

Rush

With the Hansa Powerade Fish focusing all eyes on fast K2s suitable to rough river racing, a brand new boat has just hit the market. Dave Macleod got his hands on the new Knysna Racing double "The Rush".

Phwoah! This is the sexiest boat I have laid eyes on in many a year! Sleek slimline, aggressively styled with bold deck cutaways, all of which is reinforced by striking deck colouring that accentuates the cut-aways, and this is one boat that will turn heads at the time trial!

Aimed at the intermediate and advanced paddlers, this new boat features plenty of new styling, but also seeks to take their old Clone K2 (and its various updates over the years) to a new level. The popular perception is that the Clone '07 was hampered by too much rocker being added to the original Clone hull, which had much of the V-shaped characteristics of the Eagle-generation.

The Rush hull design is really interesting. It has the sharp v-grooved line down the nose and tail that is great with straight line tracking and speed, but then you see the inclusion of the contemporary design philosophy of adding significant buoyancy to the nose and tail of the boat, instead of concentrating it around the cockpits.

In The Rush the nose tapers out sharply to a point 1,1m from the nose, where it then assumes an almost cylindrical hull shape to a similar point in the tail, and the v-shape gives way to a smoothly rounded hull shape, still slightly v-pitched, and without any sign of a flat track down the centre of the hull.

The consequence of this extra buoyancy spread out along the full length of the hull is a very buoyant design that will cater for even the heaviest of crews, and with significant volume forward and aft, this should help keep the nose up in rough water, and stop the bucking or "porpoising" as you go through a drop.

The deck adds to that buoyancy, making it river friendly with a chunky square deck raised 40mm at the nose and tail tapering up to 80mm around the cockpits, in a neat "box" design that will add strength to the deck while bringing really striking aesthetics to the deck.

The cockpits are also set high up on the deck and not recessed in any way, to help keep them above choppy water, and enabling racing crews to get moving after a portage without having to fit splashcovers first.

At the back a standard heavy duty rudder assembly occupies the full stern assembly of the boat (and in fact sticks out just a little too far at the bottom, and I'd worry about it snagging on rocks or weir walls - if this were my boat I'd take an angle grinder to take 5mm off the bottom and rake back the rudder assembly).

A neat innovation is the footplate setup that replaces the pedal footbar. A lot like a surfski footplate, this allows the entire length of the foot to rest on the plate and will easily cater for a pullstrap. Neat

and effective, and once it is set up, it can be wedged into place at the bottom making it even more solid to press against.

The back footrest is what is now a Knysna Racing standard glass footrest catering for two pumps, all neatly pitched back 30 degrees to allow for a more natural resting position for the back paddlers' feet and better operation of the pumps.

Both seats are relatively snug fits - you'll need to be anatomically 350mm broad at the hips to be comfortable in this boat - and it offers a deep seat that cradles both front and back to offer stability on bouncy water. Interestingly the back seat seems to be roughly 20mm lower than the front seat (where the hull is naturally narrower). This may well be a case of personal preferences and stability choices, and I am sure the manufacturer will be able to offer a slightly raised back seat on demand.

The first impression is one of stability. I am always cautious about slipping into a narrow double, as this is usually a recipe for several hours of agonizing hip twitching before a crew really settles into a boat, especially any of the Eagle family which are regularly used as a source of club timetrial mirth when lent to novice crews.

Shifting the extra buoyancy forward and back of the boat definitely adds to its stability, and also makes it a truer ride, far less prone to bobbing under acceleration or cutting through a wave. It sits nicely on a wave, and the v-tracking in the nose and tail contributes to solid tracking, together with the rocker, which has actually been straightened from the Clone 07 design.

It sits down solidly and holds its line easily, but still has the rocker needed to make it very maneuverable and responsive to both pedal and paddle.

As a slimline double it has sacrificed some of its above-the-waterline flare, and as such does not have significant secondary stability, and while I didn't have a chance (mid-winter!) to try it out in rough water, the very pleasing stability of the basic ride never brought the secondary stability issue into question.

It's quick! You'll notice the water displacement starts very early on because of the volume up front in the nose. It might feel fractionally slower off the mark than a sprint boat, but it gets up and planning very quickly, and the buoyancy spread over the entire length of the boat creates a really pleasing long glide.

It's a craft that has a unique feel and personality. Once you have let it guide you and your strokes start to take on some of the distinct characteristics of the boat, it becomes quite mesmerising, and I could fully understand a long day on the Vaal for example becoming really pleasant in The Rush!

The Rush will be great for an established intermediate crew wanting to extend their performance and ability - offering them top end performance with significant stability.

Don't be surprised if a bunch of them race into top ten places on the Fish, because that's exactly

where this craft is designed to excel and reward top paddlers.

Oh, and you'll love having this car on your roof racks! The sexiest looking K2 around by far!