

review

Assegai 51

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The assegai is the short stabbing spear once used in battle by the people of Southern Africa, most famously by Zulu and Ndebele (Matabele) warriors. It was and is a fearsome weapon.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

Custom-built in Australia on Queensland's Gold Coast, the Assegai 51 *Resolution* is the weapon of choice for ardent game fisher and Bay of Islands Swordfish Club President Jeff Douglas. As far as Jeff knows, she's the only Assegai in New Zealand (there have been at least two others, but both are now back in Australia) and since boatbuilder Barry Martin has now retired, there won't be any new ones built. Together with another boat constructed alongside her, *Resolution* is the last Assegai.

Jeff took delivery of *Resolution* in December 2019, and while the boat has already proven deadly on New Zealand marlin, last year's game fishing season was severely curtailed by COVID 19. Northern New Zealand usually enjoys its best marlin fishing from February until late May or June. Jeff is looking forward to making up for lost time in 2021, including expeditions to the Far North, Three Kings Islands, Middlesex and King banks.

An experienced big game fisher, Jeff's previous boat was a

Caribbean 40, which he rated very highly, but for his dream boat he wanted something custom-built. His good friend and mentor, celebrated retired gamefish charter captain Bruce Smith, put him onto Assegai Marine, having himself fished aboard an Assegai on the Great Barrier Reef. Jeff and Bruce have been friends and fishing buddies for years – Jeff succeeded Bruce as BOI Swordfish Club President in 2018.

Bruce Smith is considered a legend in New Zealand game fishing circles, so his recommendations are not easily ignored. After making a few enquiries with Assegai Marine, *Resolution* was duly commissioned and the build got underway in 2016.

To ensure its boats can run at high speeds in comfort and safety, Assegai Marine use only high-quality materials, paying particular attention to saving weight without sacrificing strength. *Resolution's* hull is female-moulded, strip-planked red cedar sheathed in hand-laid fibreglass carefully sanded between layers. Bulkheads are solid plywood while decks and cabins are balsa-cored, epoxy resin fibreglass



sandwich with solid plywood under any deck fittings.

Four main engine girders run from the transom forward until they run out, fibreglassed in place. *Resolution* is fitted with twin C18 Caterpillars, each producing 1015hp, driving propellers in hull tunnels for the best possible shaft angle. She tops out at 34 knots and cruises comfortably at 18-22 knots, burning 220 litres per hour at 21.2 knots. She also performs very well in reverse – important when backing up on a rampaging marlin.

Bruce Smith has also played a part in naming the new boat. Jeff's Caribbean was called *Endeavour* after Captain Cook's first exploration vessel, so when Jeff was casting about for a name for his next boat, Bruce logically suggested *Resolution*, Cook's ship on his second expedition. *Resolution* it was.

With its flared bow, big cockpit, curved transom and high gunwales, the Assegai 51 is a classic American-style, flybridge game-

