

## **GREAT FISHING ATTITUDE**

**Australia - By Adriano-staff@biggame.it**

The rush of adrenalin in the few hours preceding a planned fishing trip is always the same, the only difference being that this time instead of driving the boat, I am towing it and I must tell you that is not an easy task. I generally don't tow it very far and putting it on the Island Seaway had always been a real dream. The 15 minute towing trip from North Haven to Port Adelaide was all it took to get the boat to Kingscote but now those 15 minutes have become 5 to 7 hours. I must admit though that I have gotten so used to expect illogical decisions out of the government of this country that nothing surprises me any longer, but lets get back to fishing.

After a 12 hour trading day in the city on Friday, I am finally home and although tired, I am so happy I cannot stay still. Unfortunately due to work commitments I hadn't had any time to get things organised, so it had been thanks to my fishing companion Vince that I had been able to get everything organised. Vince had 3 days off prior to our departure and we had used the few evenings leading to that date to work on the engines (a very important part of my boating time). It was Saturday the 30th December and everything was ready. I met with Vince and Leanne at the CYC and we started preparing the boat. After a few stops for ice and bait, we were finally at our last pick up site to collect my wife and daughter and our next stop was going to be Cape Jervis.

The first impression was good, the place where we were staying was excellent and the temperature had dropped from 35 degrees in Adelaide to around 20 but we didn't seem to mind very much at that stage. The weather wasn't looking good for the next day and a quick check with my friend Terry at the weather bureau confirmed my worse feeling, a few days of strong south easterly and no hope of good weather. But we have got a week and we have to get some decent weather ( we then thought). After having unpacked we decided to leave the ladies to look after the house and we headed down to check the sea and the ramp.

The wind had already picked up, and although the excellent rough water capability of my boat, I was so tired because of the past Christmas trading and of the recent towing that the thought to head south into that sea first thing in the morning was not that exciting, so we decided that we would spend the first day north of CJ towards Rapid Bay. This area is very sheltered in the south easterly as well as being waters that I'd never fished so the idea to find (haunts) some fish was very exciting, after all that is what I really enjoy about this sport. 'Catching them is easy once

you've found them (According to Bill's gospel 1,3,24). So we headed back home very happily and after a good meal, we went to bed for an early start.

On arrival at the ramp we were greeted by a very nasty 20-30 knots south easterly with white caps that were visible from the hill on top of CJ, and when that happens you can bet that Backstairs Passage is not a pleasant place to be in. We decided to leave the cray pots in the boat because going north it looked very calm and they would not create a real problem on the deck in reasonably calm waters. After the usually simple launching of a Cat, regardless of its size, we were on our way towards Rapid Bay and although we new far out it would've been rough where we were it was like being in a swimming pool. We decided to trawl for some snooks so we set the outriggers and sat back waiting for a strike. May be the over cast weather, or may be the falling barometric pressure but of the snooks there was no sign.

Approximately an hour later we reached Rapid Head and having had no strikes we decided to anchor just off of it and set a burley trail hoping to catch some gars to use for live bait on the famous Rapid Bay Kingies. Not even 2 seconds after Vince had lowered the first line into the burley trail and a double header of garfish was in the live bait tank. I quickly set the live gar on my TLD 30 suspended by a balloon 200 metres behind the boat and while waiting started fishing the bottom ledge for some rock species to use as baits for the cray pots, while Vince kept landing double headers of gars. Dinner was starting to look pretty good thanks to his efforts when we noticed that the balloon had disappeared.

While trying to retrieve the gar in the current, I noticed the heavier weight of the classical squid connected to it and, was she connected, she was stuck so much that I just lifted her into the boat without the net. Within the matter of one hour we had another few squids but not Kingies. We knew about how good live bait squids can be for Kingfish but we like squids too much to use them as live bait, so if the Kingies were hungry they had to eat gar. By 12 the wind had moderated considerably and a quick phone call to Terry at the bureau saw us contemplating a very quick trip to a ground that we love fishing off of the north coast of Kangaroo Island.

This is a true paradise of lime stone bottom that has always produced for us plenty of King George whiting, snapper, and crayfish, and with dodge tide just the day before the temptation was too strong. A quick check on the GPS told us that trip would take around 30 minutes ( going very fast) so after all we knew that area that well that even if Terry had told us that we only had a 2 hour break before another change would hit us again, we decided to go. Vince did a marvellous

job in baiting those two pots with the rock species that I caught while he was fishing for gars on the way down in the still very choppy conditions. Once there the 2 metre sea didn't make our life any easier in locating these very small ledges.

