Searching for the Ideal Tender or Jet Ski Lift – long version

What would we do without our 'tenders'!

Our Ubiquitous Tenders, Dinghies & Jet Skis

Whatever its purpose, our tender, dinghy, or jet ski is indispensable for boaters. But when it's not needed, what to do with it? Hang it on davits, tow it, lift it onto the swim platform, crane it on deck or, if it's a smaller inflatable, deflate and stow it?

Fig.1 AB Mares Centre Console

For four years, I towed an AB 3.7 metre rigid inflatable (see Fig. 1), behind my Grand Banks 42 Classic. I habitually looked aft, hoping not to see only the broken painter trailing in the wake, or in a following sea the tender surfing, threatening to whack me the stern, or a strong wind getting under it and flipping it over. Towing worked well when my wife and I were younger and nimbler - launching and retrieval at the boat ramp was 'part of boating'! But when the total time to launch, retrieve, wash- down and store on a trailer, exceeded an hour, I searched for other options, but wishing to retain the same centre console tender The RIB's weight would determine the final choice and capacity of the 'lifter' I needed. With its 20HP outboard, full fuel tank and spare fuel can, battery, anchor, flares, life jackets, etc., the scales tipped at **254 kgs**! I needed a *powered* 'lifter'.

I found the 'perfect' solution, but only after a lot of research, which was not an unenjoyable task.

What Are The Options?

They are:

A. davits on the marlin board or swim platform

B. davits on the transom
C. a crane on the flybridge or fore deck
D. a hydraulic lift fitted underneath an existing marlin board
E. a hydraulic platform, to replace an existing marlin board, or
F. a Presto Marine hydraulic lift fitted onto the existing marlin board/swim platform.

Options *A* to *E* are summarised below, generally in terms of increasing cost, *A* being the most affordable and *E* probably being the most expensive.

In the end, the **Presto Marine** hydraulic lift, stood out from the crowd, particularly on cost competitiveness, superb Swedish engineering and manufacturing, ease of installation, quietness, and speed of deploying and retrieving, remote controlled, no components permanently in the water, aesthetics, and outstanding operational performance.

This is the story of my research.

A. Davits on Marlin Board/Swim Platform

These may be permanently mounted, removable or swivelling, while others may be supported partially by stern rails (if fitted) and powered manually, electrically or hydraulically.

They fall into two broad types:

(i) Less expensive bolt-on versions, manually operated, easy to install but with limited lifting ability (say <100 kgs), some of which require removal of larger outboard motors, fuel tanks and other heavy gear, before lifting.

(ii) More expensive, motorized, reinforced units, capable of lifting approx. 350kgs.
There are a number of 'off-the-shelf' options available, and many are custom made. See Figs 2 & 3.

Fig. 2 Marlin Board Mounted Davits

Fig. 3 Marlin Board Mounted Davits

The advantages of marlin board mounted units are they are the least expensive of the powered davits, can be electrically operated from the mothership's 12 or 24-volt power supply, installed relatively easily and inexpensively, generally require no strengthening of the boat's transom and none of the operating systems are underwater (savings on annual maintenance costs and easy access to components for servicing or repair.

The tender must be stabilized/tied down to prevent swaying motion when underway.

Their primary criterion for selection will likely be the strength of the existing supporting brackets underneath the marlin board/swim platform. Will they be strong enough to handle the cantilevered additional weight of the davits and tender (when full of gear!).

The disadvantages, for some owners are aesthetics, blocking the view whilst relaxing on the aft deck, impeding access into and from the dinghy and difficulty in fitting a protective, waterproof cover around the lifting cables of the davits. This is a good option for owners on a limited budget who can readily handle the disconnecting and reconnecting of snap shackles or snap hooks when launching/retrieving the tender in choppy seas and high winds – sometimes a bit of a challenge for 'more senior/less nimble' owners.

B. Davits on Transom

These can be off-the-shelf, or custom made to suit an owner's requirements, use electric or hydraulic power, and are mounted on the strongest section of the transom. See Figs. 4 & 5. Cables or high strength straps lift/lower the dinghy, requiring extra care with waterproof covers, to avoid rain filling the dinghy (the bung or drain plug can inadvertently be left in place), increasing the load on both the transom and lifting gear.

Fig. 4 Davits Mounted on Top of Transom

Fig. 5 Davits Mounted on Bottom of Transom

Their distinct advantage is the tender can be lifted well above the wake of the boat, plus avoiding wave interference in following seas. The aesthetic downsides, access restrictions and the disconnecting/reconnecting snap shackles challenges associated with davits on marlin boards/swim platforms, mentioned above, equally apply to this option. As before, the tender must be tied down to prevent side-to-side swaying motions underway.