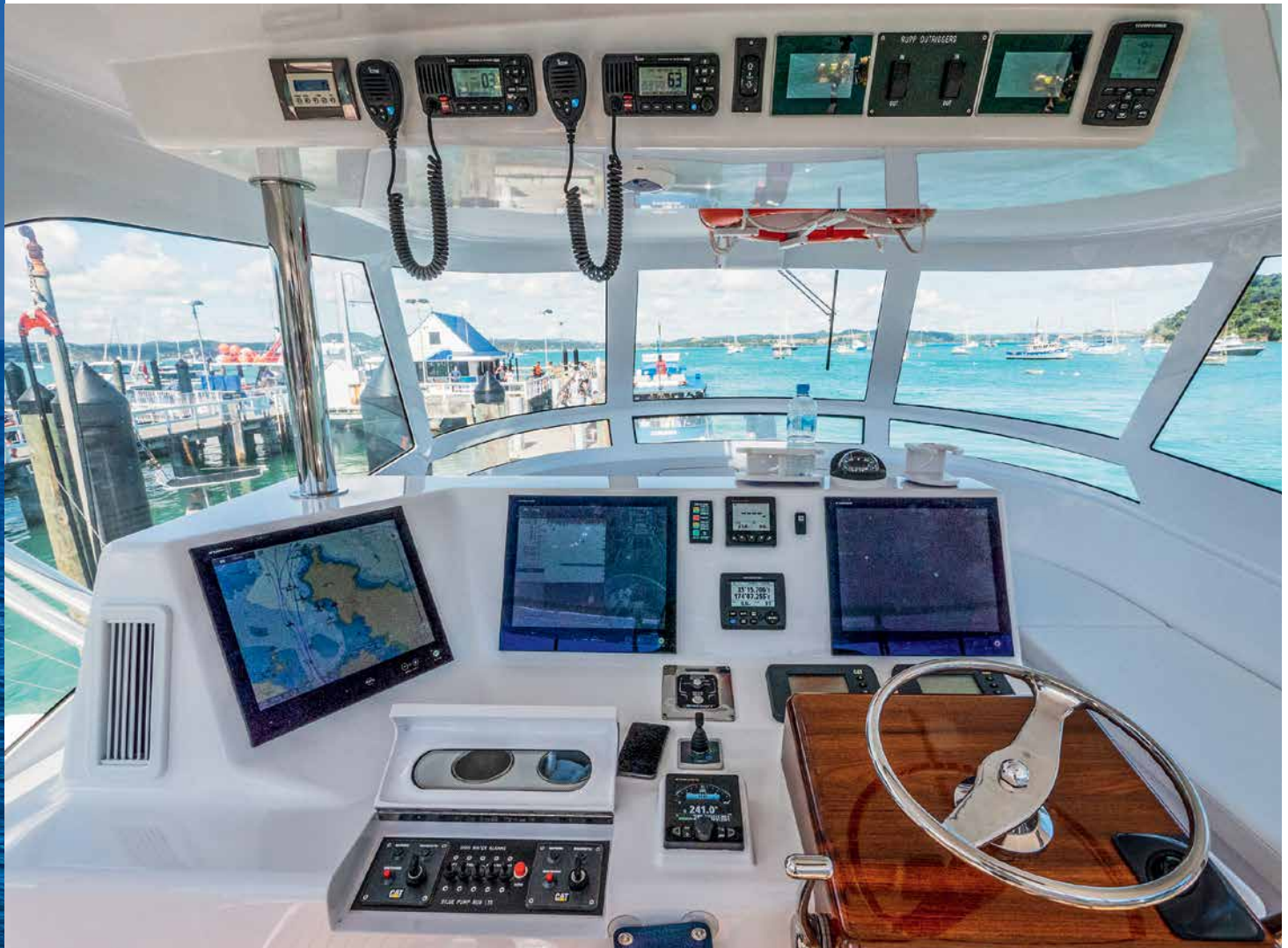
fishing launch. Most Assegai custom launches have open flybridges, some with tuna towers, but for *Resolution* Jeff specified a semi-enclosed flybridge furnished with clears across the back.

Home to the helm station, the all-white flybridge benefits from air-conditioning on a hot day, but with the clears rolled down and zipped closed, it is also cosy and dry in inclement conditions – important in New Zealand. The flybridge offers ample seating, storage and a large drinks fridge, with good visibility through the glasshouse. The lower tier windows – a modification Jeff insisted upon – let the helmsman see the foredeck more easily. Access to the flybridge is by a ladder from the cockpit on the starboard side.

The clean, well laid out helm console is vast, which is just as well given the three huge displays it must accommodate. These comprise a couple of Furuno Hybrid Touch MFDs and a WASSP multi-beam sonar unit, one of only a handful of this New Zealand-designed-and-built seafloor mapping sonar system fitted to a recreational fishing vessel. A custom mahogany panel for the stainless-steel steering wheel and Quick Shift controls gives the whole flybridge a lift.

Communications equipment, Rupp outrigger, Humphree trim tab and Muir anchor controls are tucked away in a ceiling console, along with various other displays. The ceiling also houses a pair of Mamiya Enoch Command Z-20 programmable electric reels controlling the vessel's teasers. Teasers – over-size, splashy





artificial lures – attract game fish close to the boat where they can be caught using conventional lures or bait.

