ÉPIC FEATURÉ
BLUEFIN TUNA HUNTING

WHITE POINTERS HUNT
SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA

Jack discovers a gamefishing wonderland in a land (and sea) that time forgot.

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As the plane flew low over Hobart, I glanced out the window at the shimmering water beyond that southern city and wondered, is there such thing as gamefishing heaven? In the fantasy world inside my head, huge birds work the surface all day long and the sea showers schools of baitfish in blue, green and silver. The surrounding landscape is ancient and jagged, and the boats are lovingly handcrafted by silver-haired men with piercing blue eyes and hands of leather. The crew is battle-hardened, dry of wit and rich in spirit. The fish are as big as barrels and when hooked in the jaw, charge to dark blue depths to which no man has ever been.

Could such a place exist? Suddenly, I awoke from my daydream as a rainbow emerged from the clouds and kissed the Tasmanian mainland. Maybe, just maybe.

Nestled in the southeastern corner of the Apple Isle lies a remote stretch of coast guarded by an army of vertical cliffs standing proud in the face of the Tasman Sea. And those stoic rocks are showing their age, with limestone cracks animating the cliffs like the lines on an old man’s face. The tallest of their kind in Australia, those ancient sea cliffs decorate the brochures that sit quietly in magazine racks at the quaint hotels and cafes dotted along the winding road in. That road meanders between bays fringed by buny pine trees and bookended by rocky headlands. Timber boats gently rise and fall in the swell at anchor, their gunnels scarred and their ironwork rusted. Their paint is chipped away, telling tales of a long, hard life at sea. This is the doorway to our game-fishing wonderland.

THE BLUEFIN CREW

BARON HAY
NICKNAME: BARRY THE BARREL
SIGNATURE MOVE: CAN SNIFF A TUNA IN A TRILLION SQUARE METRES OF OCEAN
TRIP HIGHLIGHTS: DOUBLE BARREL HOOK UPS

BARRY HAY
NICKNAME: THE KRUSHA
SIGNATURE MOVE: EXPERT BOAT DRIVER
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: BIGGEST FISH ON HIS BOAT – AND REX POINTING OUT THE WIPER WASHER BUTTON

REX BENTON
NICKNAME: THE CRAZY KIWI
SIGNATURE MOVE: TECHNICAL ADVICE & SEAL MANAGEMENT
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: SPENDING TIME WITH WHITEPOINTER OWNERS AND SEEING HIS BOATS IN ACTION

BRIAN FRANKS
NICKNAME: BLUEFIN BRUCE
SIGNATURE MOVE: ALWAYS HAVING A CLEAN RAG HANDY
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: BOATING A 100KG BARREL TUNA

TRAVIS GODFREDSON
NICKNAME: BIG TRAV
SIGNATURE MOVE: GAFF MANAGEMENT & UNDERWATER OPERATIONS
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: WILD TASMANIAN COAST AND BARRY’S STORIES

CHRIS RICHARDSON
NICKNAME: RICHO
SIGNATURE MOVE: FINDS THE FISH & EPIC BROADBILL STORIES
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: FIGHTING A BARREL FOR TWO HOURS

JACK MURPHY
NICKNAME: JACK SPARROW
SIGNATURE MOVE: ROD GRABBING
TRIP HIGHLIGHT: FISH OF A LIFETIME

CAM MCDONALD
NICKNAME: CAM
SIGNATURE MOVE: MAKING SURE EVERYONE HAD A COLD BEER
HIGHLIGHT: FIRST GAFF SHOT EVER. RIGHT IN THE KISSER!
BARRY THE ‘BARREL BUSTER’ PICKS HIS TOP 5 BLUEFIN TUNA LURES

1. AVENGER – MILLER VIB
   - White and purple with yellow belly, Barry
   - Yellow and purple with yellow belly, Barry
   - This killer vib is one of the best bluefin lures around. They take a beating through, and as such Barry has replaced the rear hook eyelet with a D-shackle! Super-versatile, they can be fished from 3-12 knots.

2. JB LURES – LITTLE DINGO
   - Pink and purple with streaks of yellow, Barry
   - The lure that caught the barrel bluefin on the first day of our Tasmanian adventure. The lure was also used in the World All Tackle Record capture of a whopping 167kg southern bluefin tuna.

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4. LIVELY LURES – MAC BAIT
   - Another vib style lure, the acute angle of the nose causes an erratic swimming action that proves irresistible to zippy pelagics.

5. HALCO – LASER PRO
   - Affectionately known as the ‘Brown Dog’, the Laser Pro in Kingbrown pattern is the one lure you’ve got to run when chasing southern bluefin tuna. With the ability to be trolled at seven knots, they can also keep up with a spread of skirts.

BARRY REPLACES THE REAR HOOK EYELET WITH A D-SHACKLE!

The Rock

As we motored out of our limestone fortress, a stormy orange sunrise filled our squinting eyes. The ocean was alive with large, yellow-toothed seals and sprays of baitfish. Massive sea birds worked the surface, vertically dive-bombing their quarry. This was the fishiest water I had ever seen. After 20 minutes of trolling we had a quadruple hookup on 15kg southern bluefin tuna. Seals caught and mauled our fish, reminding us this fishing paradise had other revellers.

After losing two more fish to lustful seals, Barry suggested we push south. “We’ll catch a big one near The Rock”, he offered, with gentle confidence. And sure enough, it wasn’t long before the skirted lure on the short corner screamed off. The TLD 50 offered little resistance to the blue-water beast. Seals agitated on the surface. If we got the big fish to the boat, they would be our next foe. After a 45-minute battle that brought a man to his knees, the big WhitePointer heaved too, giving the crew a chance to fight the seals with fist and fury. The flipper gang were subdued and four men hauled a behemoth bluefin over the gunwale. Grown men embraced. Stories would be told for years to come. Reputations of boat and men were forged.
SEAL VS TUNA

On the second day we mounted the 800 Sports Cruiser; a true stallion of the sea, finished in charcoal metallic paint. The boat was perfection; like a beautiful woman, everywhere we looked we saw gorgeous curves and handles.

We only trolled for 20 minutes before the first hook up. Our driver, David, kept the WhitePointer in gear. Another reel screamed off, then another. Three rods were buckled over, bluefin chasing for freedom en masse. We manned the rods as the WhitePointer slipped into low gear, bow to the sea.

After 15 minutes, I was the only one with a fish still connected. One had pulled the hook, the other was ‘sealed’. I battled on for another 45 minutes, dropping to my knees in submission several times. The fish neared the boat, a big southern bluefin. A single seal then appeared, quickly diving down to inspect my trophy. The tuna ran hard with his (and our) adversary in hot pursuit. Although no one saw the deep-water battle between tuna and beast, the imagination paints pictures of a mythical kraken versus sperm whale tussle.

In an attempt to salvage my prize, I cranked the last 100m of line back onto the tired TLD 50. The last few slithers of adrenaline fuelled my shaking arms and throbbing lower back. When the barrel bobbed up boat side the seal attacked again, ambitiously snapping at its tail with almost canine barks between breaths. The crew jumped to action like a SWAT team, grabbing the leader and sinking the gaffs before hauling the oversized tuna onboard. I collapsed, exhausted and ecstatic.