



In 2002 Buccaneer released the 635 Exess. Last year that was followed by the even bigger 735 Exess. So it would have seemed logical that for 2004 the much anticipated 835 Exess would be unveiled. Not so. This year the company has gone right back to basics with two new models under 5.5m. Compact they may be, but they also represent a whole new construction system for Buccaneer, that is the forerunner of future models.

The new Buccaneer 525 Billfisher and its more upmarket variant, 530 Exess share the same hull, deck and interior mouldings with the difference being in the fit-out and appointments. The 525 Billfisher is the more basic version of the two, although while lacking some of the refinements of the 530 Exess, it is also well equipped. The basis of the new boats is the existing hull used in the 525 Escape.

They are the first Buccaneers to utilise the new Advanced Composite Stringer System (ACSS) system, which incorporates a full fibreglass inner liner and stringer system and virtually does away with any timber in the boat. There are basically three large moulds for the hull, deck and inner liner and these are added to with hatches, seats and side pockets. Timber side panels have been replaced with polymer plastic board as used in other Buccaneer models such as the 635 and 735 Exess. Using Plexus adhesive to bond everything together, the liner stretches from gunnel to gunnel, bow to stern. It has not only cut down production time, but has also produced a stiffer and stronger boat. There are three composite stringers either side, with foam filling all the side cavities to maximise the flotation capabilities of the boat. The new boats more than comply with the CPC flotation requirements.



Buccaneer's managing director Gerry Gerrand said that the new boats are pitched at getting people into boating, but more importantly getting them introduced to the Buccaneer brand. "We want them to experience our product right from the start and then hopefully this will lead them into other models as their boating experience and requirements change in the future".

The company's intention from the start was for a base model which would suit divers and fishermen, but as time went on, a prototype was built and it was realised that the new styling would also be a winner in a higher profile version. Hence from the 525 Billfisher was also born the 530 Exess.



When I was shown the first of the two boats on Auckland Harbour just a few weeks prior to the New Zealand Boat Show, they were still very much under wraps. The 525 Billfisher was complete and ready for market, but the 530 Exess was still a concept boat and incomplete in a number of areas and certainly not ready for a full test. However, Gerry assured me that it would all be complete and a finished production boat would be at the show. For the purpose of writing this article I took a complete look over the 525 Billfisher. I also make reference to the 530 Exess when appropriate.

A few years ago Buccaneer introduced the 172, a boat that was targeted directly at the aluminium market and was a reasonably back-to-basics, no-frills version. The 525 Billfisher takes over from the 172, albeit with a few more refinements. It comes from the factory complete and with very few options available. The big difference between the 525 Billfisher and the 530 Exess is what comes standard from the factory and for that there is around a

**Model 525 Billfisher**  
 Price (Boat Only) \$19,500  
 Price as Tested \$41,300  
 Package Boats from \$37,990  
 Designer Gerry Gerrand  
 Type Half Cabin  
 LOA 5.60m  
 LOH 5.30m  
 Beam 2.25m  
 Height on Trailer 2.20m  
 Deadrise 21 degrees  
 Trailerable Weight 1050kg  
 Engine Capacity 90 - 115hp  
 Power Options Outboard Only  
 Fuel Capacity Tote tanks  
**PERFORMANCE**  
 600 rpm 3.5 mph  
 1000 rpm 4.5 mph  
 1500 rpm 6.5 mph  
 2000 rpm 8.0 mph  
 2500 rpm 10.0 mph  
 3000 rpm 13.5 mph  
 3500 rpm 22.0 mph  
 4000 rpm 29.0 mph  
 4500 rpm 32.0 mph  
 5000 rpm 37.0 mph  
 5500 rpm 40.5 mph  
 All speeds recorded on a Lowrance GPS and rounded off to the nearest 1/2mph.  
 Notable Standard Equipment  
 CPC rated, stainless ladder, fibreglass liner, composite stringer system.  
 Notable Optional Equipment  
 90 litre underfloor fuel tank, ski pole, bow rail, Humminbird M25 Fishfinder.  
 Engine  
 Make Johnson  
 HP 90  
 Model 2-Stroke  
 Cylinder Type V4  
 Displacement 1726cc  
 Max RPM 5800 rpm  
 Propellers 19" Renegade  
 Retail Price \$13700  
 Trailer  
 Make DMW  
 Model 500 Premier  
 Braked No  
 Multirollers Yes  
 Std Features Jockey wheel, submersible lights, winch  
 Price \$3995  
 Manufacturer Buccaneer Pleasure Boats Ltd, Hamilton