Resolution's teasers are deployed via state-of-the-art Rupp hydraulic outriggers, the Mamiya reels setting and retrieving them at the push of a button.

The Rupp outriggers also deploy a spread of trolled lures or baits, complemented by a centre rigger on the flybridge for the shotgun lure position. Jeff tends to fish lures early in the season, before transitioning to tease and switch bait fishing a bit later on. *Resolution* has a large live bait tank in the transom wall equipped with a couple of removable tuna tubes, so it's well-suited to live bait fishing.

For tease and switch marlin fishing, Jeff likes to use

OPPOSITE *Resolution* cruises at 22 knots.

ABOVE The helm station is vast – even with three large displays, the console doesn't look crowded.

RIGHT AND BELOW The well-equipped galley and wet bar/entertaining area are situated forward. There's ample dry goods storage in twin pantries.



**RESOLUTION'S
TEAK-LINED
COCKPIT IS
OPTIMISED
FOR BIG GAME
FISHING.**





LEFT A pair of Mamiya electric fishing reels set into the hardtop ceiling control *Resolution's* teasers.



koheru as live baits, but jack mackerel also work well. Slow trolled live skipjack tuna is an excellent bait later in the season, which is when the tuna tubes should earn their keep.

Resolution's teak-lined cockpit is optimised for big game fishing. There's no boarding platform and the port-side transom door opens outwards to allow safe backing up. The cockpit is wide as well as deep with a Relax game chair at its centre. Rod holders are numerous, including vertical rod stowage on both sides to streamline clearing the gear after a strike, while the rocket launcher can accommodate up to six 50 or 80 Wide bent-butt Shimano outfits.

The cockpit bulkhead features a large freezer to port and an ice maker to starboard which discharges into an insulated locker from where it's easy to shovel ice into one of the vessel's underfloor fish boxes. Access to the steering gear and pumps is good, as is engine room access under the steps leading into the saloon. The cockpit is self-draining and the saloon floor level is higher than the cockpit sole, to prevent water in the cockpit sloshing inside.

The boat's interior is functional and clean, almost stark, with



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LEFT The saloon is laid out in classic sportfisher style with galley forward, seating down either side and unimpeded access to the cockpit.

ABOVE AND RIGHT Accommodation includes the master cabin in the bow and two guest cabins with twin bunk berths.



