

The Journey to Choosing an O'Brien 47 as our next Charter Boat

In 2006 most of our charters in North Queensland mother shipped with very few live aboard days. The rest of the year was filled with day charters running out of the Gold Coast. This was happily achieved and done well by our 40' Blackwatch Castille 11. The following year everything changed as our customer base en mass requested live aboard charters for North Queensland. It soon became obvious to retain the work, the old boat which was not even two years old at that time had to go. We simply did not have enough room. Marvellous!

My wife and I, along with Captain Clyntn Braithwaite, and Captain Deen Beech all put our ideas of what we required in the hat, and I who had the power of veto commenced the search.

I live on the Gold Coast and work in Brisbane, so many of the major boat builders are on my doorstep, and I certainly did not discount the second hand market as this alternative is certainly far more economical than a new boat, but often come with their own set of mysterious problems. I looked at purpose built timber game boats with large interest only to find their build times would exceed the eleven months before the next season started which meant we would loose the charters. This style of boat takes approximately eighteen months to build. Way too long for my time frame.

Most production boat builders who I spoke to had little idea of what I was on about. In fairness to them in my opinion, they do not build boats which can easily do well in excess of 1000 hours a year let alone hold together.

Our want was simple. To have a strong seaworthy vessel capable of comfortable and economically cruising at around twenty-five knots with a soft dry ride. We also had to have a two head boat with twin upper and lower bunk rooms, a stateroom plus a substantial galley with big cupboard space. Add to this all the inclusions of a state of the art battle wagon.

The Townsville Tournament came around so my wife and I were off to meet Castille 11 and the crew on the final day as we were fishing the next few days at Bowling Green. As we walked down the Marina to our boat which was surrounded by game boats I saw not one but two O'Brien 47's. Now at this stage I had not seen my boat or crew (these people become family after a while) for quite some time and I could not get past these O'Brien's. I checked them inside out and back to front. It was time to talk to the boys. The boys being Deen,

who skippers the boat in FNQ, and Clyntn who skippers the boat everywhere else, and Tinka. We quickly got the formalities out of the way and tore the O'Brien's apart.

Well, what a breath of fresh air they are. The boys watched the O'Brien's thoroughly during the tournament and researched them via their skippers. These skippers have all worked together at some stage and known each other for many many seasons. The result was very positive. My crew knew my expectations and were quite proud of themselves to have the answers to my hundreds of questions and all were then confident we had found the boat to build.

The next step was naturally to approach the builder. In my experience a lot of these builders have been building boats forever and change is somewhat difficult if not impossible. Our new boat's layout was to be very different to anything Peter O'Brien had built before. Our initial meetings were long and to the point. Like two bulls in a paddock. There had to be give and take on both sides. Remembering this venture for me to spend this much money on a boat had to be better than right. The day soon came and the build deposit was paid.

In summary the amount of research we did along with Peter and his staff having a full understanding of our requirements before we started was the icing on the cake.

Castille 111 was launched on September 1st and I have nothing but admiration for the O'Brien Boat organisation. My skipper and crew are now the envy of the charter fleet and our season has no vacancies for charters, this is the biggest tick a charter operator can have.

A special thanks to Peter O'Brien, staff and my extended crew for a job better than very well done.

Mark & Stephane Ripper
Castille 111