



# TackleTour

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## Featured Review



## Watercraft Accessory Review

### Get into fish faster with the Pontoon enhancing Launching Gear



Launching Gear

Date:	7/05/04
Tackle type:	Watercraft Accessory
Manufacturer:	DaBob Prec. Sheetmetal
Reviewer:	Zander

**Total Score: 8.83**

**Introduction:** Pontoon boats are terrific for many types of fishing, and while they are easy to navigate on water, they certainly can be challenging to lug around on land. Unlike float tubes, pontoon boats can range from 60 to 150lbs depending on how they are loaded, and can be arduous to setup or carry from your vehicle. DaBob Precision Sheetmetal addresses this very dilemma with an innovative product they aptly named the "Launching Gear."

Launching Gear Specifications	
Overall Length (Flat)	31"
Material	1/8" thick aluminum
Weight	7.6lbs
Foldable	Yes
Locking	Yes via locking pin
Tire	10" Diameter
Additional Features	Made for various boats (no drilling required), Plastic wheel has Delrin no rust bearing
Price	\$120.00

**The problem with pontoons:** Pontoon boats are the boat of choice for moving rivers, or small lakes where it isn't necessary to traverse vast distances. At most locations anglers are not allowed to drive directly to the water's edge, and it doesn't make sense to pay to launch an inflatable, so pontoon owners find themselves making multiple trips to carry all the various components to the water's edge, or setup their boat and attempt a combination of backbreaking drag and carry techniques. Even when the pontoon is set up just feet from the shoreline the final 5-10 feet usually requires some pushing and dragging, both of which tire out the angler and damage the pontoon. It was for this reason that Dana and Bob of DaBob Precision Sheetmetal employed their alloy fabrication skills and created a effortless way to



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make pontoon boats transportable on land. Thus the Launching Gear was born.



Introducing the innovative Launching Gear pontoon accessory

**Impressions:** Upon initial inspection the Launching Gear looked straightforward in design, and that's certainly a good thing when it comes to watercraft accessories. We have found that the more complex the design, the more likely it is to fail. The Launching Gear consists of three main components, a mounting bracket, an adjustable arm, and a high quality bearing supported wheel. DaBob offers a number of different Launching Gear models, all of which are designed to fit a particular brand of pontoon boat. While the Launching Gear can fit many more types of boats with its adjustable bracket design it is guaranteed to fit the vast majority of Leigh Outdoor, Creek Co., Bucks Bags, Outcast, Dave Scadden, Copper River, Orvis, Bad Cat, and Water Skeeter boats.



The wheel is reinforced and the actual wheel sports is a high quality rubber tire (30 PSI)

**Materials:** The Launching Gear is made out of heavy duty aluminum and the finishing is superb. There are no sharp edges to cut yourself on, and all the tooling and bolts are well out of the way of your inflatable pontoons. The Launching Gear itself weighs a total of 7.6lbs, surprisingly light for such a big accessory. The majority of weight comes from a very rugged looking wheel and rubber tire. DaBob could have used a rigid wheel in the Launching Gear's construction but opted for a



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high quality rubber tire for softer and easier maneuverability. The wheel spins freely thanks to a high quality Delrin bearing which feels more like it should be on a pulling duty on go-cart rather than mounted on a inflatable boat wheel.



The clever bracket system installed on the frame of our boat in under 3 minutes

**Real World Test:** A fully loaded pontoon boat can weigh a lot out of the water. I know that when I go fishing on our Water Skeeter test boat I can easily add 40lbs once throwing in all my tackle, camera equipment, extra clothing, and the essential sixpack. The best way to test the Launching Gear was to install the accessory and see just how much it improved our complete launching experience.



Adjusting the Launching Gear requires a quick pull and insert of the locking pin

**Installation:** Saying the launching gear is quick and easy to install would be a understatement. This accessory is designed to fit your brand of pontoon like a glove, and that's exactly what it did. You could easily mistake the Launching Gear for just another section of your pontoon.

Before setting up your pontoon flip over the seat section and position the Launching Gear with the wheel facing the back of the boat, adjust brackets so they fit your frame and tighten. The two clamps hold onto the frame securely and are curved with no edges so there is absolutely no damage done to the pontoon's finish. All in all it took about three minutes to mount the Launching Gear. You can remove the Launching Gear in the same amount of time, or you can leave it permanently

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mounted on the base of your seat bracket. It takes very little room when folded and is just about as easy to stow, so we recommend just leaving it.



**Adjustments:** Once you mount your air chambered pontoons the launching gear sits right off the ground, and when folded it will rest just inches in the water. There are three adjustment holes on the Launching Gear. One is for a fully flat position, the second is for a slight angle (good for when you have mounted an accessory basket or trolling motor plate), and the third is the open mode for terrain transport. Making adjustments is straightforward and requires the repositioning of a locking pin the desired hole setting. The locking pin has a locking arm so it easy to remove and insert, no screwing is required. One minor issue I noticed was that when fully flat or fully open the holes wouldn't line up perfectly, this is because the settings do not match up with the natural arc of the hinge. To compensate for this it is possible to customize the Launching Gear with a small rubber stopper glued in below the arm. This helps you line up the arm flat in the water.



