

G'day lads

We've been watching Seabreeze.com for weeks- waiting for a good weather window, to fish for marlin off Port Stephens. But with the crazy weather patterns this summer, there hasn't been many of those! Finally, good weather was predicted for today.

Darryl and I left Wahroonga at 4:30AM, trailering my boat and picking up Col at Berowra on the way. We launched the *Carolyn Jane* at Nelson's Bay and headed straight for Tomaree, hoping to catch mackerel for livebait underneath the cliffs. No luck, although Darryl took a bonito, which we kept for skip bait.

With a big squall line (and plenty of rain) to the nor' east, we set a course for the fish attractor, about ten miles out. On arrival there we found a couple of boats had preceded us. As a result the mahi were already counting their losses, and not keen to strike our lures. Plus, the seas were too bumpy for speedy travel. So out went two marlin lures on the 24 kilo Tiagras, and we turned onto a bearing for the famous 'Car Park.' This location is south east of a fold in the sea floor on the edge of the continental shelf. Although the fold doesn't look particularly spectacular on a sounder, it generates a nutrient-rich upwelling, which attracts and holds countless millions of baitfish through summer and autumn. Over the past few years the Car Park has become arguably the most consistent marlin fishery on the NSW coast.

After 40 minutes or so the squall dissipated, and the wind died down. We were in 75 fathoms. It was decided to bring the lures in, so we could travel to the Car Park at full speed. The boat was in neutral, and Col's lure was wound nearly to the transom, when what appeared to be a small marlin rose behind it. Darryl's lure was still out so I put the boat in gear, and took her up to seven knots. After traveling a hundred metres or so, the marlin struck.

We quickly realised this was NOT a small marlin! After a hard fast run and a frenzied series of jumps, the fight settled down to the usual slugfest. Darryl was on the rod, with Col giving some helpful tips:



After ninety minutes both participants were feeling the strain, yet were still in the game:



After two hours we had the fish circling the boat, but the leader stayed tantalisingly out of Col's reach. At one point it made a fast dive under the boat and Darryl moved like lightning, plunging his rod into the water so that the leader just cleared the prop. At the 2:15 mark the fish rolled, and we realised it was in serious distress. Darryl pumped it to the boat and Col attempted to revive it:



Sadly, that didn't work. We brought the fish aboard (which was quite a challenge!) and measured its girth and length. From Col's length/weight chart we estimated the fish- a blue marlin- at 150 kilograms:





With the crew quite sad to be unable to give such a magnificent creature its freedom, we headed back into Port. Styrofoam boxes and ice were purchased, and the fish was cut up and taken home.

A magnificent day on the water, and one that we'll never forget. All credit to Darryl for his great rod work and to Col, for keeping a cool head during the excitement. Cheers, Andrew