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**Morningstar 460 Sports Cuddy
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MORNINGSTAR 460 SPORTS CUDDY

There's a new dawn in tinnies and it's coming from the direction of Asia with this attractive 4.6m cuddy tinnie that has the lines and the ride a fibreglass boat. Test report by JAMES HILL.



Last year we introduced *TBF* readers to a small console craft from Asia that really does offer something different for tinnie boat buyers. Indeed, the Morningstar 460 is more akin to a fibreglass boat due to its innovative construction that has each side of the boat and deck pressed from one sheet under massive load.

This construction process results in a craft with a smooth finish and curves you normally wouldn't see in a tinnie. It not only makes for an attractive craft but also one that rides pretty well in choppy water thanks to a very sophisticated bottom shape.

With its smooth lines and good ride the Morningstar 460 is a craft

that does offer a fresh approach in a market that pretty much dominates the fishing scene these days.

And whilst it's still early days for this new Asian brand, the Morningstar have been impressing those who have tested the boat and given it a run in bumpy water.

Helping the process along are two more deck configurations on the standard Morningstar 4.6m hull – the Bay Rover runabout version and Sport Cuddy version. That makes a total of four configurations, including a side and centre console version.

Early in spring I had the pleasure of getting an early bird look at the two newest models through Sydney dealer, Enterprise Marine.

Whilst I really liked the runabout and found it very comfortable, we've published the Cuddy Sports test first because it's such an interesting fishing package, especially for coastal fishos.

In the past decade we've seen quite a swing away from cuddy designs in the smaller boat category of under five-metres. It's funny in a way because smaller size cuddy boats have been very popular in the past and you only have to think of the old Seafarer V-Sea 4.7m to know they made a lot of Aussie fishos happy!

I believe there's still a place for a small cuddy boat like the Morningstar 460 Sports Cuddy. Especially for coastal fishing areas where fishos need to punch through a river bar, it ticks the box!



While I don't recommend boats under five metres for serious offshore work, they can be acceptable for short offshore runs where sea and weather permits. Indeed, a tinnie this size is easy to launch and can also be good for big coastal bays such as Port Phillip in Victoria and Moreton Bay in Queensland.

What I also really like about the 460 Cuddy Sports is that it delivers a traditional 'short' cuddy that doesn't chew up too much valuable fishing space. Also, both pedestal seats are designed to be reversed for fishing and even come with rear footrests on the seat box!

The price for the Morningstar 460 Sports Cuddy will also appeal

to those looking for an affordable estuary-cum-coastal fishing rig. As tested through Enterprise Marine it was \$31,990, including a Honda BF60 Blast four-stroke, single-axle Mackay trailer, navigation lights and inshore safety gear. Pretty good value all round considering it has a nice four-stroke motor, top of the line trailer and above average hull.

About all I'd add would be a hand-held VHF radio and sounder/chartplotter, at about \$1000 extra.

Design: As you can readily see, the Morningstar 460 Sports Cuddy is a nice little package with clean lines and rolled gunwales with no weld lines in sight.

The hull measures 4.65m overall and has a generous beam of 2.0m that is carried to a quite wide footprint in the water.

The underbody features a fairly sharp Vee entry flowing to a soft gull-wing shaped transom. The latter creates quite wide chine flats and even has lifting strakes shaped into the bottom.

This is really more like a fibreglass boat than a tinnie and is one of the reasons it rides so surprisingly well in choppy water!

Bottom and sides panels are made from extra strong 5083 grade alloy. So effectively, you're getting a 'plate' alloy boat with this little tinnie.

Another good safety feature is an extra layer of 4mm alloy over the bow forefoot to help protect the craft at this vital point of impact.

You'll notice there's no keelson because the Morningstar relies on its Vee'd bottom and angled strakes to provide steerage. This works well in practice and it also means the Morningstar is fairly easy to retrieve onto the trailer.

While the previous models we tested had a carpet over-plywood floor, this Cuddy model has a heavy-duty checkerplate alloy floor sealed to the sides. There are also self-draining bungs out to the stern sides, however, this is more for self-draining the cockpit floor when the boat is on a mooring, rather than underway.

So, the bungs are left in during normal boating and any stray water coming aboard is drained to the bilge and taken care of by an electric bilge pump.

Entry aboard the Cuddy Sports is made easy by a folding stern ladder (portside) and the stern landing deck.

Morningstar boats are unusual in that all interior items like seat boxes and even the cabin are separate modules fitted after the hull is built. This means hulls can be mass-produced and the configuration of the hull decided later. The factory in Taiwan

can mass-produce hulls in one go as it normally stamps out car bonnets and other car panels.

The Cuddy delivers a fairly clean cockpit space with seating for four adults in total. There is the rear folding lounge (two/three seater) and two pedestal seats behind the dash. The latter have seat boxes underneath and provide tackle drawers.