Knowing it wouldn't have been easy I headed first for the bigger one in this area. It is around 2 metres in 35 metres of depth. Once founded and marked it, it was just a matter of dropping the pot and pulling it right into the ledge. Ledge 2 was not as easy to locate. I knew I had to be close, but finding a one meter ledge in a 2 meter sea at 35 meter of depth from a boat under 30 feet is never going to be easy. Fortunately we got there around slack water and I decided to mark it on the assumption that the ledge would have had "colour" over it and that was what I mainly relied upon. I reckon it must have been because of the words of Terry at the bureau that I was in such a hurry that we just left this one where it landed and decided to head straight back into the shelter of the peninsula.

There had been only another time in my entire boating life that I had missed the opportunity of fishing this ground and that was one afternoon that I left North Heaven with my fishing master Bill and my friend watchmaker Grant in the middle of a South Westerly change heading for KI for an overnight trip. I can never forget the words of Tim Marsh, as he saw us launching the boat and on our way to Emu Bay, "surely whiting aren't so expensive at the market to justify going down to the Island in this weather". But I can never refuse a lecture of Professor Bill, once he says we go, I go.

Bill would have to be one of the best skipper of cats in the world. I can never forget one day, before taking delivery of my boat, when speaking with Bill, who as always and only owned Cats for the last 30 years, after I asked him whether he would teach us (me and my brother) how to use it properly he asked me: "How long have you been boating in a monohull for ?" and after hearing that it had only been six months he added: "thanks god, because it is almost impossible to teach anyone with a lot of experience in a mono how to use a cat properly".

It is only seeing Bill taking it in a 25-30 knots South Easterly, with a full outgoing tide, from Adelaide to Emu Bay, that would convince anyone on how good these cats really are. Anyway back to the trip. Instead of heading nose into the wind we decided to head back towards Rapid Bay and then south to CJ, that would have made the trip into the choppy conditions shorter and it would have also have given us another shot at the kingies. Approx 30 minutes and a few songs later we were back anchored on Rapid heads dreaming about the crays we would be eating on

New Year's day. Within a matter of minutes the wind had started to build almost a one meter sea right under the cliffs and the fact that nothing, not even the squids, seemed any more interested in our live gars, made us decide to head back home, were a hot shower and a good meal would have certainly have made up for the busy but not extremely rewarding fishing day.

Once home two dozen garfish and four squids was the "eating" result of day one and although to the lady's it didn't seem as we had been working very hard, it certainly felt much more tiring to us. The bad news was that even if dead tired the ladies wanted to go to Victor Harbour for New Year's eve to watch the movie "Apollo 13" at the drive-in. I can't tell you how much I hated that idea but we had to do it, so we did. The weather really got upset with us and, on the way back at 1a.m, I had to cope with an incredibly thick fog all the way to CJ and luckily, I had driven through fog a lot in the past having lived for a few years in a region of Italy called "Emilia Romagna" where from November to March the fog is like the drizzle in England, it's always there. Once home, not after having missed a few times the dirt road turn-off which we could not possibly see, we headed straight to bed with no intentions of waking up. I had had it by this time. A decision was made that we could not be bothered with an early start for New Year's day and that we would have assessed everything the next morning. The next morning the weather had really turned quite nasty and we decided to go down and check the sea. On arrival at the ramp the only trailer in the car park was the one of a 30 footer who had a charter trip and that was leaving the marina as we got there looking more like a submarine trying to immerse itself into the sea than a boat. I bet the Glenelg ferry to Kingscote was cancelled on the 1st January, we thought we were on holiday and could not be bothered, plus the pots were well baited and would probably have more chance of success with 2 nights then with 1 so we went back home and spent the day with the wives visiting Deep Creek Conservation Park and going through some very nice 4WD trucks. Going to the south of the park and looking at the coast and at those very nasty southern ocean swells curling and breaking made us feel so good to be on "terra ferma" that we did not miss being on the water, not even a bit.

Day 3 was Tuesday and although the sea had definitely improved from the previous day it was still far from being pleasant. A trip to the south coast of the island was definitely out and with the pots on the north coast out of Emu Bay it was a matter of having to repeat day one. As we headed north we decided not to trawl but to inspect one area that on the chart looked interesting.

