

Field Test

SMARTWAVE**XL490 Sport**

Marine Revolution Ltd
www.marinerevolution.com

Mike Shanks takes to Lough Neagh to try out a new inshore boat that would also be suitable for our large loughs.



Last year we reviewed the first Smartwave XL490 to reach Ireland. There are three basic designs in the series: the open boat, the central console, which was the subject of last year's test and the latest model called the sport fisher. It was the last of these that I recently I had a chance to try out on Lough Neagh.

The hull is made of moulded polyethylene thermoplastic. The makers claim it is "virtually indestructible, unsinkable and maintenance

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free." It certainly looks and feels very robust and surprisingly stable. It's five times stronger than fibreglass according to the maker. The hull

contains UV stabilisers and is impervious to corrosion, acid, petrol and I imagine fish slime and bait too. There is no gel coat, so there is no need to repaint it. We took it out when there was a good wave on the lough and it was possible to travel and move around the deck without constantly feeling the need to grip on of the rails.

The XL490 draws only about two feet so it can be launched just about anywhere. I was surprised that it arrived with a 60HP engine. This is the maximum recommended, but it should work well with a 25HP. It can carry seven adults. I have no doubt that it can cope with that weight, but for comfort and fishing I would happy with just four, one driver and three fishing.

The Sport version has a foredeck and split windscreen which provides shelter and comfort when travelling. It also has plenty of dry storage space. These boats have been designed so that once you have decided on your particular requirements, they can be fitted out to accommodate you.

The basic electronic pack comes as standard, including battery, insulator and switch panel. A fish finder and GPS can be added. An engine immobiliser is also standard.

Other options worth serious consideration include: underfloor fuel tank, canopy, auxiliary

engine bracket and boarding ladder. All accessories simply screw on to the hull.

The boat we looked at came on a trailer with super glide runners, which made launching and retrieving very easy indeed. It also had waterproof lights built in, another design feature which is very convenient.

This is the sort of boat that the experienced boat angler could tailor to their own needs without the need for the annual chore of maintenance. For the beginner, you can get the hang of how to use it without too much hassle and because it's so stable and handles so well you can get started with boat fishing in comfort and safety.

DETAILS AT A GLANCE

Price: Open starts from £4995
Central console starts from £5695
Sports Fisher starts from £8495
Trailer £1149

Powered in partnership with Yamaha.

Boat and engine packages to suit customer.