Prior to selecting transom-mounted davits it is imperative the transom be checked by a marine surveyor, or an experienced boat builder, to ensure its structure is capable of carrying the substantial additional forces introduced by the cantilever effect of the davits and tender, especially the higher stresses experienced at initial extraction of the tender from the water.

Options A and B are well proven and have much going for them.

C. Davit or Crane on Foredeck or Flybridge

Single arm davits or cranes using hydraulic or electric power, installed on the foredeck or flybridge is another option. See Figs. 6 & 7. When not in use, they are stowed, low profile on the deck and are designed to handle larger tenders, the higher pricing reflecting the added lifting capacity. Even though they are powered, launching and retrieval of a tender with a crane can take some time, especially if being undertaken single-handed. When launching or retrieving in a choppy sea or windy conditions, given the single point of lift, the tender will swing and pivot, making it difficult to control. The setup requires chocks on deck - a very safe way to stow the tender on board when underway. A supporting tube is frequently installed in the boat, firmly attaching the hull and deck structure, and the telescoping crane fits into or onto it. Deemed by many owners to be easier to use than marlin board or transom mounted davits, they have much greater reach and height. Check for any reports of deck cracking or leaks associated the crane you selected before purchase. This is another well-proven option.

Fig. 6 Davit or Crane on Foredeck (in stowed position)

Fig. 7 Davit or Crane on Flybridge (not stowed)

D. Hydraulic Lift 'Cradles' Fitted Underneath an Existing Marlin Board/Swim Platform

Hydraulic and electric lifts, fitted with cradles or chocks on which the tender sits, have become popular in the last decade or so, especially with advances in electronic controls and superior reticulating-arm engineering. See Figs. 8 & 9.

Fig. 8 Lift 'Cradle' Underneath Marlin Board

Fig. 9 Lift 'Cradle' Underneath Marlin Board

Lifting cradles such as these resonate with powerboat owners who are perhaps retired or less nimble, and yachtsmen who have transitioned to a power boat, and wish to continue boating, without the hassles of towing being the only option. Hydraulic lift cradles can

handle tenders of substantial weights, and owners can opt for a larger tender or a centre console RIB, instead of a traditional inflatable dinghy, while retaining easy launch, retrieve and storage.

Regular preventative maintenance of this option is crucial as there is a complex mechanical and hydraulic system permanently underwater. Repairs, particularly anything more than minor, necessitate a haul out. Tie downs of the tender to the mothership are essential for secure storage when underway, to prevent swaying/side-to-side motions. This is one of the more expensive options, and installations are generally professionally executed.

E. Hydraulic Platforms

This option is an extension of the cradle lift, being a submersible swim platform, when lowered into the water is used as a tender launch, capable of handling loads up to approx. 1200 kgs. See Figs 10 & 11. The hydraulic mechanisms are frequently off-the-shelf kits, but the platform itselfcustom made to marry-up to the boat's moulded-in deck. Installing a hydraulic swim platform can be done during construction of the boat or be added as an aftermarket project. This perhaps explains why boat builders are increasingly offering a lifting swim platform as a new boat option, when access to the rear section of the hull and transom areas are optimal, before steering, exhaust, and other mechanical, electrical, and hydraulic systems are installed.

Fig. 10 Hydraulic Platform Being Installed (note chocks)

Fig. 11 Hydraulic Platform with Tender Secured

The lifting gear may look complex but is basically two marine-grade stainless steel multi-jointed lifting arms, bolted to the transom, carrying a fiberglass platform. Each arm is raised/ lowered by a hydraulic cylinder, to keep the platform level during movement. The hydraulic pump together with control box, are mounted inside the hull, e.g. in a lazarette or in a cabinet or under a bunk in an aft cabin. Hydraulic cylinders and hoses are mounted on the hull, underwater. Submerge the platform all the way down and you drive the tender, dinghy, RIB or jet ski right onto the chocks, touch a remote-control button, and lift everything out of the water. Simple! This option tends to be the most expensive when retrofitted but is becoming increasingly popular on larger power boats. Excellent storage capacity and functionality. All work and do an excellent job.

But the final option F, I believe addresses most if not all other lifts' shortcomings, has some distinct advantages and has proven to be a well-executed and cost effective, retrofit design, which is exactly what I was seeking. At the end of my search this is the option I selected for my Grand Banks 42 Classic and here's why.

