

THE TRIDENT

VOLUME 74 - ISSUE 10



TWO GROUPER, ONE CAVE

Our newsletter editor, Jorge, recently asked for fish-story submissions, indicating that old stories would be accepted. This fish tale happened in the winter of 1984, at Isla San Marcos, Sea of Cortez. As most of you know, the island is approximately ten miles offshore (southeast) of Santa Rosalia. It's always been a good spot for winter yellowtail and big fish. In the early 80's, Dale Cote and Dwayne Smith made the island popular with the club after spearing several large roosterfish at the south end.

Vance Carriere, a fellow Neptune, and I had just left our jobs and decided to spend six months diving and shooting fish up and down the Baja Peninsula, including the Pacific side. I had a twenty-foot panga and towed it with an old Ford van. The van was our home on wheels (the stories that old van could tell) and was clearly not palatial. In fact, if you pulled open the side door too hard, the entire door panel would fly off its rail. We were camped at an RV park in Mulege, which was our first stop on the trip. The name of the park escapes me, but it had a nice restaurant, hot showers and a swimming pool.

We were diving at the north end of the island, off two large rocks. The water was clear and cold. We were diving in shallow water, 15 to 20 feet, and planned to hunt yellowtail. However, I shot a nice grouper, close to a hundred pounds, on my first or second dive. The grouper, of course, quickly shot into a cave. I've never been able to dive deep or stay down for extended times, but this guy made the mistake of entering a cave that was in shallow water, less than fifteen feet. I made several dives attempting to pull the fish from the cave. No joy, the fish was in deep, headfirst, with its dorsal fins extended into the top of the cave. It was locked tight. The only way to get the fish out was to turn its head so that it faced the opening and then pull hard.

I was resting on the surface, trying to figure out how to turn the fish, when I saw a large, one-hundred-pound grouper jet into the same cave. I could see a shaft in the fish, but the shooting cable had been severed from the reel line and was still attached to the spear. At this point I'm confused. I initially thought "my" fish had cut the line, left the cave and returned. But I had not taken my eyes off the cave entrance, so I wasn't sure how that could have happened. That's when Vance swam to me and asked if I had seen a grouper swim by. Now it all made sense. Vance shot a grouper that managed to cut the shooting cable and escape. So, both of our fish are now in the same cave. Vance put a second shaft into his fish to secure it, and we worked for over an hour trying to recover both fish. We finally got one out and into the panga, but the other one was in tight and wouldn't budge.

Frustrated and fearing that we might lose the remaining fish, we swam back to the boat to sort things out. I had a short gaff on board with a secure lanyard attached to the end. I thought I could reach in and gaff the remaining fish in the jaw and pull it out headfirst. I managed to place the gaff in the jaw but was unable to turn it. We were quickly running out of ideas and options.

We decided—not sure which one of us had the idea—to tie a line to the end of the gaff and pull the fish out with the panga, knowing it would disqualify the fish for any Neptune award. This was not a highpoint of sportsmanship, but it seemed to be the right thing to do. We didn't want to kill the fish and waste the meat.

I secured a line to the end of the gaff, returned to the boat and pulled out the fish—under power! The boat was at half throttle when the fish was pulled from the cave. Both fish were under a hundred pounds, but not by much.

We exchanged the fish for all the margaritas we could drink and two lobster dinners at the campground restaurant. It was December and it was cold outside, but the fireplace at the restaurant was blazing and the mariachis were playing full blast. We were warm, content and full of lobster. It was a memorable day of diving.

The aging process takes away some memories, so Vance may have a slightly different version of this event. But I don't think it would be too different than mine.

Good Hunting to all and Safe Diving
Tom Blandford

Almost forgot, a good friend recently gave me this advice: If your spouse or significant other is angry at you, buy a new speargun. They will still be angry, but you now have a new speargun.



Tip Report – French Polynesian Islands

In my opinion free divers belong to a select group in the world... I don't think most people enjoy the experience of setting an almost unrealistic goal and achieving it. With spearfishing, there are almost endless goals to be achieved... A new personal best, new species, new locations, new conditions, etc.

For me it's become a combination of them all... I love the intrigue of remote locations. Ascension Island is an example, my Yellowfin was 235lbs and people are getting larger Bluefin right in our backyard. However, the multiple flights, being in the middle of the Atlantic, dealing with sharks, etc. made it even better.

I just returned from another adventure targeting Dog Tooth Tuna and this trip had it all... new species, new location, new conditions, new approach, and more.

Four airports and a boat ride, we found ourselves on an island 1000 miles from Tahiti. Dog Tooth Tuna as my goal. This was my second time hunting Doggies, but in Africa I only saw a single fish and it did not teach me much about hunting these challenging fish. This time I was able to have many sightings and attempts to get close. I took seven shots on doggies. Three misses because the fish were out of range. The crystal blue water is very deceiving. I had two lost to sharks and eventually land two Doggies!

The key to landing fish in this area is the stone shot. I shot two fish that I didn't stone, and the sharks show up in seconds. The first one was evaporated. The second I almost got the fish, but there were just too many sharks. It was not the smartest thing to do, but I was trying to fight them off my fish. I punched several but they came right back in and ate my fish. I was feeling pretty discouraged at this point. However, the next day I was able to stone two fish and bring them to the surface without any sharks. They were not big, but it was still incredibly rewarding. I was also able to stone two Wahoo and landed them without any sharks.

