miss out on the luxurious finish of the cabins. Both cabins are fully air-conditioned and lighting is easily accessible. As mentioned previously the mid section on this side has a double door fridge/freezer for all those extra supplies. Aft there is another toilet/ shower area finished in white 2-pack paint with cherry wood trim. This area also allows access to the starboard engine room including the water maker and hot water system.

Time to start the engines! Powered with twin 300 hp, 6 cylinder Yanmars the most noticeable feature was the distinct lack of engine noise. As with the 1450 you can see every corner of the cat from the flybridge making visibility excellent. Steering is light, responsive and direct. Thanks to the high bridgedeck clearance there was no slapping of waves under the bridgedeck and as I looked out behind the boat the small wake was proof of how effortlessly the boat glides through the water. On the day of our test run the wind was up 10-15 knots creating the usual chop out in the bay. We increased to revs to cruise speed and headed straight out to the island. The more slender hulls on this 1650 and the larger spray rail on this boat dramatically cuts down on the spray over the front hulls. The hulls cut through the waves rather than going up and down the wave face, creating a very smooth ride even in the choppy seas!

There was no sign of broaching and in fact there was little need to steer at all. At full speed, full lock turns were done in about 5 boat lengths, the cat stayed flat throughout with no fuss or vibration. With one motor turned back to idle the boat still maintained a straight course. It was still possible to turn the boat in both directions ensuring the ability to manoeuvre on one motor in the event of one engine failure. On arrival at the island we dropped anchor close to the beach. The anchor winch is operated from the flybridge. The visibility up there is excellent over the forelock making dropping and raising the anchor very easy and safe. We had 20 people aboard this day which was not a problem and there was more than enough room for everyone. No sooner had the anchor dropped when the spa was filled with water and bathing beauties. People were sun baking on the trampolines, congregating out on the game deck or staying in the shade on the flybridge.

You might think serving lunch for this crowd would be a stressful affair but not for the hostess of the day. The open and very functional galley lends itself to easy preparation and dining. We were served a beautiful buffet style lunch and people had numerous choices of places to sit and enjoy it. By late afternoon it was reluctantly time to head home. The few children we had on board were tired from the day's activities so were happy to be shut inside with a movie playing and the air conditioners on.

Cruising smoothly at 22 knots it didn't take long to cover distance back home to the marina. Slowing down to the 6 knot speed limit in the harbour was difficult. Manoeuvring the boat to come along side the dock was very easy with the twin motors. They are counter rotating props so there is no prop walk to worry about. With the helms centred I was able to just use the throttles to spin the boat around in its own length and bring it back into its pen at the marina. The perfect end to a perfect day!

Once again PowerPlay Catamarans have created a real winner. A stunning boat with beautiful lines!

A spacious interior and that's very economical and fun to play with. PowerPlay Catamarans build a range of boats between 12.5 and 18.5 metres. Currently under construction is a 4 cabin 17 metre Sportfish version for a US client and it will be due for launching in September.

More details can be found on the web site at [www.powerplaycatamarans.com.au](http://www.powerplaycatamarans.com.au) and their agents can be contacted by email at [info@powerplaycatamarans.com.au](mailto:info@powerplaycatamarans.com.au)