

Making your anchoring stress-free

Accurate anchoring, whether in a crowded bay or in an attempt to get over the fish, is not always easy. Over the last few years we have had Stressfree systems in our Stabicraft centre-console project boats, and I have grown to appreciate their many advantages.

In the last two boats, we have had a free-fall facility and it has proved invaluable, especially when targeting fish. Getting the boat in just the right position when deploying berley is often essential, especially when trying to draw fish out of a patch of foul. Get wide of the mark with your boat positioning, and you end up wasting a lot of berley distributing out into unfertile territory.

The secret is to pick the spot where you want the ground tackle to be positioned and get it down on the bottom quickly. This is made more difficult without free-fall – which is where the Stressfree product has come into its own.

The same applies when anchoring up in a busy bay. Having worked out the likely effects of wind and tide, and your neighbours' location, you want to be in a good position and hold it, staying clear of nearby boats.

The Stressfree winch in the last boat, a Stabicraft 1850 Frontier, was a Stressfree Mini Freefall, designed for boats up to six metres. The unit fitted snugly in the anchor-well; we had 80 metres of braid warp plus six metres of 6mm short link chain – plenty for most situations we found ourselves in.

I have seen some Stressfrees mounted on the foredeck, a practical solution where there is limited space in the anchor locker or the unit is being retro-fitted. On bigger trailerboats I have also



The Stressfree unit in the NZ Fishing News project boat is compact, fitting unobtrusively in the anchor-well.

seen the situation where the Stressfree is fully enclosed, creating a casting platform over the top of the anchor well. Matt Watson's big Stabicraft Got 'Em On is an example of this setup.

Manufactured from 316 stainless steel, Matt's unit had a holding capacity of 1800kg and a maximum lifting capacity of 195kg.

When picking the anchor up, I always run the motor – standard practice with any capstan operation. In free-fall, the Stressfree draws around 25-30 amps, with up to 55 amps drawn when under load. The unit is rated to 80A, with a built-in circuit breaker should the pick get stuck and create an overload situation.

Our Stressfree units have been trouble-free, as the brand name suggests, and to the best of my knowledge, those who have purchased our old vessels have found the same.

Stressfree has just released a new model, the Quick 50 series, designed specifically for New Zealand conditions. Improvements include: a beefed-up base plate; the addition of a higher-torque, double-anodised gearbox; an increased drum-shaft diameter from 18mm to 25; and a wireless remote being added as an option.

Stressfree's founder and engineer, Dean Forster, spent time in New Zealand talking with boat manufacturers and anglers. The even more rugged Quick-50 series was the result, designed to meet the local demand for deeper anchoring in rough-bottom conditions.

While most people associate Stressfree with drum anchoring winches, a look at New Zealand distributor Absolute Marine sees several other handy devices using the same technology and built-to-last construction. These include cray-pot haulers that allow an easy one-person operation and fit most boat gunwales, and a longline hauler, available in several free-fall options, that can be customised to suit individual cockpits and needs.

- Grant Dixon 



The latest Stressfree anchor winches, the Quick-50 series, were developed and manufactured in Australia, and have been upgraded to suit New Zealand conditions.

To check out the full range of products, go to www.stressfreemarine.com.au or www.absolutemarine.co.nz.