The checkerplate floor runs at one level right to the bows so there is no seats or bunk structures within the cuddy. It's a practical layout because it gives you plenty of room to dump your fishing bags, esky packs, etc. It also makes it very easy to stand within the cabin forehatch and work the anchor in safety.

The forehatch is a large, side-opening kind so you could even stand here and happily fish out the front of the boat!

Structurally, this is a solid little craft due to its solid panels and under-floor chassis. The bottom incorporates foam buoyancy and there is added strength from the rolled side decks and 3mm checkerplate cockpit floor.

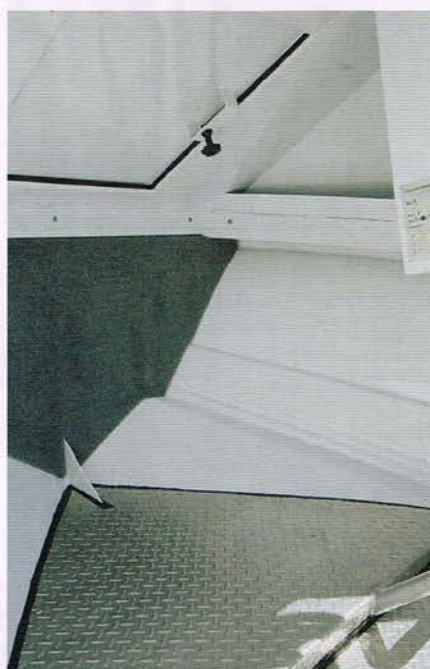
Hull warranty is five-years so this is added reassurance for buyers taking on a new brand.

Although somewhat taller off the road than her console sisters, the 460 Cuddy Sports is still an easy rig to tow. She should fit under most garage entrances and therefore can be kept under cover.

Hull weight is only 405kg so you only looking at a road trail weight of approximately 860kg. This puts the Morningstar comfortably within the range of cars like the Honda Accord (1200kg) Holden Cruz Wagon (1200kg) and the Mazda 3 Hatch (900kg).

Performance: We had a delightful spring day on Pittwater for our hit-out test of these new Morningstar boats. However, we didn't bother going offshore because the conditions were pretty flat due to an offshore westerly and we would likely get more bump from passing boats and around headland washes.

Running both Morningstar models over a range of conditions from quite



calm to a sea-breeze wind chop I was pretty happy with the result. The Cuddy is every bit as comfortable as her console sisters and is a particularly good choice of craft for the bottom-basher wanting to anchor up on FADs and reefs and fish in comfort.

Having a cuddy helm makes it easier to steer the boat in the standing position, which also means getting a better view of the water as you search for fish signs.

I also like the extra shelter provided by the cuddy structure. It really does work like an effective wind break even when you're back in the cockpit fishing.

While the driving position is pretty basic, you are provided with comfortable pedestal seats with footrest and slide adjustment. There's also a sloped dash with sports steering wheel, six-ganger switch panel and space to add a sounder/chartplotter.

Actually, some owners might like to mount the sounder/plotter on the top of the dash space because it might be easier to view from back in the cockpit.

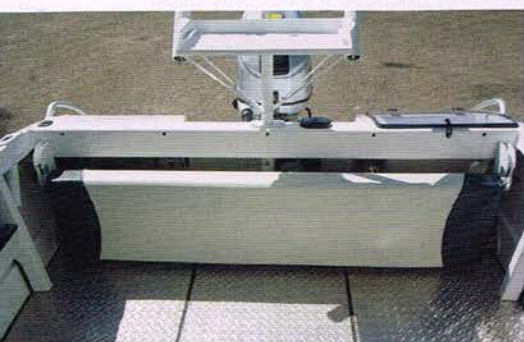
However, the fact is you can choose to mount it either way to suit your individual preferences.

What's especially pleasing about the Morningstar is its high level of stability at rest and sufficient freeboard for fishing. With a crew of two both to one side, the boat had some initial heel but otherwise was pretty stable for a craft of this size.

Whilst the Cuddy model is not as fast as the console models, we can put this down to the added weight and windage of the cuddy design. That said, the 460 Sports Cuddy handles well in a range of water conditions and is quite soft-riding. There is no doubt the gull wing bottom and foam inside helps to make for a softer, quieter ride.

The cuddy also delivers extra spray protection underway even through the windscreen is quite short. Interestingly, the runabout fitted with the same Honda 60hp motor was noticeably quicker but when it comes to hard-core fishing the Cuddy Sports is definitely the better choice of the two!





Power: The Morningstar 460 Cuddy Sports Angler is rated for single, long-shaft outboard 40–90hp. However, after testing the boat with a single Honda 60hp I wouldn't think you would want to go for anything smaller than the 60-size motor.

Powered by the BF60 Honda four-stroke Blast Torque we achieved the following GPS estimated speeds.

3500rpm	17 knots
4500rpm	20 knots
5500rpm	27 knots

These are quite acceptable speeds for a craft used for estuary/close coastal fishing and a bit of general day cruising. However, depending on crew loads you might want a bit more power in some instances. In which case the 75hp size outboard would be more than sufficient.

