

Runaway Gun

By Daniel Hanning.

The destination on this day was the famous Flat Rock located off Stradbroke Island, Brisbane. We had been out of action for three weeks due to a cracked hull on our boat basically from going too hard so we were just about foaming at the mouth at the prospect of getting back in the water.

Approaching the bar between North Stradbroke island and Morton island we could see it was up a bit. The usual passage we take was awash in white water, it actually took us 4 or 5 attempts to get through, its times like these you really appreciate having a powerful outboard. Just as we got through the bar a large set rolled in cresting at close to 4 metres, its was beginning to become quite obvious that the forecasters had got it wrong but there was never any thought of turning around after all only the big ones were 4 metres most were around 2 metres.

My brother Doug was driving the boat and he only knows one speed...very fast, we were bouncing around all over the place on the way to the Flat Rock which is probably about 10 kilometres from the bar. In fact Tim the sales rep from Adrenalin Spearfishing Supplies once commented on a glassy trip back from the bunker group 'this is freaking me out normally I am battered and bruised when I come back with you guys, you will have to throw me down the stairs and ruff me up a bit when we get back so I feel like I have been diving'.

I was standing down the back of the boat when we hit three waves in quick succession. The first was your standard launch into mid-air at 40kmph; we struck the second wave very hard in the process breaking the canopy on one side. Since I was holding on to the canopy I fell almost entirely out with just my leg locked between the esky and the side of the boat, I would have either fallen completely out or broken my leg had the third wave not thrown me back into the boat. Electrical tape was used to tape down the sorry looking canopy, I guess you could say Dougie went a bit slower the rest of the way but not by much.

Flat rock was completely devoid of any other boats, its usually crawling on the weekends, some of the guys surmised that everyone else was not as stupid as us.

Doug did not feel well enough to get in the water so six divers became five from the outset. The current was running quite strong visibility was at least 15 metres except right at the surface where it looked a bit snowy thanks to the wind and waves.

The water was loaded with bait and it did not take long before Wahoo were being sighted. This continued for the first two drifts it was not until the third drift that one was taken. I looked over to see but the end of its run, all its bars were lit up so vivid it looked fantastic. Greg Thomas landed his 16.5kg wahoo at less than 10 metres. I could see a school of 10 to 15 cruise right up to the prop milling around for a few seconds then off again, I just could not get there in time.

Back in the boat we were all thinking here we go again Thomo the old bastard is going to show us up once more.

It was absolute mayhem on the next drift, Brett descended on a nice wahoo firing a split second before Daniel Skinner whom had made a beautiful broadside approach. Bretts spear struck the fish very low since his spear tip turned out to be bent badly down, he was not happy neither was Daniel his spear finding nothing but blue water. We later found out that Greg had been chasing that one for quite a while and had actually inadvertently herded it towards us.

To make things worse for Daniel I then shot a large 20 kilo fish out from under his nose, a solid mid body shot I headed over to my float which was tangled with Daniels. Just as I freed up my float the Wahoo made a strong run pulling my Omer float under when suddenly snap! Its every spearo's nightmare to witness their rig breaking and disappearing in the distance. I began swimming as hard as I possibly could against the strong current, you don't realise how strong a current is until you take it on. It then dawned on me that's not my gun its Doug's gun. It was very painful watching the rig finally vanish.

Doug was not pleased to lose his beloved 1.4 metre Rob Allen railgun with sentimental value he keep adding as he ranted and raved at me, proceeding to rattle off a long list of carnage the weapon was responsible for. Greg mentioned that he lost a gun at bolt reef in the bunker group to a Mackerel two years ago from a rig line failing he further explained that he had never got over it, but now he was feeling much better thanks to me, 'gee thanks greg ya bastard' I said.



The float was now up on top of Flat Rock itself, we had to hold back Tappies Joubert from retrieving it....crazy South Africans more balls than brains.

Brett was now seasick so we were down to four, I grabbed his gun another stupid mistake not realised until I missed a sitter on another hoo, I am still kicking myself about that.

The Wahoo seemed to have vacated the area maybe because they were getting shot at all the time, so we decided to have a go on the pinnacle located about 300 meters off the North West corner of flat. The Pinnacle rises from 30 metres to almost 10, normally a nice dive with the current well not today the swell was hitting the current across the top forcing them to break. It was so bad the boat could not safely go through instead having to run around the back and wait for the divers to pop out the other side, Greg actually had his mask knocked clean off in the mess.

There were no wahoo on the pinnacle but I did get to witness the most incredible dive I have ever seen. I looked over to see Tappies swimming frantically up current back to the pinnacle, I figured he must be chasing some fish, I could barely keep up with him and I was about to give up when Taps went down, without breathing up at all I could see him powering down to the bottom at one point he was going backwards the current was just that strong. Taps then began pulling himself along the bottom at an incredible rate, I had dropped my gun by this stage and was free styling to keep up it was insane I could not help but think he was going to blackout for sure. Then I saw it, in the distance the end of my rig sitting on top of the rock, Taps made one last lunge grabbing it then shooting for the surface. I could not believe it, was the gun still there? I knew the bull sharks would have intervened on the fish for sure. Then after all that I could finally see the gun materialise out of the blue I was overcome with such a feeling of relief and at the same time astonishment its like finding a needle in a haystack. I had the biggest smile when I handed two guns in to Doug he was gob smacked. Greg slipped back into depression about his lost gun of two years ago.

Taps fell in the boat exhausted, he vomited a bit narrowly missing Daniel Skinners head whom was now also sick. Daniels day got worse and worse, he was asleep at the back of the boat when a wave crashed in all over him, then in one of those 'you have to be kidding' moments we realised that a brand new spear of his which he had on the floor of the boat had somehow worked its way down and out the back of the scuppers at the stern, it was gone. Then to top it off he managed to stab himself in the hand, just one of those days I guess.

So six became two, after a couple more efforts we thought stuff it lets go besides I had to buy a lotto ticket.