

Kayak Fit Out

# Custom Console & Accessories

By Dave Brace



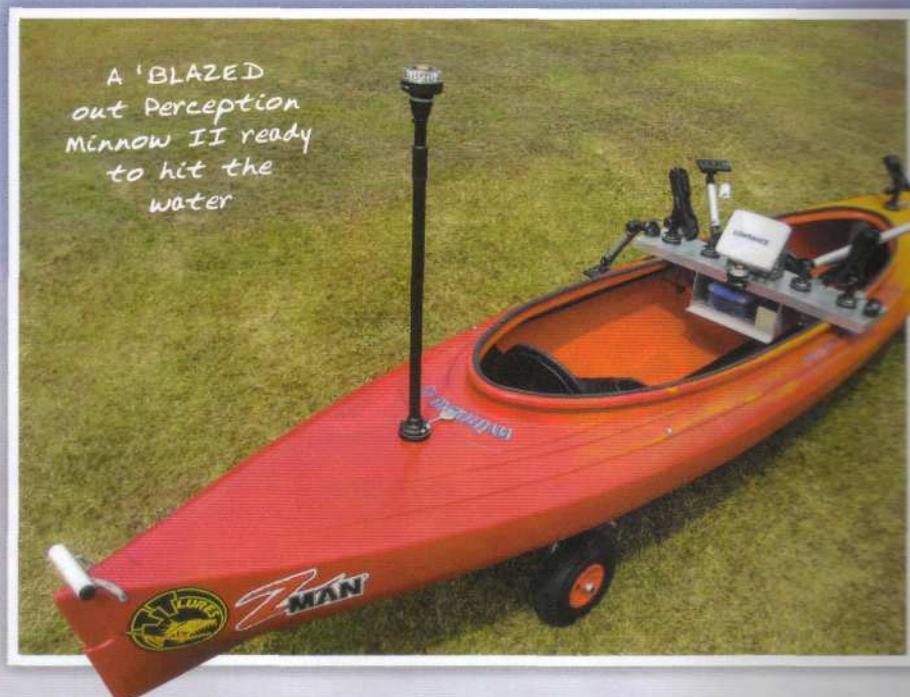
*Inspired by a recent trip to a couple of Queensland's northern barramundi impoundments chasing metre plus barra from the seat of my Perception Acadia, I thought a larger vessel would be more comfortable to target these iconic sportfish and also to spend longer sessions on the water targeting smaller Australian native species.*

The challenge was set to locate a Perception Minnow II in good condition along the east coast of Australia. This miraculously turned out to be more luck than anything else and after only searching for 4 weeks I had my yak. The Minnow II is a 3.9 metre long double sit in kayak that is as rare as hen's teeth, as Perception ceased manufacturing this particular model many

years ago. You can expect to pay at least \$700 to \$1200 for a good Minnow II, remembering it will be secondhand and pre-loved, including scratches from the previous owner.

As mentioned in a previous story in Issue 8 of BLADE, 'Yakkin' Big Barra', my preference is for sit in kayaks over sit on kayaks. One important attribute of sit in

kayaks is that even though quite narrow in width, being seated lower in the water provides a lower centre of gravity for better balance, making them fantastically stable. Being rather sleek vessels they are also able to cut through the water with ease, requiring minimal effort. The variations and brands of kayaks all have their pros and cons, however choosing a kayak that



A 'BLAZED  
out Perception  
Minnow II ready  
to hit the  
water

most suits your needs, within the budget you have at the time, is what really matters.

Excited to have this new vessel added to my small fleet, I began to clean and remove the scuffmarks and rectify any deep scratches and gouges from the kayaks undercarriage. This was achieved with the use of a portable gas stove, a spatula, butter knives and a soldering iron. From experience, the best results have come from rotating and heating two butter knives until they are glowing red from heating them over the portable gas stove and then using them to smooth out any defects and deep gouges, being careful not to distort

the hull and discolour the plastic. A leather glove also becomes very handy, due to the knives maintaining their heat whilst you work on the kayak. It is also advisable not to use your best cutlery from the kitchen draw unless you are a carefree bachelor.

With the cleanup process now complete, it was time to plan the kayak layout in terms of accessories. To my mind this is where careful preparation and organisation, along with thoughts of what is needed to complete the kayak fit out, become paramount. Sketching a diagram on a scrap piece of paper – outlining where you would like to arrange and attach rod holders, fish finders and camera mounts

to the kayak – is a great way to see what is needed and where. This is especially true when it comes to fixing battery boxes and transducers for the fish finder.