We discovered a 3-4 metre ledge and after working it we started fishing it. In the beginning we started pulling a few rock species but the type of rock species was a good sign.

Yes, most of you might say how can you be happy of landing rock fish but the truth is that, in most of the area populated by the KG whiting in the southern part of the gulf, including Investigator Straight and Backstairs Passage, KG are sharing the same ground with certain type of fish and seeing the right type made me realised that there was good potential here but that we had to work it harder in order to understand it well. These are the time where the difference between a good fisherman and a bad one is evident. Most fishermen would be anxious to wet a line without realising that the hard part of fishing is instead to locate the fish and that infact, once located, 3 blokes (and I mean any blokes not just good fishermen) can pull 50 whiting in a matter of 30 minutes. So why not spend 2 to 3 hours searching for the fish then.

We spent most of the day trying to located the whiting and understanding the bottom features of this new area totally unknown to us until then. By the end of the day we finally got 2 decent size whittings (not a very successful morning fishing by anyone standard, but at least we did get to know where they were and the area very well). At around 11:30a.m we realised that even though the wind was still quite blowing conditions would have only deteriorated with the afternoon sea breeze, so if we didn't want to leave the pots there another day, our only hope was for a very quick trip to the grounds of Investigator Straight as soon as possible and straight back into the shelter of the Fleurieu peninsula. Conditions on this day were quite a bit nastier and on arrival at our grounds we were greeted by a defined 2-3 metre sea with the odd scary pattern and I was real glad that we had left Rapid Bay area right at the start of the incoming tide which was going to keep tide and wind in the same direction for the remaining 6 hours.

We decided to check the second cray pot first, this is the one left in a hurry without proper locations. After a very uncomfortable manual pulling from 35 metres depth we were surprised to find what we certainly had not targeted with our effort even though it was still a pleasant surprise. Inside the pot there were 2 snappers, 1 undersized that we quickly released, the other took us a good 10 minutes to get out and what an experience that was risking to get bitten by a very green 8-pound snapper as we attempted to remove it from the pot. After putting him on ice we directed ourselves onto the other pot and now we had very high hopes.

We did not have a lot of confidence into the previous one but this one we had certainly done it properly and on pulling it up the weight confirmed us that something was inside it so now it was

just a matter of whether it was some more snappers or the well deserved crays. After a tug of war with the pot, our best hope were met and, pulling this on board was like landing that first big 30 pounder snapper. Six beautiful limestone crayfish sitting inside the pot and were they big! After a few attempts at removing the big ones we decided we could do it a bit later so we headed straight back for Rapid Bay. 15 minutes closer to land and the sea had started to get better and, after having set the auto pilot, Vince and I were both at the back admiring our catch and the joy was so high that we had totally forgotten the sea conditions and the hard work of pulling the pots.

On arrival at Rapid Bay we decided to anchor the boat and have another go at removing the big crays. After further struggles we decided that the only way to get them out was to cut their long antennae so we did it. It was a great pleasure when weighing them to find out that we had a 2.8 and a 3.8Kg crays on board. By now it was around 2 o'clock and the approaching slack water made us think of aiming at those whittings that I was still convinced to be down there. So on our arrival back on our new ground we marked the ledge and I located where the exact likelihood spot of the fish being was in relation to the marks. Noticed however that I'm not actually looking for the fish colour but for bottom features on my sounder. After a first attempt of anchoring goes wrong with the anchor not holding to the bottom a second one put us exactly on location.

Within a matter of seconds we were in a frenzy of whiting bites that saw us catching just over two dozen in less than 1 hour. I was so happy with my day and with the fact that I had proven once again to Vince that the area had certain whiting potential, that we decided to head back home and to give it another shot the following day. On arrival at the ramp a friend was there from Adelaide and was he happy with his timing! Eugene had decided to come and join us for a fishing day on Day 4 and the sight of those crays made him wondered what he would have missed if he had just come a day sooner. At home there were beautiful food and wine and plenty of smiles all around.

