

35 Kilo Cobia

By Doug Hanning

Cobia was not a fish on our minds as we prepared for a social club dive with the freedom divers of Brisbane, we had not seen any for quite a few weeks now and we had assumed the season was over. Today we were more intent on finding those elusive wahoo which were now appearing in good numbers off the coast, it was looking like a another bumper year according to the fisherman.

The weather had turned out to be quite marginal but we had organised two boats so it was still a goer, why stop now. After a pounding run out a couple of the guys didn't feel too good so our ranks were a little reduced in the water, fortunately it did not take too long for the sea to flatten out as the day progressed, first up thou she was a bit on the lumpy side.

We headed north to a famed wahoo spot, where we commenced a series of drifts in good visibility. A few wahoo were spotted but they kept their distance as is often the case, so instead the guys concentrated on getting a feed from the reef below, taking some tusky's and parrots.

As time progressed it became apparent that things just weren't going to happen for us on the wahoo front today there simply just wasn't enough current to really get things pumping, so we ended up moving south to some shallower reef areas.



I jumped in on a bait filled ledge, it was so thick it really was only a matter of time before a kingie or two made an appearance. Sure enough moments later in they came, Scott from the club was closest and seized the chance to unload his brand new 1.5m gun on a kingie pushing 10 kilos. The speared fish was held in the area when an entire school of kingies began circling around it. I dropped down taking careful aim with the intention or at least hope of securing a double header with my Rabitech. The spear left the gun and smashed the brain of the first fish then out the other side and into the mid body of the second fish, I was pretty happy with the result.

After checking a few other local haunts producing little we decided to jump in on some shallow rocks in 12 or so metres for one last go. Knowing the area holds cobia I made sure I was first in the water, first in first speared. It only took a couple of minutes before I had found a school of cobia, it was a large school of about 20 – 25 fish all around the 10 – 15 kilo mark they were moving sporadically around

the reef following a the rays in the area, coming in and moving away with what seemed little purpose. I yelled to the other guys encouraging them to get in the water, I could see they were scrambling for their gear.

The school had appeared again in the distance so I quickly began finning over at the surface, trying to close the gap before making a dive. Looking towards the back of the school I noticed a large dark shape, the size of it making me believe it must be a shark. Not interested in sharks I focussed my intention back on the school of erratic cobia, when a realisation came over me, why would a shark follow a school of Cobia? They often lead cobia but I have never seem them follow before. I turned looking back towards the tail end of the school the dark shape was now close enough for me to conclude, that's one big arse Cobia! I began the chase immediately, my veins now pumping pure adrenalin, I had no idea of its size all I knew was that this fish is big. Diving quickly I found myself at the same depth hence swimming horizontal at the fish when I could sense from his movements he was about to back away, I had to act quickly with three or four big powerful kicks I closed the gap as much as possible before extending my Rabitech and sending the shaft on it's way striking the fish a maximum range.



The reaction of the cobia or lack thereof reconfirmed to me that he was large, he didn't even flinch from the shot and he did not even run instead he just joined the school and continued to swim around quite merrily. I was left at the surface a little perplexed, do I just wait or do I apply tension, I did however know whatever action I would take it was going to be a long bitch of a fight. The decision was taken away from me as eventually the rope became taught enough for the float to catch in the waves the cobia then realising something was not quite right, as so began the titanic struggle.

The thing with cobia is they are not actually that hard to retrieve but once you get them to the surface they will resist to the bitter end and that can take a while as they are very hard to kill. Brett had jumped in the water with the still camera after I told him how big it was, as Brett was taking pics I noticed the flopper was now exposed and only holding by some skin, I quickly grabbed another gun from the boat to plug it a second time. I was just fortunate they do have a tough skin not like a mackerel or wahoo which I am sure would have torn free in that situation. Shot number two was solid but it did little to slow him down and now we had two shafts and two rigs to deal with, Brett was nearly collected trying to get close for a pic and on the grab I made for the fish both rig became tangled around my weight belt and I was subsequently pulled down against my will, they are a dangerous fish! It was then I had to do the unthinkable and call for a third gun from the boat, we had never done this before this was one damn tough fish. Brett took the honours with the third shot, he positioned himself right next to it but as luck would have it just as he pulled the trigger the fish flicked towards him and met the spear. The spear didn't have the chance to leave the end of the gun, quickly Brett struggled with the tangle pulling the gun back far enough from the advancing fish for the spear to drop from the muzzle thus preventing it from becoming damaged. The last shaft did some damage in the gills as blood was pissing everywhere, now with three shafts sticking from the mighty fish I was able to pull it up and get it in the boat where it got the treatment and was dispatched.

Weighing it in at 35 kilos I was elated, having not speared one that big before, just goes to show it pays to take a second look at those sharks.