Getting some assistance from a mate or using duct tape to help you hold the fishing rod holders, fish finder and any other accessories temporarily in place, while you paddle the grass in the back yard, is a sure way to locate the exact positions of these attachments from your sketch. Consideration of the fishing line angle from the tip of your rods to the water whilst trolling, in relation to your paddle stroke, is something that shouldn't be overlooked also.

The Minnow II, being a double sit in kayak, had its own complications, as there are minimal areas to fix these attachments and accessories to. Contacting Darren Dales Welding & Fabrications from Glasshouse Mountains in Queensland, I was able to have him manufacture a custom made, aluminium console, designed to do justice to the ideas in my personal drawings. The biggest hurdle was how to attach the console to the kayak, with it also being easily adjusted along the cockpit and easily removed for transportation.

As crazy as it seems, many sleepless nights were had prior to coming up with a solution. Thinking outside the square can sometimes give you the best results; after all, the attachment of the console was of great importance. Attaching four small

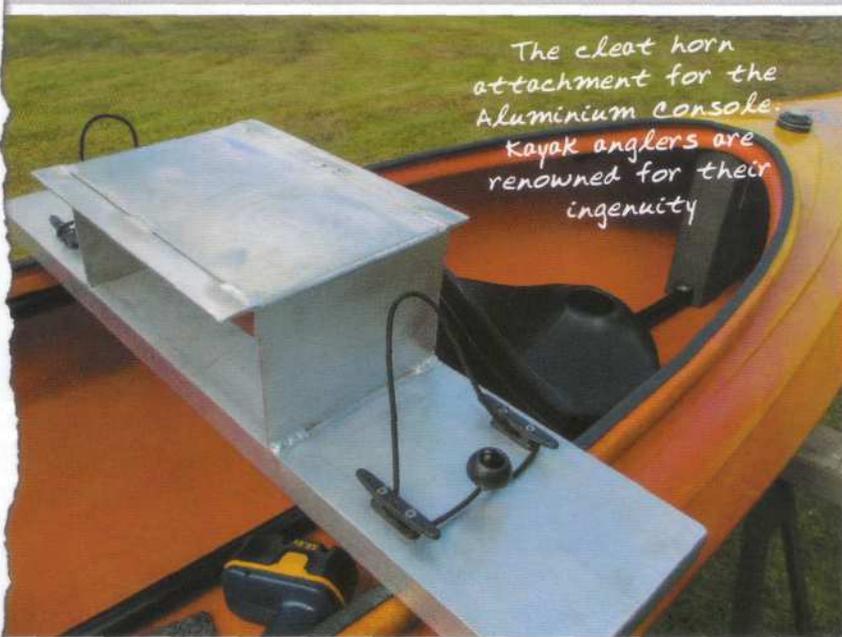


The Perception's  
first fish. Dave  
with a solid  
impoundment  
bass

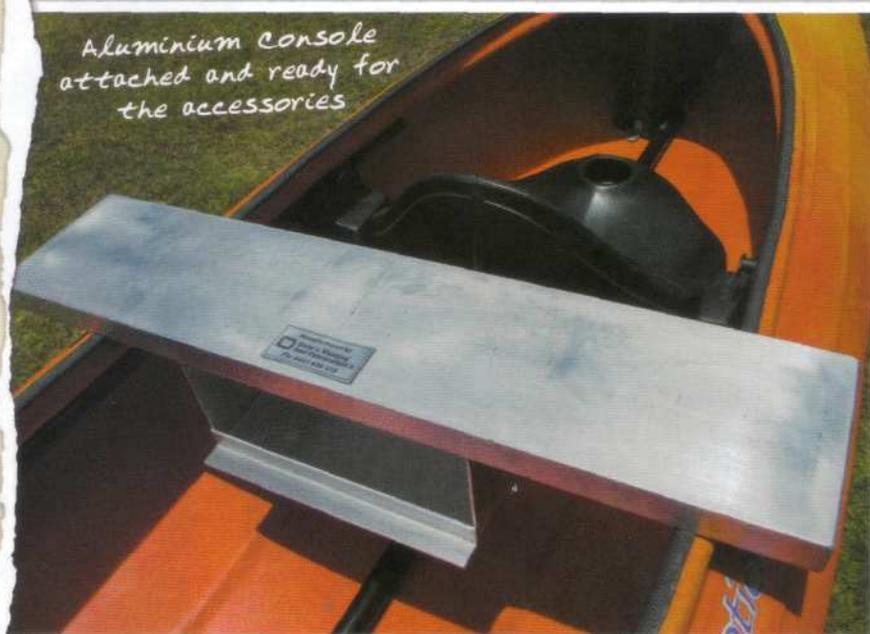
cleat horns to the underside of the console, which slide into the lip of the cockpit and are attached with the use of some bungee cord, fixing it to the inside rails of the kayak, created an excellent resolution. Tethering the console and the accessories mounted on it to the kayak's inner rails was also vital in case of a roll over that could possibly occur whilst on the water. The loss and replacement of these accessories would most definitely hurt the back pocket and turn a great day into one to forget. Eight weeks on and the planning and preparation stages were finally over, yet still the kayak had not yet seen water. I was growing more anxious every day, wanting to see how this kayak would perform on the water.