At the start of Day 4 the wind was still blowing hard from the south east so the idea to head south was once again rejected and we decided to take Eugene on our newly discovered whiting grounds just a few miles north of CJ. On arrival the conditions seemed perfect down there even though they must have not been out wide considering that on approaching the ground we crossed the Glenelg fast ferry just less than 200 meters away, obviously put off track by the sea conditions they must have met out wide on their way to Kingscote. In rough weather they must

stick to CJ on the shelter of the peninsula and then cut across to Penneshaw in Backstairs Passage to then head to Kingscote. I found it so hard to believe that a boat of that size cannot cope with the conditions out there when I think of us going across to the crays the day before in even worse weather, but then again we are trying to compare a Mono with a Cat and as Bill would say "forget it". It makes you think again about the decisions of this government, doesn't it? But lets get back to fishing. Once there it was again a matter of marking the spot and then spending the best part of the next hour sounding the general area. Notice again how 1 hour spent sounding could be quite normal. Once we anchored at our likely spot we started getting a few bites but unfortunately they were not of the right type so it was a matter of playing with 2 variables that got us connected to the right species. I am sure that by now all of you are wondering which ones the 2 variables were and it's sufficed to say that they were water depth and bait but I will not specify which values to attribute to the variables.

Within a matter of seconds the one rock species per minute had changed itself to a whiting per minute and it wasn't long before we ended up reaching the boat limit. I still don't know how to thank Eugene for his try on the new bait, it was amazing to see how you could select rock species from a whiting just by the bait used, even for me that was a first. I have always known obviously that certain fish bite on certain bait and so on, but to imagine not to be able to land a single whiting on a cockle for over an hour while nothing else than a whiting was landed on Eugene's 'magic' bait, that was a very welcome surprise.

Everything seemed to be proceeding well apart from our hope to go to the south coast of the island, that after all had been the reason why we had selected CJ as our holiday destination for this break, but the weather as usual had decided once more not to cooperate. Spirits were still high after all we still had another 3 days to get a shot at that and surely our bad luck could not last that long. The idea to go back home for a feed of crayfish and whiting was too strong to resist so we decided to head back in. On the way home we decided to ring the weather bureau again and I can't tell you how disappointed I was when I got told that the forecast was for another 4 days of the same south easterly. That just killed our morals. We could just not believe it.

One week in CJ and, infact, as I write this article it is the 9th January and we are still in a south easterly stream. I guess we must have been a bit optimistic to try and strike anything else this time of the year. Anyway over dinner that night I received a call from my wife's cousin Jonathan, he is a doctor and this would have been the 3rd fishing trip of his life, so I asked him to meet us

at 9a.m at the ramp as we could only try to fish 2 change of tides at 10:30a.m and 4:30p.m. On arrival at the ramp Jonathan, David, and Scott were there keenly waiting for us, and although Eugene wasn't there, he had decided to head back to Adelaide, as the best we could do was to try for another 'boring' boat limit catch of whittings he thought.

We soon seemed to form a nice crew. David had just purchased a boat and although he hasn't yet got a sounder on it, he and Jonathan were quite keen to learn and understand exactly how to use a sounder. So I spent most of the time sounding the area while explaining to them how to read and use it. When we finally marked our likely spot it was again a matter of performing one very important part of a fishing routine, anchoring. I once again stress the importance of taking 2 variables in consideration - tide and wind, and understanding the way they affect your vessel will determine how accurately you can get at anchoring. I must also admit though that I find absolutely indispensable a piece of advice that my fishing prof. Bill has given me but unfortunately I am not going to disclose something I was told by him without his consent.

Back at anchor we started landing a few rock species again and after a few shifts we were back on the whittings, needless to say that the morning slack water session ended with a dozen whittings. I had planned with Vince to take the boys to Rapid Head for a go at some squid while the tide was racing and then come back on this ground around 2 hours prior to the next slack water at 2:30pm. But just as everybody had packed their rods and rigs I had this idea of trying to reach the bottom with some 'heavy' and I mean heavy sinkers. The result was magic and within a matter of 30 minutes everybody was back into the whittings and this time no rock cods. A thank you at this time has to go to Vince, always capable of satisfying everyone's requests.

In fact fishing from a boat should always be looked at as a joint effort and as a team work and never as a battle to see who gets the most fish. Having Vince doing the rigs made us catch fish even though he didn't. Sometimes you might have 10 blokes catching heaps while another 2 are catching very little, but it still is very important to have those two catching nothing because they work like attractors to the rest of the school above all with whittings. Back to fishing though, and things had slowed right down for everybody but having the eight rigs to reach comfortably the bottom made us decided to have another go at re anchoring, after all we were still exactly on the same spot that we were fishing on slack water and most of you readers will relate to my next 7 words, 'even though our baits, definitely weren't'.