\$6000 price difference. Standard features on the 525 Billfisher include folding- extending ladder, recessed side cleats, rod racks and full CPC rating. Things like bowrails, ski pole and underfloor fuel tank are optional on the 525 but standard on the 530. The 530 also includes extra grabrails, burl walnut dash, fitted carpet, upgraded level of trim, underfloor locker, and teak coamings.

Boats Supplied By: Family Boats, Auckland, Ph 09 2740511



The 525 Billfisher is rated to 115hp with a 90hp recommended, whereas the 530 Exess is rated to 130hp, with 115hp recommended.

I ran the first 525 Billfisher with a 90hp Johnson and on the Lowrance GPS got a top speed of 40.5mph. With the Yamaha 115hp on the transom of the prototype 530 Exess, that increased to 44.5mph, yet the speeds at each recorded rpm step through the mid-range stayed much the same (not surprising, as the hulls are identical, both outboards have the same 2:1 gear ratio and both had 19" pitch propellers). I felt that

90hp was more than enough for this boat and while it can certainly handle more, it doesn't need it.

Stability at rest is good, despite a generous 21deg deadrise, although balancing the boat is important to achieve the optimum trim and ride, especially at the higher end of the rpm range. Trim tabs might be a good option, especially if you do a lot of boating on your own. It's very quick onto the plane and certainly an easy boat to drive in the choppy water.

The fine forward sections and wide chines help lift the boat easily and at high speed there is not a lot of hull left in the water.

## LAYOUT

The whole concept behind the 525 Billfisher was to provide a boat that had a workable cockpit as big as possible, for the fishing, but also a sensibly sized half-cabin. There are three individual squabs with storage under the side two as well as in wide side trays above. The cabin is fully fabric lined and you have the choice of different coloured multi patterned squabs. Standard colours are an ivory gelcoat hull, almond liners, with latte and seastone coloured upholstery.

I was impressed with the sitting headroom in the cabin, especially as far forward as the bulkhead, where I was able to sit without rubbing my head on the cabin roof. Plenty of space for at least three adults and if you add the squab infill you also have two reasonably sized berths.

While the 525 Billfisher doesn't come standard with an electric capstan, provision has been made to fit one, such as the Maxwell 500 Freedom fitted to the concept 530 Exess. The fact that a boat this size has provision for a hands-free winch is certainly a good selling point and may just be the deciding factor on your next purchase.



However, if you don't have that added luxury then a moulded step forward in the cabin and an extra large Weaver overhead hatch lets you get through to the very large anchor locker without too much hassle.



Storage in the cockpit is provided in a central moulded wet locker in the sole, in moulded side trays and under the aft deck. As the 525 Billfisher doesn't come standard with an underfloor alloy fuel tank - a 100-litre tank is standard in the 530 Exess - you can stow a couple of tote tanks under the rear seats. The battery, oil tank and cut-off switch are fitted in the centre under the engine well.

A bilge pump is fitted to take care of any excess water in the bilge.

The Billfisher comes standard with Nautolex vinyl glued to the cockpit sole or a fixed carpet or in the case of the 530 Exess a teak option is also available.

Standard seating is a single moulded pedestal helm seat with rotationally moulded swivelling bucket with clip-on cushions and back-to-back seats opposite.

An upstand in the floor liner around the fibreglass seat bases has been designed to allow the units to be adhesively bonded, rather than screwed, to the cockpit sole. Clean, tidy, stiff and very, very strong. However, you now have no option as to the seat position.

It is obvious that much attention has been paid to finishing details, when you see the moulded edges rather than an end grain fibreglass cut around the seat base mouldings. The rear jump seats are removable to give access to the back for fishing.

The 525 Billfisher is an entry-level boat pitched at the first time boat



owner. With the Buccaneer name behind it, the 525 maintains the marque's reputation for quality. The higher half-cabin and full bodied design has got to have a lot of appeal to people wanting a boat that offers maximum space and usability in this size range.



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