

## **The Slipstream mid-season report card**

I have only rowed in two other types of surf boats previously and my experience would be considered limited by the standards of most in this sport. If you can accept that and want to know my impressions of the Slipstream boat as a rower and boat captain, then please read on.

I will not comment on the details of the spec and compliance. Gavin and ourselves have done our best to comply with requirements from the beginning and will continue to do so. We currently have approval to race our boat and will enjoy doing so unless told otherwise.

We've been training and racing in a Slipstream for ten weeks now and snuck a few rows in at odd times before then.

The first thing you notice if you jump in for a row in the harbour (Perry and his bloody stopwatch) is that generally, the setup puts you in a very comfortable and strong rowing position, no matter what seat you row in. It lets you get on with the business of putting the power down. Not that one should, but the boat is far more stable if there is lunging at the front or leaning in/out at the start and finish of the stroke.

Our old boats would squat down a little in the stern with each stroke when putting the power down. Initially, when the Slipstream boat didn't do this, we thought it wasn't as responsive. We have since worked out that it is the stability and lines of the Slipstream that let it hold its clean trim whilst you put the power down without the inefficient pitching.

Take the boat to sea and the design really comes into its own. It remains exceptionally stable in decent seas and wind-driven chop (front or side-on). The bow lifts. It doesn't rely on the stern sinking to do this, it just has a bucket load of volume right up front that means it must lift and keeps the boat relatively dry. Like any boat, if you put it in the wrong place at the wrong time, you will cop a nasty one on the head, but the Slipstream does climb beautifully.

The big difference as a rower is on the backside of a wave. The stern and stability mean that you get back to a level rowing trim far sooner than we have experienced previously. In other boats, even when well coordinated as a crew, with plenty of power, there has been a feeling of bobbing. In the Slipstream, the bow comes down on the backside of the wave, and provided you all stay in your seats, the power is down and you are accelerating away without the bobbing.

The boat turns as well as any other we have rowed and whilst I believe there is a further change to be made to the keel, it is fairly minor and based on our experience going from no keel to the current one, I doubt there will be much influence on rate of turn.

As for the run home, the added stability has helped our crew greatly since we have always watched some of the more experienced crews make better use of the runs whilst we have struggled a little when hunting across them. The long waterline also has the boat running far better on far less too. Getting closer to home, the design has the boat accelerating well out in front of the wave.

The boat takes on and holds very little water, clears it quickly and as a former stroke now rowing second bow I am having fun making the quick (in my mind) dash up and down the middle.

The first boat (now Gavin's trial boat) was 30 kg heavy. The only areas we found this showed were getting off the beach, coming out of the turn and in the trim of the boat on the way home (a little tail heavy). Our current boat that we have now been in for four weeks, is on weight, feels as light/heavy as any other from a standing start and seems to have its centre of mass a bit further forward which has us trimmed a bit better for the runs home. Incidentally, despite having to work hard off the beach, we felt better off racing in the first boat despite the extra 30 kg, than we did in our previous boat.

I can't really speak for Dyso on the sweeping side of things but he keeps saying how good a boat it is and telling us we need to get the most out of it (as in our crew needing to settle in and row hard).

Whilst it puts you in a very strong and comfortable rowing position, it still takes a little while to settle into any new boat. It's the "happy to do starts blindfolded" kind of feeling you seek that is only just coming together for our crew (we have also had crew makeup and position changes this season).

There have been a few minor issues in terms of setup, but none have been unexpected (foot chocks, seat heights etc), and all adjustments have been made promptly and effectively by Gavin and his boys.

Whilst I am no boat builder, I can only suggest that the quality of build and workmanship is second to none. I make this comment on the basis of attention to detail and the inclusion of design features in key areas to avoid problems that seem inherent in other designs. It will take time for the Slipstream design to prove its longevity, but our small club was happy to make the big investment because Gavin has certainly started at the right place.

As a rower, would I go back to what we had previously? No.

As a boat captain frequently taunted/frustrated with a multitude of red herrings from many fronts (not from Gavin and his boys), would I go back? No.

Would I buy another one? As soon as we have the rest of the money together!

If you are looking for a new boat, the Slipstream is worth some consideration. Get in touch with Gavin for a row of his trial boat. Feel free to catch up with myself or the other Dicko boys on the beach if you have more questions. If you have a genuine interest and can't get into the trial boat, Gavin will arrange for you to have a row of our boat.

If you just want to point at the stern, tell me how wide it is and then ask me for a row to "kick the tyres", don't bother as I will be forced to do a Dyso and suggest you get used to looking at our fine boat from an angle you won't like on the water.

I don't get a kickback for the above, but I sure want it to come together for the Slipstream boys because like most others in this sport, they put in a lot of hard work and more to the point, they have a damn good thing going with their boat.

Get stuck in. You will enjoy the row.

Matthew Criss  
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