Presented with a blank canvas, it was now time to attach RAILBLAZA's many accessories to 'BLAZE' out the kayak and add the finishing touches. RAILBLAZA's StarPort mounting system offers the angler so many options from their wide range of kayak mounting products and accessories now available from their 2013 catalogue. Lucky enough to trial some of RAILBLAZA's products whilst yakkin' for big barra last year, I put the Rod Holder II through its paces whilst trolling for these barramundi and found this particular accessory fantastically strong and durable. If you're planning to target larger species of fish whilst trolling, it is advantageous to cut out a piece of cutting board with a hole saw to act as a large washer to suit RAILBLAZA's StarPort base. This is placed on the inside of the kayak and the StarPort mounting bolts go through this washer to 'spread the load from the fish's initial strike. You can also adjust the reel's drag accordingly.

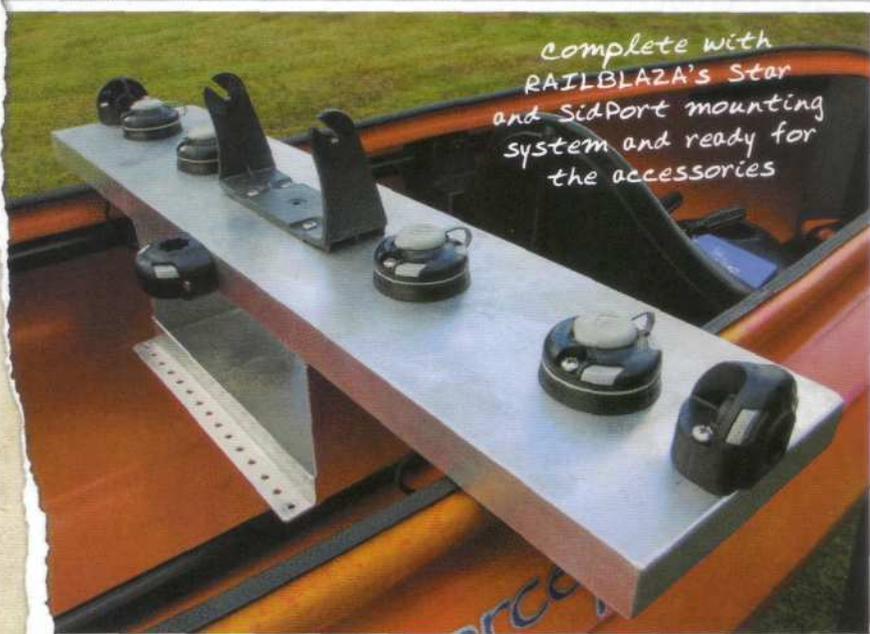
An innovational idea was using RAILBLAZA's 150 Platform Boom, designed for mounting accessories such as HD videos and digital cameras, in a new role. The 150 Platform Boom was used to mount the fish finder transducer, via a RAILBLAZA SidePort. This has proven to be unbelievably effective since the kayak's initial trial on the water. The adjustable nature of this Platform Boom makes this accessory extremely versatile. The platform of the boom can be turned 360 degrees, with the second elbow adjustable to lift the transducer from the water to prevent it from being fouled with thick weed. The boom's first elbow, closest to the SidePort,



*The cleat horn attachment for the Aluminium console. Kayak anglers are renowned for their ingenuity*



