

Brisbane Sailfish

By Brett Craik

The day began early before daybreak at a boat ramp in North Brisbane, my two cousins Doug & Dan and a South African Friend of ours Tappies began gearing up during our 1 hour run across the bay to the offshore reefs in our 5.5 metre 130hp boat.

The four of us hit the reef on daybreak and began drifting across it. The visibility was poor about 10 metres with very few fish spotted early. There was plenty of bait around yet each drift failed to produce any pelagic action. That was until I looked over to see Doug powering off in one direction, I could not see what he was chasing but I presumed it to be a Wahoo or Spanish Mackerel the later being quite prevalent in Southern Queensland at this time of year. When Doug finally hit the surface he yelled out 'Sailfish, he was just out of range'. That got the blood pumping and picked up the morale.



Continual drifting over this particular reef produced nothing and with the number of trolling boats in the area increasing we decided to try some other less favorable reefs in the area. After a number of hours trying different places we decided to head back to where Doug had spotted the sailfish in the morning.

We arrived back to find the last of the boats was leaving. The visibility had improved markedly and baitfish numbers had increased. Things began to heat up, some macky's were spotted along with a school of nice size kingfish and some barracuda were also hanging around. I drifted across the top of this reef, shallowest point being about 20 metres when I noticed a large Wahoo cruising on the bottom, I descended but he noticed me and began to move away I fired but pulled up short. It was then that I realised just how much the visibility had improved and just how big the wahoo was, approximately 20 – 25 kilos.

As I surfaced Doug pulled up in the boat and somewhat excitedly explained he had seen a sailfish feeding on a baitball up current. Skeptical and somewhat despondent after missing such a fish I climbed into the boat not really confident of catching up to this sailfish. As I reloaded my spear in my 1.5metre gun, Doug yelled 'there he is', I looked to witness a tight ball of garfish jumping clear of the water in fright as a large exposed tail following from behind. Without hesitation I leapt out of the moving boat loaded gun and all and finned in the direction of the leaping bait. After about 10 seconds I could see a mass of gars approaching, all measuring about 30cm they were in their thousands, as I approached closer they began to split either side then before I knew it I could not see past my elbow on my extended gun arm and I was being struck in the face and body by countless numbers of panicked garfish. The adrenalin was pumping by this point and I knew something big was waiting on the other side, within seconds the bait cleared to behold an incredible sight, two magnificent sailfish crossing in front of me their large eyes fixed directly at me.

I dived no more than 1 metre after the closest sailee, aiming for the spine behind the head from above and behind the spear found its mark exactly as I planned, I watched as the tail swung downward and the head pushed upward, Stoned! Unbelievable! I swam over placed a hand in its bill the other in the gills and held up the head for Doug in the boat to see. As the boat pulled up the fish decided to give one last struggle making life difficult for me but with the captains help the fish crashed to the floor of the boat with a glorious thud, the sound of victory.

Needless to say there was much rejoicing on our part and disbelief from the other guys as we picked them up, especially since we left them not more than 5 minutes earlier.

All I can say is thank god I missed that Wahoo, I'll blast him next time. We estimated the sailfish weighed about 35 kilos.