On the last day, I was able to get at least 8 drops on several monster fish. During the trip we had fish sightings from 40 feet to well over 100. This day they were deep. Every drop was 80-90 feet. After four days of diving and at the end of the fifth day, I was the only one of the group willing to make the drops required to get close. Several times I was within feet of knowing it would be a kill shot, but I didn't pull the trigger. I was not going to shoot a monster without knowing it was a perfect shot and give the sharks another meal. I didn't land one of the monsters, but it was one of the most amazing and exciting hunts of my long career of spearfishing.

This was only my second time hunting these challenging fish so I'm no expert, but here are my learnings:

- In crystal clear water, when you think you are close enough you are NOT
- You must be very comfortable diving around lots of sharks
- It's not a requirement, but if you want more opportunities you need to be able to make deep dives.
- Every shot needs to be a stone shot or you should NOT take it
- At least for me, bottom time was key. These fish require time to look the other way, swim up and turn around, swim the other direction, charge them to close the gap and then pause and hold if they sped up, etc.

Note: I didn't push myself past my comfort zone, but multiple dives I was at the top of my comfort range. I wore a sens07vest safety vest and had automatic deployment set for both depth and time. I also had my watch set to buzz at 80 feet and 1:30 minutes, so even focused on a fish I knew where I was on both depth and time.

And yes, after seeing 100lb+ monsters I'm already planning another trip 😊

Del White



MONTHLY CLUB MEETING

OCTOBER 5TH @ 7PM



**This month's club
meeting will be held at
Me-n-Ed's Pizzeria
4115 Paramount Blvd,
Lakewood, CA 90712**

2022 Board Members

President

Juan-Carlos Aguilar

310-569-3316

juanmilliondollars@yahoo.com

Ex-Presidio

Paul Zylstra

562-254-7717

zflattie@gmail.com

Vice President

Seamus Callaghan

714-742-6326

acwaman@aol.com

Treasurer

Kyle Brannon

562-397-5959

kylebrannon@gmail.com

Tentative Manager

Hobie Ladd

562-607-5579

lbwallbangr@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Jorge Veliz Ramirez

310-977-8259

jvsc_sp@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary

Taylor Yates

714-747-6807

taylorlyates714@gmail.com

Club Historian

Paul Byrd

949-500-1459

pbyrd@argosx.com

Conservation Liaison

Terry Maas

805-642-7856

tmaas@west.net

The Trident is the official newsletter of the Long Beach Neptunes, a non-profit organization. The Trident is published monthly and is provided free of charge to the members of the Long Beach Neptunes and associates.

The Long Beach Neptunes would like to thank the following members for their work in obtaining our 501(c)(7) non-profit organization status:

Jeff Benedict, Brian York, Jon McMullin, Will Wither, Steve Parkford

2022 CALENDAR

- November 2nd - Club Meeting
- December 10th - Christmas Party

FISH STANDINGS

CALIFORNIA

Calico Derby	Todd Farquhar - 6.4
Calico Bass	Todd Farquhar - 6.4
White Seabass	Ron Warren - 70.15
Yellowtail	John Johnston - 36.1
Halibut	Open
Sheephead	Richard Cunningham - 24.9
Bonito	Open
Barracuda	Open
Dorado	Jeff Bilhorn - 19.5
Bluefin Tuna	Richard Cunningham - 200
Lobster	Hobie Ladd - 8.2

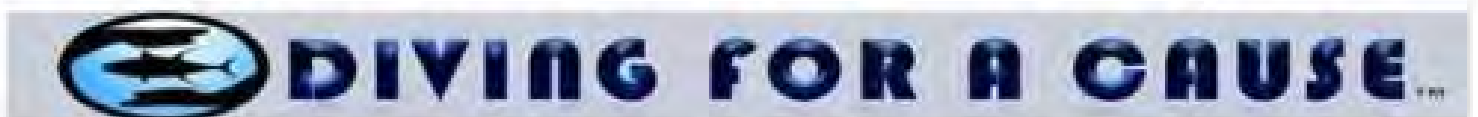
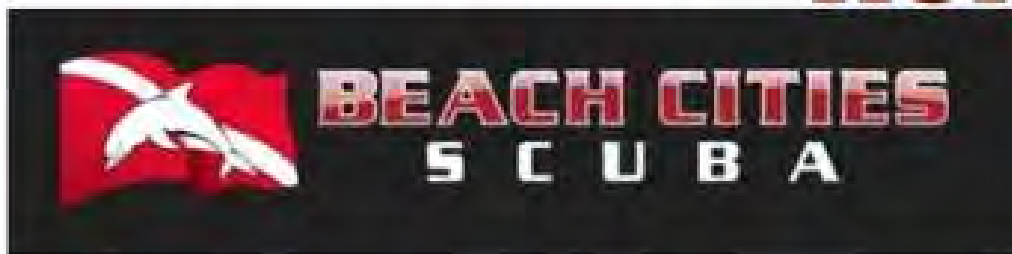
OUT OF STATE/COUNTRY AWARDS

Yellowfin Tuna	Open
Bluefin Tuna	Dave Freeman - 175
Reef Fish	Open
Pelagic, non-tuna	Hobie Ladd (yellowtail) 31.1
Kent McIntyre Award	Paul Zylstra 102.55

Perpetual Big Fish Trophy

Open







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