

Tappies the Tyrant

By Brett Craik

It looked like the weather was going to come good for yet another bumper weekend, I needed no further encouragement and I started making calls. The plans were set an assault on the reefs to the north of Moreton Island would be the crux of the intinery

The bay was flat allowing a fast and gentle run across to the island in Graeme McCutcheon's boat, the run was momentarily broken by a screaming alarm from the engine, it turned out we had some water in the fuel pump but it was an avertable disaster so without too much of a delay we were tearing out once more. The ocean was as flat as a pancake a beautiful sight, there would certainly be no seasickness today a big plus especially for Taps whom often falls victim to rolling swells, that was the first indication today he would be healthy and when Taps is healthy the fish don't stand a chance.



Starting in the shallows the lads managed to pick up a couple of reefies but with very little current in the area it was unlikely we were going to spear any pelagics. A couple of wide hangers were spotted by Taps but it's a numbers game and simply you have to put yourself in the position or circumstance where you are most likely to encounter the prospective target.

Next location on the hit list was Flinders Reef, this reef which incorporates a marine reserve out to 200 metres from the edge can produced some good mackerel at times. We set ourselves starting a drift outside the zone of course and in the current, the big guns were drawn now where were the big fish.

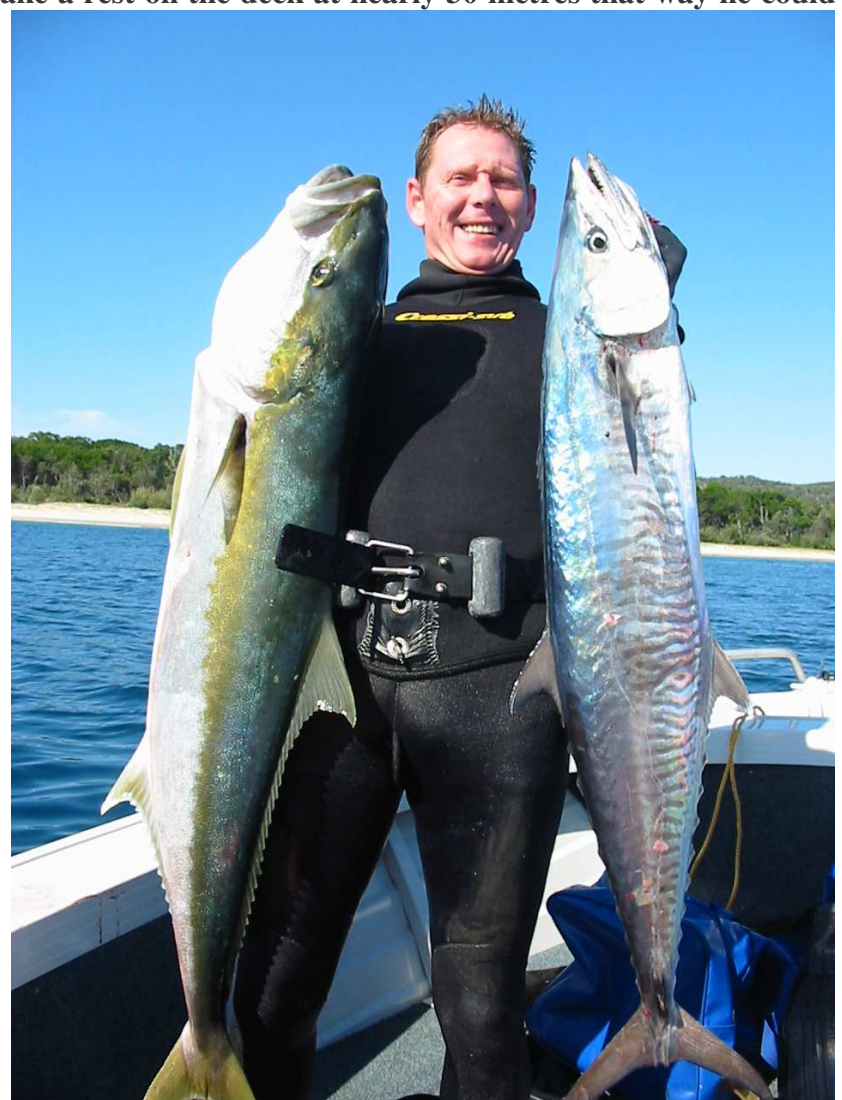
The visibility here was excellent, you could clearly see the bottom in 20 metres of water and there was an amazing amount of bait around, a large cod drifted along below us as if to keep us company while we waited patiently for the first victim to arrive. Half way into the drift I turned and noticed a Spaniard approaching on our flank, he immediately gave me that impression that he would drift away if we approached, still you have to try so I ducked under only to see that tormenter Tappies was down below all of us approaching the fish rapidly. He moves quickly underwater, it's a style that many prefer not to use against mackerel but it seems to work for Taps. He travelled a fair distance chasing the fish out of our sight. The next thing we knew his rig line and float went streaming past us in a hail of white water, the sub had done it again.

The drift took us out into deeper water, while most of us worked hard scanning the water column for more macky's Taps decided to take a rest on the deck at nearly 30 metres that way he could

surprise them from below. Just before we were ready to cease the drift a school of about ten came in circling around beneath us, I took a dive on them but I chose to hold off on the trigger since I could not get into position for a secure shot. Daniel Skinner on the other hand found himself within range and took his chance this time, the shot was typically a little low crashing into the gut cavity skinner style but he was using a slip tip that seemed to help tangle the mackerel up as it performed some short circles in an attempt to flee.

I jumped in and took over the role of boatie for the next drift, looking out over the lads I could see Taps was further down current when I noticed him submerge quickly then I watched as his float pushed up current at a fairly reasonable speed, I thought to myself perhaps he has a fish on although it was not as quick as you would expect from a Spaniard. Upon surfacing I could here the boys talking about a 25 kilo Spanish that had cruised up stream which Taps had chased to the end of his breath back up past the other blokes as they watched from above. Its testament to his speed that from the boat I actually thought he had speared a small pelagic based solely on the movement of his float the man certainly is quick.

After a couple of other empty drifts we decided to make one last move before calling it a day, this time to a not so secret ledge of ours. I say not so secret for as we arrived we could almost count about 50 lines in the water it is the major curse of flat days like this, fortunately the ledge is quite long and the fisherman were not on the best part anyway so we took our position and began diving right next to the boat for safety reasons. The lino's appeared to not



be catching much at all as we entered the water and subsequently I was expecting to see a lifeless reef, but on the contrary there were quite a few about I guess they were just not biting.

First Graeme missed out on a school of about 100 young spanish which flew past in a hurry, the skinman also missed out on the Spaniards but managed to grab a cray from the ledge in 18 metres which he was quite pleased with. But it was the ruthless assassin Tappies whom stole the show after performing a 2-minute dive where he checked out the base of the ledge in 22/23 metres only to rise and find a lovely Spaniard sailing above his head, with a merciless shot it was all over another one bites the dust, after a rough fight Taps threw it in the esky and continued his rampage. He was more comfortable diving in water that didn't extend beyond his floatline depth as he was getting sick of tapping out around 29 metres or so, we just didn't have enough spare rig for him.

I just happened to be in the boat moments later when a tired Taps past me the gun with another fish on it, from way it was fighting I just knew this would be a kingfish, Taps was too tired to drag it in so he climbed on the esky and watched me do the work confident his shot would not pull out. Eventually he got tired of tormenting the fish stocks so we decided to head off leaving behind us some very jealous fisherman whom had the rare opportunity of witnessing the exploits of Tappies Joubert.