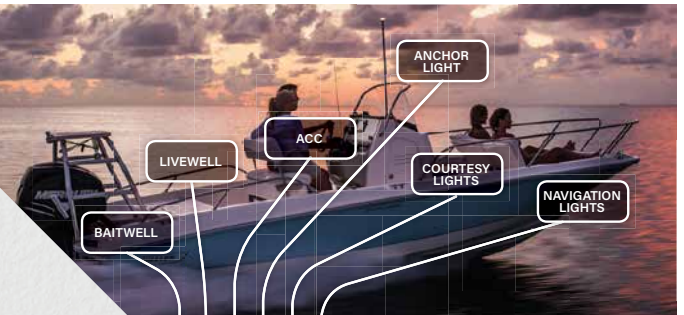
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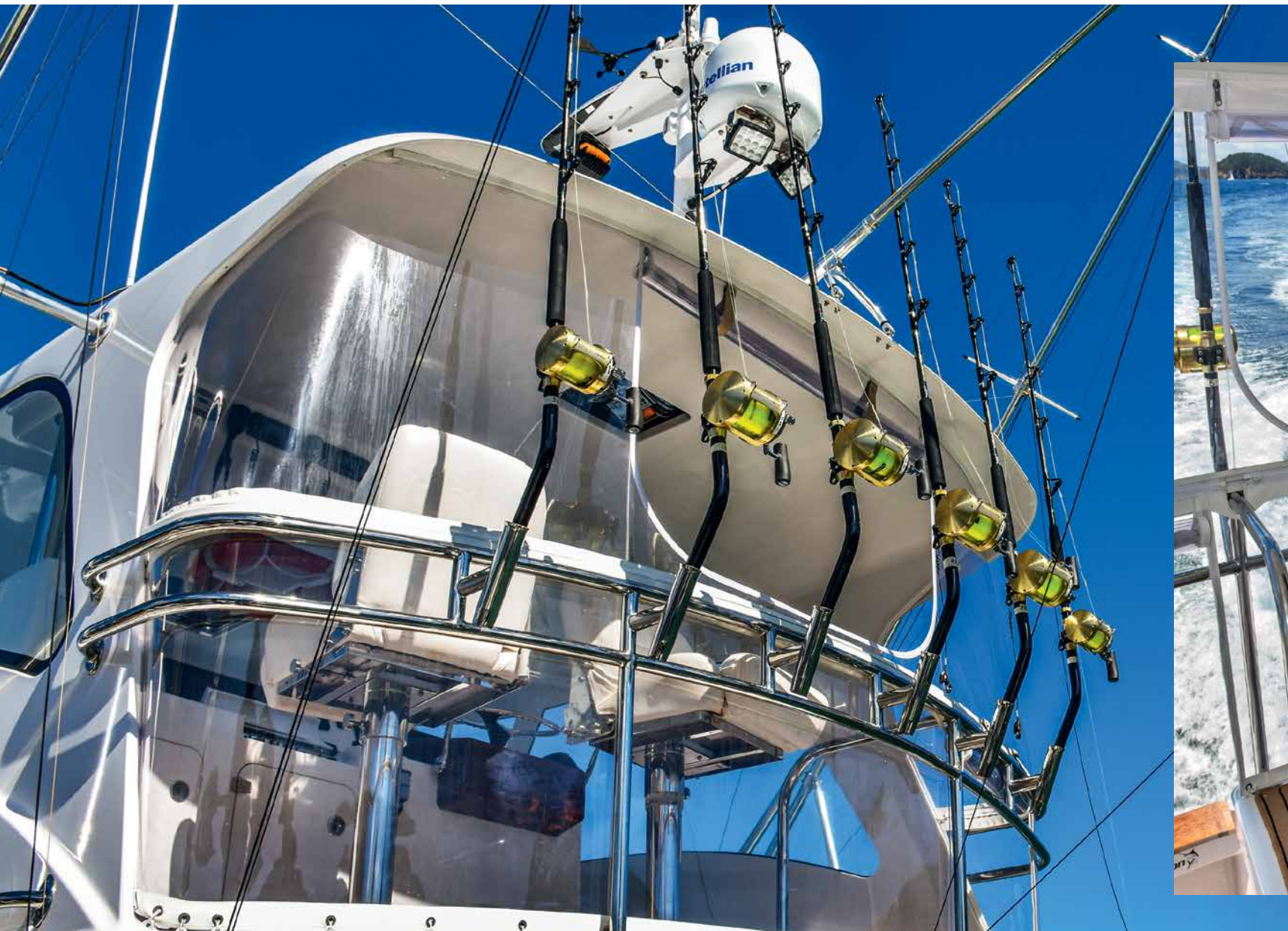
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...THERE'S NO
MISTAKING ITS
MAIN PURPOSE —
FISHING.

white the dominant theme. The whiteness contrasts with highly polished mahogany flooring, counter tops, tables and grab-rails. It works well, the dark wood softening the light, bright interior somewhat and adding a touch of luxury.

Resolution's air-conditioned saloon is laid out like most classic game fishers with the galley forward and seating arranged down either side. To port, a blue leather settee wraps around a drop-down saloon table addressed by a pair of fixed stools; to port the banquette bench runs along the port side aft. This layout makes it easier to monitor what's happening behind

the boat and to access the cockpit quickly if there's a strike – large double doors and a pair of electrically-operated rear cavity windows open onto the cockpit.

The couches also double as day-beds – game-fishing is often a waiting game where nothing happens for long periods, so the ability to get comfortable, maybe even lie down, out of the sun but within a few steps of the fishing gear is useful. The wraparound settee also converts to a double berth when additional sleeping accommodation is required.