Knowing how far back the lines were reaching the bottom we tried first to pull up some rope on the anchor but not having been able to still produce any results we opted for a full re anchoring. It is amazing to see how a bottom with plenty of colour around slack water becomes absolutely bear naked, or more like a desert, when the tide starts racing. But what actually happens to the fish? surely they are not going miles away to then return miles back to these same grounds 3 hours later. And that is the key to fishing, again acute observation of your bottom through your sounder. The fish had to be there. I decided to anchor on a part of the ledge that I thought would offer plenty of shelter to the fish from the incoming tide, And twice I was right. Within a matter of seconds from reaching the bottom, everyone of us was on and it was all whiting been landed. Unfortunately the anchor pulled out and we drifted off but this time it was clear that we knew exactly where the fish were so it was a simple matter to get back exactly on the spot and so we did. The remaining 1 hour saw us catching the remaining approximately 50 whittings that we needed to reach our boat limit. There were smiles all around, David, Jonathan and Scott seemed to be having an absolutely ball and that gives a skipper immense pleasure. The only other thing worth a mention was a first in my fishing experience. I had previously caught on several grounds around SA a beautiful fish commonly known in our waters as the Blue Devil. Because of its beauty this fish has always been returned to the water as it seems a pity to have to kill such an absolutely beautiful creature.

On this occasion though the funny thing was that David caught three different size ones within a few seconds from reaching the bottom on 3 consecutive casts. Does that tell you something or what? It certainly did to an excited observer as I am. By now time was around 3:30p.m and it was time to start cleaning up the boat and head back home. So we set the auto pilot to steer the boat to the marina and took out brooms and brushes to start cleaning up. The trip home wasn't very long at all but it is always enjoyable to get back into the marina in a nicely cleaned boat. Once we had pulled the boat out of the water I got everybody involved in the cleaning process. I asked Vince to organise a knife for each of them and got 4 people scaling and me filletting and within 1 hour, we had a nice bucket full of fresh fillets and no more worries of any work to be done once back home. We left half a basket with David, Jonathan and Scott and they then headed back to Adelaide with what I'm sure it would be a trip they wouldn't forget for a while. To me and Vince the hard but logical decision to call it the end of this holiday considering that even if we had stayed another 2 days as planned we could have only had done the exact same fishing.

The trip back to Adelaide was quite easy and most of the time was spent commenting on how successful anyone can be just by applying some simple rules from experience to fishing. The most enjoyable part of fishing CJ was to be able to fish only a few miles away from the ramp and to find that even though there were about a dozen boats out from the ramp, nobody seemed interested in what everybody else was doing and above all nobody tried to spoil everybody else's fishing day. One of the reasons why I ended up getting a bigger boat was to really be able to get away from Adelaide's fishing attitude! It is so annoying to find that hours spent sounding and anchoring exactly in one spot can be totally destroyed by the arrival of other boats that have decided to anchor right next to you. And this is an attitude not only verified on those typical Adelaide's grounds like the Grange, Norma, or The Barges up north but anywhere where people see some one else fishing, above all if they look like "they might know what they are doing".

It is as if instead of looking for fish people leave the marina looking for other boats and this is the wrong attitude that I am here really criticising. I remember reading a very nice article on fishing Tapley Shoal a few years back in SA Anglers and since then, I have noticed that the shoal has become a rather busier place. Now, not that I am asking people not to go to Tapley Shoal, but that article as well as describing very well how to fish that area, also had a very clever note on fishing etiquette on the shoal, something obviously most of the boats arriving from Adelaide just do not seem to want to know about.

It infact clearly stated that there are plenty of grounds on the Shoal and it stressed the importance of not intruding into someone else's fishing in an area with so much bottom. I guess my conclusion is that fishing to me is hunting the fish and the real challenge for most anglers, that are not attempting to break game fishing records, comes from things like battling the weather, anchoring, and as I just said finding the fish and not other fishermen. With this in mind we can all enjoy better fishing and much more pleasure knowing that the only way to get home with some fish is if we find it first, then anchor right on it and then, and only then, fish it.

**By Adriano**