By the way, we found the Honda BF60 a really nice package. It's both smooth and quiet and looks really good on this boat with its silver colour and curved cowling. The Blast technology

also gives you added low speed torque, which means better hole-shot when you are trying to get the boat onto the plane.

They use an advanced ignition timing solution to develop more horsepower when it's needed. There's a bigger size propeller to help make the most of the added power in this Honda motor and the result is more get-up-and-go than you expect of a four-stroke motor.

The Morningstar 460 Cuddy Sports comes standard with a 60L underfloor fuel tank so you've got sufficient fuel for the average day trip. However, I'd be taking an added port-tank for any longer trips in open water just to give you added insurance.

I was pleased to see the boat comes standard with mechanical non-feedback steering, wire loom for additional accessories, power master switch and LED navigation lights.

Deck layout: The Morningstar 460 Cuddy Sports is nicely kitted out for coastal fishing with all the stuff you need like an anchor bow roller, split bow rail, self-draining anchor hatch and tee bollard. You also get a lockable lid on the anchor hatch and it's easy to reach the anchor from within the big cabin hatchway.

The cuddy area is really just a big open floor space but you could squeeze two adults in there if you were trying to get out of the rain and weather.



I would suggest you buy some of those inexpensive net bags from the chandlery and hang them up at the sides of the cabin so you can stow your life jackets and wet weather gear.

The cabin entrance is cut-away on the passenger side so access in and out of the cabin is pretty easy. The cockpit also has raised side pockets for fishing gear and you get a small shelf area on the passenger side of the dash.

The seat boxes provide sets of tackle drawers under the seats and additionally you have two rod holders aft besides the plumbed livebait tank.

As noted, the pedestal seats can be rotated for fishing purposes and there's welded footrests on the back of the seat boxes so you can fish facing aft.

In this boat you get a rear folding lounge that could hold either two adults or three kids. You get rear grab rails here but because the seat base is almost at deck level, it's not a particularly safe place to sit whilst the boat is travelling fast.

This is about the only issue I had with the Sports Cuddy (and Runabout) and I'm glad to say they're going to make the seat lower in future boats.

Our test boat also came with the optional raised bait board with additional two rod holders. This gives you drainage direct into the outboard well so it's a good solution for anglers doing a fair bit of bait fishing.

Overall, the cockpit is pretty functional for fishing and you get both the very practical and hard-wearing checkerplate floor as well as the toe-under gunwales for fishing against coaming sides.

I might mention all the Morningstar models not only meet the Basic standard under the Australian Builders Plate (ABP) but also exceeded the standard in terms of foam flotation.

Summary: Overall, Morningstar is offering a most welcome new product to the market that deserves more than

just a passing glance. Some buyers might be disappointed the pricing is more than just comparable to locally built tinnies of similar size. However, such a comparison is missing the point that this boat offers a much more advanced technology hull and is, in real terms, very good value for what you're really getting.

Build quality and the two-pack paint finish is first-class and probably the only disappointment is there is only one colour choice – white at this stage. That said, the boat looks pretty nice in white

and is an especially nice package with the silver Honda motors.

This is a pretty impressive package and a tribute to her Asian builders. Not surprisingly, there was considerable Australian input into the design and the result is the Morningstar 460 fits well into our boating conditions and style of boating use.

The Cuddy should be useful for family boating as well as fishing and because it's not too large, it will be a great choice for the retiree boatie fishing solo. And if you're in that category, just remember to wear a lifejacket because it's not only good safety practice but also a requirement in at least Victoria and NSW.

tbf

BOAT TEST ANALYSIS

Boat supplied with Honda F60 Blast four-stroke outboard, single-axle Mackay multi-roller braked trailer, tie-downs, self-draining checkerplate floor, folding rear lounge, plumbed live-bait tank, raised cutting board, three rod holders, transom ladder, nav lights, bilge pump. Price \$31,990 Enterprise Marine, NSW ph 02 9913 7767.

SPECIFICATION CHART

Brand	Morningstar	Quintrex	BarCrusher	Brooker	Surtees
Model	460SportCuddy	510SeaSpirit	500CR	525Cuddy	485Workmate
Material	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy	alloy
Style	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy	cuddy
Length	4.6m	5.3m	5.2m	5.3m	4.8m
Beam	2m	2.2m	2.1m	2.2m	2m
Rated power	90hp	100hp	90hp	115hp	75hp
Power as tested	Honda60	Mercury90	Yamaha70	Mercury90	Honda75
Hull weight	405kg	525kg	580kg	450kg	480kg
Fuel capacity	60L	95L	90L	portable	60L

STAR RATING

Finish	★★★★	Helm Set-up	★★★★
Fitout	★★★★	Fishability	★★★★★
Ride	★★★★★	Safety Features	★★★★
Dryness	★★★★★	Value for Money	★★★★★

*Data ESTIMATED by the TBF team when accurate information is unavailable. Maximum star rating 5 stars.