F. Presto Marine Hydraulic Lift

This is a simple hydraulic lift and storage solution. It launches, retrieves, and stores a tender, dinghy, RIB, or jet ski effortlessly. It comes in two lifting capacities - 200 kgs and 500 kgs benefits from benefits from patented design, has in-built safety features, and Swedish high-quality manufacturing, using 316 stainless steel. The lift can be factory-installed in a new vessel or retro-fitted to a wide variety of boat models. Over five hundred have been installed on boats manufactured by Fairlane, Princess, Grand Banks, Sunseeker, SeaRay, NordWest, Delta, Azimut, Grandezza, etc. worldwide.

The service from Presto Marine is first-rate, including airfreighting the lift from Sweden to Australia. It arrived within 10 days! See Figs. 12, 13, 14 & 15.

Figure 12: Exquisitely simple Presto Marine lift.

Figure 13: Lift fitted onto the existing swim platform of my Grand Banks 42 Classic.

There are two types available, for both the 200kgs and 500kgs models, a *fixed* (F type) for boats with narrower (<600mm) platforms /marlin boards (see Fig. 14) and *rails* (R type) for boats with deeper (>900mm) platforms (see Fig.15). The R type allows the tender to slide inwards and be locked down close to the transom. Both types are easy to install.

One person may operate the lift using a small hand-held remote control (retained on a lanyard around your neck). The tender can be launched in *less than 1 minute* and retrieved and stowed in *under than 2 minutes*; all done silently, safely, speedily, and securely.

Fig. 14 L200 Fixed Lift on Narrow Platform/Deck

Fig. 15 XL500 Rail Lift on Deep Platform/Deck

My Reasons for Selecting the Presto Marine XL500F Lift

1. Ability to lift 500kgs – double the weight of my tender (254kgs); a satisfying safety margin.

2. The lifting arms and rams do not appear above the aft deck cap rail (see Fig. 13).

3. The lift brings the centre of gravity of the tender closer to the transom, improving weight distribution, mothership handling, storage and increased safety in following seas.

4. Only the two stainless steel/powdered coated lifting arms and rams are exposed to the marine atmosphere, both designed to be well above the waterline; all other operational components are tucked away in the dry lazarette.

5. During operation, the hydraulic cylinders or hoses do NOT enter the water - barnacle fouling, and possible corrosion or electrolysis, are not problems.

6. Unlike Options D & E the Presto Marine lift eliminates underwater maintenance issues and associated higher costs.

7. Boarding and disembarking the tender is essentially unobstructed.

8. Drifting off and sliding back onto the chocks are easy for one person driving the tender. When retrieving, the hydraulic arms can be raised slowly to ensure the tender is correctly positioned onto the chocks, before disembarking and raising to the stowed position.

9. Replacing the two centre brackets under the marlin board with two stronger stainless steel brackets, allowed the XL500F model to be fitted easily and safely onto the existing marlin board. The new brackets were tied internally to an in-hull stringer. I probably did not need to do this, but I am a conservative boat owner who likes to be at ease when underway and asleep on-board!

10. With the professional guidance and services of Pro Marine WA Pty Ltd, the installation was straight forward; the electrics and hydraulics are essentially ‘plug and play’, and the remote control for the unit comes pre-programmed.

11. The total cost was approximately 50% of two quotes I received for Option E, the hydraulic platform.

12. The last reason is less easy to articulate. Grand Banks' reputation worldwide is that they build traditional, trawler -style power yacht that is in every way, high class, using time-honoured workmanship. It was important that the ageless lines and profile of the traditional Grand Banks design remained unimpeded. The quiet dignity of the design of this well-found vessel should not be interrupted. I spent many hours contemplating what would be the equivalent of Grand Banks in the world of hydraulic lifts and storage. Options A-E are undoubtedly suitable for many owners, are progressive in technology, and continue, in their own way, to define contemporary tender lift engineering. On the other hand, the Presto Marine lift, I felt is a hallmark of the fusion of old and new world craftsmanship creating a safe, enduring, and classic style . Together they portray attentive construction and solid design yet embodying a modern technology solution.

Finally, motoring from and returning to *Grand Spirit* in my tender, now uplifts my soul even higher – perhaps the greatest test and finest reward of all.

Fig. 16 The Mares RIB on PM XL500F Lift on Grand Spirit – a perfect marriage.

Fig. 19 Timeless lines & profile of the Grand Banks design are maintained

Conclusion

I was impressed with the people at Presto Marine, their helpful replies to my (many) queries, the very efficient delivery service, the ease of installation, the performance of the lift itself and the very secure on-board storage.

Following successful commissioning and trials, I sought appointment as the company's exclusive representative in Australia. This has been formally agreed and I would be pleased to answer any queries from readers. Contact details are:

Name: Denis Glennon AO

Tel: 0418 923 103

Email: denis@denisglennon.com

Website: https://prestomarineaustralia.com/