During the season, says Jeff, this boat will spend considerable time away from its home port of Opuā, so it's well set up for stay-away fishing. The galley is simply laid out, but it's equipped with all the latest Fisher and Paykel electric appliances, heaps of refrigeration and generous dry goods stowage in two large pantries. A Sony flat-screen TV on the forward bulkhead is easily viewable from anywhere in the saloon.

Carrying enough fuel is unlikely to be an issue, with two fuel tanks forward and two aft totalling 4,200 litres capacity. Fresh water shouldn't run short either: *Resolution* carries 800 litres onboard and also has a water maker.

With comfort in mind, especially while fishing, Jeff specified a pair of Quick gyroscopic stabilisers, which he says make a massive





FAR LEFT Six bent-butt trolling outfits can be safely stowed in the vessel's rocket launcher.

LEFT The all weather flybridge is comfortable. In summer, the clears can be rolled up to enjoy fresh air, or take advantage of the air-conditioning.

ABOVE *Resolution* doesn't lack for equipment. Game fishing tackle is all top-end Shimano.

RIGHT A pair of Quick MC2 gyros are configured to work together.



difference when trolling in a seaway or stopped to fight a fish.

"We fish long days, especially during tournaments, so comfort is very important. Getting tossed about for hours on end is extremely fatiguing and tired crews make mistakes. Mistakes can lead to missed chances and lost fish. The stabilisers greatly reduce *Resolution's* pitch and roll, making her motion much less tiring on the crew. They're a fantastic addition which I am certain will help us catch more fish. They're also great when we drift-fish for bottom species, keeping the boat steady and level."

Compact and configured to work together, they easily fit inside the vessel's spacious engine room, nestled between the big Cats. They were sourced from the Quick agent in Australia and fitted by Assegai Marine, like most of the rest of the boat's engineering.

Jeff purchased the Furuno electronics package in New Zealand, which includes the WASSP multi-beam sonar and Furuno autopilot. It was shipped to Australia and fitted at the factory. The boat's wiring, plumbing, HVAC and engineering in general appear superbly executed – Assegai Marine has done a stunning job.

One of the things Jeff wanted from his new boat was an extra head – the Caribbean had just one. With *Resolution* he's got his wish with an ensuite head (no shower) for the master cabin in the bow. The day head is shared by the other two cabins and has the



Assegai 51

BASE PRICE
POA

PRICE AS REVIEWED
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MANUFACTURED BY
Assegai Marine
www.assegaimarine.com.au

HIGHLIGHTS

Purpose-built big game fisher is one of a kind in New Zealand

Extremely functional layout and very well engineered

Hull design and high quality build translates to excellent performance and seakeeping

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 15.54m

beam 4.85m

draft 1.3m

displacement (dry) N/A

construction strip-plank cedar, epoxy resin GRP, balsa core decks

engines 2 x Caterpillar C18 1015hp

cabins 3

sleeps 6-8

fuel 4,200 litres

water 800 litres

cruise speed 18-22 knots

top speed 34 knots

WATCH IT



vessel's inside shower in a separate shower compartment. The all-white bathrooms are clean and bright, each fitted with a small overhead hatch for ventilation.

The cabins also lack windows, which would compromise the boat's sea-keeping ability, but they don't feel dark. They each have overhead skylight hatches with screens.

The master cabin in the bow boasts a tall island double berth with ample storage underneath. Additional storage is furnished by lockers at ceiling height and a decent hanging locker. Guest cabins feature man-sized, bunk-style berths with under-bunk storage and useful lockers. The cabins are reverse-cycle air-conditioned for all seasons comfort.

The Assegai 51 is a game fishing weapon. While it's undoubtedly a comfortable weekender and family cruiser, there's no mistaking its main purpose – fishing. *Resolution* is Jeff Douglas' weapon of choice, his dream boat. He enjoyed the custom-build process and loved watching his boat come together, in person and via the internet.

Since taking delivery, Jeff's used *Resolution* regularly, fishing tournaments and enjoying stay-away weekends. With the meat of the northern game fishing season ahead of him, Jeff can't wait to properly put his new boat through its paces – *Resolution* is up for it, whatever the season brings. **BNZ**