

The Bloodening

By Doug Hanning

There comes time when you just have to say goodbye to that old outboard, yep we finally decided to pool some cash and make the trade after literally thousands of hours of hard abuse, she took it well the old girl but we needed more performance if we were going to push increasingly wider each time in search of new hunting grounds. The old 2-stroke 130hp Johnson was now replaced by a 140hp Johnson 4-stroke, with skyrocketing fuel prices it was hoped the 4-stroke would save us in running costs, we also thought the extra power might come in handy.



Everything was ready so all that remained was for us to blood the engine, the boys were very eager to get out test it and spill some blood in the process. It was quickly evident that we could not wait until the weekend so we took a day off work and hit the water, it just had to be now.

Ripping across the bay we were very impressed with the performance, it simply flew and the extra length on the drive shaft appeared to give us a better ride there was however one downside thou it was more quiet so we actually had to converse with one another.

Beginning the first drift at hutchies we were quite pleased to be faced with visibility at around 30 metres, the lads began warming up with several mid water dives. Part way into the drift a large Big eye trevally came in for a look but nobody could be bothered, it wasn't the type of blood we were after. As I watched the Trevelly move off into the distance

I turned back to see Greg descending onto a nice Cobia, he placed the shot and began to fight the fish. The cobia was strong managing to pull some acrobatic twists and turns enough so that the spear was pushed out and off he went, Greg was evidently disappointed you could tell by his colourful language at the surface.

On the second drift a Wahoo appeared in the distance I was about to chase him down when I also noticed a Spanish right below me sitting on the flasher I quickly thought I had better take the Spaniard otherwise I would be regretting it after what would have most likely been a futile wahoo chase, so I dropped down and nailed the Spanish stoning it cold. I couldn't believe it when I was hauling up the quivering fish the damn wahoo came back he was big too at least 25 kilos just circling me very close with a mildly interested look in his eyes, there such an arrogant fish. I screamed out to Dan who was down below me at about 15 metres, miraculously he heard me and looked up but his line of vision picked up another mackerel which I guess had also appeared due to the commotion it was turning into a real party. Dan ended up chasing that instead to no avail, the whole saga was incredibly frustrating for me sometimes I wish I had a gun strapped on my back.

After a few more drifts we then moved to another reef where straight away we picked up a couple of reef fish, and some burley which we administered post haste into the mix prompting an immediate response. A school of huge spangled emperor moved in but they were hanging deep on the bottom in 23 metres, Dan dropped down and began a horizontal pursuit just managing to slam one of the stragglers not as big as some of the others but still a very descent fish.

Greg the old bastard as we refer to him was still reeling from his lost cobia he desperately wanted to redeem himself and what better fitting opportunity than a dirty cod, as one had appeared in the burley trail a nice size around 10 – 15 kilos not too big and not too small. Greg managed to get down and plug the cod, I guess even the elderly can dive deep with Ray Powell fins.

Meanwhile I was involved in one hell of a battle with a Yellow Fin Tuna that kept stealing the burley out from under my nose. I managed to get two shots off at the same fish striking nothing but blue water. Each time the tuna approached the burley I steadied myself hovering mid water waiting, waiting, waiting until he began his approach, each time as I aimed straight at a piece of burley the tuna would sail in at a reasonable pace before exploding at the last minute in an incredible flash of sheer speed, I pulled the trigger but hit nothing and it happened so fast each time that I could not tell where the spear went in relation to the fish, a worthy prey which escaped for now anyway, his time will come. Just as I had wound up a school of amberjack sailed in to mock me I am sure, the bastards.



Not a hell of a lot of blood had been spilt at this point so we made the decision to try another reef with some good current running on it. The first drift did not produce any mackerel in the boat but a couple were seen in the distance in addition to this some good reefies were spotted including a school of 30 snapper around the 3 – 6 kilo range but they were too smart however in pursuing these snapper Dan did manage instead to spear a big eye sea bream which is a fairly rare fish for these waters, all in all it was enough of an encouraging sign to have another go. The action didn't begin on the next drift until I levelled out on the flasher and turned around to see a mackerel almost on my back. In an instinctual act I lurched back extended and fired in one swift motion the spear not even leaving the gun before striking and stoning the fish, now that's close! Greg whom was above me at the surface witnessed the whole event he had been hoping I didn't see it so he could get down on it, upon returning to the surface it was obvious to me he had never seen anyone turn and shoot so fast as he excitedly said to me "I just saw you turn and boom it was f%#ked"



We continued in the area before deciding if we were going to really clean up we had to find where the mackerel schools were instead of the individuals we kept seeing, a short while later we found ourselves on some shallower reef in about 15 metres working the flasher as per usual.

It was at this moment when abruptly we found ourselves surrounded by mackerel on all sides passing us by, quickly the serenity of the ocean was smashed by three blokes hell bent on Spanish carnage. Guns could be heard firing everywhere and the sounds of struggling fish and rope sliding through gloves permeated in all directions. All three of us had one on, Greg's fish pulled him away from us, the entire time he was being dragged away he could see three or four more mackerel watching him. Dan and I threw ours into the boat before Dan dropped back down on a slightly larger Spanish slugging it broadside the fish then decided to turn his spear into a horseshoe before finally throwing the shaft in an irreverent display of rejection. Dan switched guns and on the next dive swiftly speared a smaller fish before I gave him some assistance getting it in the boat as a big bronzie had decided he wanted a piece, we just couldn't let him get one. Greg then speared another and was heavily involved in the fight when he momentarily paused to stick his head out of the water and yell to us "How good is this!" before getting stuck back into it. More sharks had gathered now but thankfully they were remaining at a distance. Things were really beginning to heat up, it was frantic and we were loving every minute of it.

Dan pulled up the mackerel which by this stage had led him away from us, he grabbed the fish in its gills looked up and realised he was surrounded by at least 60 mackerel in a very tight school, being that Dan was effectively unarmed he just dropped down holding the mack in his arms. Dan then received the special treatment of being wrapped up in a cocoon of Spanish they were so thick he could not see through them only and they only seemed to be an arms length away, now that is simply spectacular an experience I am sure he will never forget. Upon surfacing the school moved away and Dan called over the boat to throw in the mackerel in his arms that he had almost forgotten about.

Doug Senior (the boatie) was throwing in burley to try and hold them in the area, that may have helped as both Greg and I then helped ourselves to another macky each. It was utter madness, Spanish madness, we had never seen them like this before they were literally everywhere, it was a fish a dive. Within the space of 45 minutes we had all reached our bag limit the boys were ecstatic.

As we all climbed in the boat we could still see mackerel milling around underneath us, it really was incredible. We certainly had enough anyway besides our gear was looking worse for wear by this point. The boat itself was absolutely covered in blood it was pooled up on the floor and the motor which must have copped several sprays from slit throats was now completely red, we had certainly achieved our goal to blood the motor and some.