*Aluminium console attached and ready for the accessories*



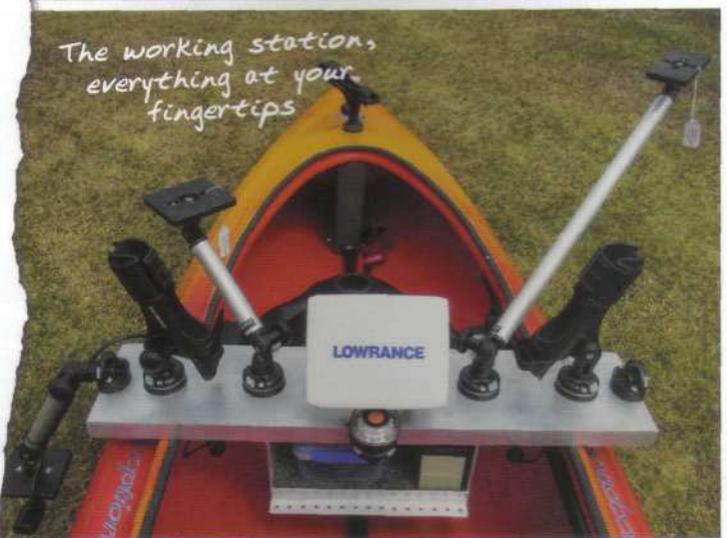
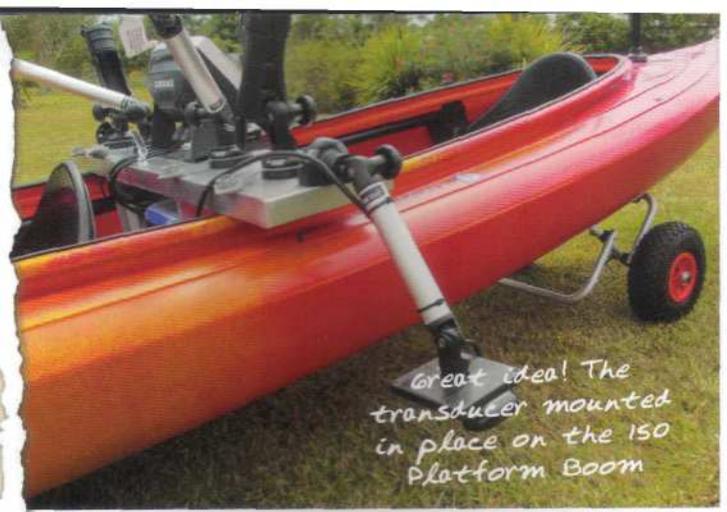
*complete with RAILBLAZA's Star and SidePort mounting system and ready for the accessories*

can also be swung upright for easy transportation. More importantly, if the Platform Boom or transducer were hit by a submerged obstacle, this same elbow has a perpendicular 360 degree adjustment to prevent damage to the boom, the fish finder transducer and the kayak. With these adjustments of the 150 Platform Boom, it can also make light work of adjusting the transducer's depth in the water to compensate for the water surface conditions and the weight on or in the kayak.

On the kayak's maiden voyage I couldn't have been happier with the design of the kayak layout and how it performed in the water. To top off a great day sharing good times on the water with my youngest son, Chris, we successfully targeted Australian bass and golden perch in my local impoundment. No matter what kayak you have or what accessories you choose to have on it, at the end of the day all that really matters is the enjoyment and pleasure you get from being in Australia's great outdoors, venturing out on the water with a mate and just wetting a line.

### 10 Hot Hints and Tips

1. Carefully plan where you are going to attach accessories to your kayak.
2. Be mindful of where you'll attach future accessories.
3. Dry paddle your kayak with accessories temporarily attached or held in place with duct tape.
4. Measure and mark twice, cut and drill once.
5. Utilise a centre punch to centre the drill bit on the mark, especially when drilling into aluminium.
6. Use pilot hole drills to reach the desired drill diameter for the bolt or screw that will be used.
7. Drilling with a blunt drill bit into plastic will avoid the drill bit from biting and pulling.
8. When fixing a screw into aluminium, after drilling, place a small amount of grease on the thread.
9. Soldering wiring joints and covering with heat shrink will give you the best results and longevity.
10. Enjoy your new decked out fishing kayak and remember to tether your accessories with leashes.



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