Before loading the pontoon you adjust the Launching Gear to it's open position

Once the boat is in the water you can choose to reposition the Launching Gear flat so it rides outside the water or leave it in the lowered position. The boat does track with slightly less resistance when the Launching Gear is stowed, but I was surprised how little effect the Launching Gear had on the overall speed of the pontoon. Perhaps it is due to the fact that these boats are made for running water and are built for stability rather than speed. Of course if your destination is a shallow river bed rather than a lake you will want to stow the Launching Gear in the closed position to avoid contact with the bottom. The only real concern with the launching gear is learning how to stow the Launching Gear once your in the water. You need to reach down and pull out the pin, the wheel then floats and adjusts the arm up into position, and you reinsert the pin and lock the clip. This can be done sitting in the pontoon or wading but is a little difficult at first. At first our team considered recommending a spring loaded set of pins so you could push down and have the Launching Gear just pop into different settings, but then we realized that when fully loaded the pressure exerted on these tabs would be too great, this is why the solid locking pin is still the best choice. After some practice I did grow accustomed to the entire procedure and can do it rather hastily now.



With the Launching Gear open your pontoon is as easy to navigate as a wheelbarrow

**Rolling along:** I'll always remember how difficult it was to carry, load, and launch our Water Skeeter pontoon, but luckily for me that's all it is now...a memory. Once armed with the Launching Gear our pontoon boat was painless to navigate on land. By holding onto the foot braces the pontoon can be maneuvered like a wheelbarrow. It is easy to pull the fully loaded pontoon uphill, or push it quickly downhill. Because the Launching Gear is positioned in the exact center of the pontoon it is well balanced and does not tip easily. I was able to navigate steep uneven terrain without difficulty.

Thanks to the Launching Gear it is now possible to park the car, assemble the pontoon, load it up completely, then push or pull the boat right into the water. During our tests many shore anglers and inflatable owners inquired about the product. Because of the seamless integration many people thought it was part of the original pontoon, and were amazed by the uncomplicated and swift launch process.



The Launching Gear allows anglers to push the pontoon right into the water and launch in seconds, no more pulling or pushing fully loaded boats

**Durability & Maintenance:** The Launching Gear's requires just about zero maintenance. The Delrin bearing is sealed and is designed to resist rust. Even fully loaded there is absolutely no flex in the Launching Gear's durable aluminum arm. The entire mounting plate is riveted and all brackets are "tig" weld. After wheeling it in and out of the water the wheel will get dirty. Once you get home simply spray the wheel with a hose. This entire wash down process is a lot faster than cleaning off your pontoons if they are dragged up through the sludge. The only routine upkeep you need to do is periodically add a little bit of grease to the main arm joint. This ensures the arm will continue to swing without any resistance.



Once in the water and stowed the launching gear doesn't affect maneuverability negatively at all

**Additional Features & Uses:** There are some side effects to using the

Launching Gear, and to our agreement they are all positive. When mounted the Launching Gear becomes an anchor point for the pontoon and actually adds additional center stability. The Launching Gear also prolongs the life of your pontoon boat by reducing unnecessary damage to the bottom of your air chambered pontoons. Finally, the extra portability and freedom allows anglers the ability to bring more on their trips. Because you are now loading at your car it is possible to bring more tackle, equipment, and additional beverages if you are so inclined.

Ratings:

Launching Gear Ratings(?/10)		
Construction/Quality	The Launching Gear is a well constructed product, and DaBob Precision Sheetmetal uses their expertise to design and build a quality product	9
Performance	The Launching Gear performed exceptionally well. Not only was it easy to use, but it drastically reduced the pains associated with pontoon ownership. It is now possible to launch out of the back of your car with just about every piece of tackle you feel like loading on your boat. The only issue was the difficulty of stowing the launching gear once you launch, and this just takes a little practice to get used to.	8.5
Price	The Launching Gear may seem expensive for an accessory but it really isn't when you consider the high quality craftsmanship, and the backbreaking work it's going to save you if you are a avid pontoon angler	8.5
Features	The Launching Gear is a straightforward tool, and a feature in itself. It simplifies the launching process dramatically	9
Design (Ergonomics)	The design is excellent, and it is easy to use with the exception of the stowing in the water, but we don't see many recommendations there	9
Application	The Launching Gear is a great product that not only reduces your launch problems, but will allow you to bring everything with you, as well as get to the fish faster. While it can't guarantee you will catch more fish, it will certainly give you the opportunity to do so quicker and easier than ever before	9
<b>Total Score</b>		<b>8.83</b>

Pluses and Minuses:

Plus	Minus
☺ Excellent design!	☹ Takes a little practice to stow the Launching Gear in the water
☺ Innovative product!	
☺ No more back breaking launches	
☺ Ability to carry more tackle	

**Conclusion:** DaBob Precision Sheetmetal may not be a tackle manufacturer you have heard of before, and that's because this company specializes in high quality metal work rather than the building of traditional tackle. It took the expertise and exactness of metal specialists to design and manufacture the inventive Launching Gear. This product addresses the problems associated with pontoon



ownership, and does away with them in spades. The high quality construction and ease of use associated with the installation and operation of the Launching Gear astounded us. No more multiple trips from the car to the water, no more pushing or dragging the pontoon into the water, and no more sacrifices in what to bring and what to leave in the car. The Launching Gear is all about freedom. Freedom to load up whatever tackle you choose, and freedom to simply wheel it into the water and get to fishing. If you are an avid pontoon angler then you definitely should look into enhancing your rig by adding the Launching Gear. While this particular element of tackle can't guarantee you will catch more fish, it certainly will give you more opportunities by putting you into them a whole lot faster.

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