

Another Day At The Office – November 2000

Akashi & Tomiko were on their honeymoon - two days ago they were at Monkey Mia in Western Australia swimming with the dolphins. Yesterday they arrived in Cairns. Today they wanted to catch a marlin!

Phew! You have to be quick some times but that's the way of the modern world. Everything is done at a hectic pace as we all lead such busy lives and have limited down-time.

Kim Andersen, the skipper of New Moon III, eased back on the throttles. A quick change of plans, "lets try for a GT first". Akashi was handed a 2 metre spin rod loaded with 50lb braid and a BIG surface popper. "Chuck it as far as you can towards the bommie and crack as hard as you can" First cast nothing, second the same, two more brief stops, and then crash. The monster GT swallowed the popper in a boil of foam.

"Pump and wind as hard as you can!" yelled Kim. Moose the deckie (don't ever call him Jason) did his best to help as the rod buckled under the pressure as Akashi struggled to gain line. Tomiko was ready with the camera and peeled off a few shots of her husband straining under the weight of a good fish.

We soon had the 30lb GT thumping on the deck. A quick de-hook, some more happy snaps and it was back in the water.



"Try over there" yelled Kim from the tower. A few more cranks and another surface explosion but this time the hooks pulled after a brief fight. Time to head out wide for the real quarry - a giant black marlin.

The diesels purred as we passed through Grafton Passage, past Michaelmas Cay and on out to the edge of the continental shelf. The 15-20 knot north-northeaster made for less than ideal conditions as it made the seas stand up quite sharply against the shelf. There was also a raging 7 knot current heading south as well.

We had a skipping scaly mackerel on 130 lb on the starboard rigger, a small stripy on the port side, and a small green plastic squid down the middle on a straight 80.

"More marlin are generally caught in the afternoon?" I quizzed Kim.

"Yeah, from 1 to 4 is probably the best time for some reason" so we has some time to kill. "I'd expect a marlin after 1:00 pm". No sooner had we settled into a trolling pattern than the flat 80 screamed, a small stripy was quickly brought on board, bridled and sent back out.

Another school of feeding tuna was found and this time the flat 80 really howled. "Probably a good yellowfin" Kim noted. "There were plenty of them around yesterday. Real horses nudging 80lb. We had to cut them off as the gear and the anglers were just not up to the task on light tackle. If we let them have their heads too long the sharks would have had the lot." If you fell overboard out here you would not last five minutes - the tigers would have you in a flash. I now understood why all the panic is on when big fish are hooked. Its not the mad scramble to just land the fish, it's the hope of releasing it fit and healthy before the grey suits move in for the kill.

Akashi was really struggling this time - Tomiko took more photos, of course – and it took about 8 minutes to land the 30lb yellowfin but it was back in the water, bridled up on the 130 outfit in three. Moose did the job with the bait needle and I held the deck hose in the tuna's mouth - circulating fresh water over its gills to keep it alive. This was valuable bait.

No sooner had Akashi sat in the chair and clipped on the harness to the 130 when the tuna went on a slugging run. It had its head down and obviously in a bit of a panic - the rod sprang up, the line went limp and it was all over in 45 seconds. A big tiger perhaps - a frustrating way to lose such a good marlin bait. It was now lunch time and Lavain, a sun tanned, ever smiling Kiwi lass had prepared fresh fruit, ham and salad sandwiches, a good cuppa and a real treat for our Japanese clients - a big bowl of fresh yellowfin sushi!

It was bloody good too as I helped myself to three portions. Served like that - fresh from yesterdays catch and with all the right trimmings - you begin to understand why it commands such high prices in a seafood craving country like Japan.

"Kim", I said, "its almost 1 o'clock, you had better start producing the marlin we came after".

Moose began scrounging around in the bottom of the bait freezer. He pulled out what arguably is the best dead bait of them all - a two kilo oceanic queenfish that he bridled up to swim like a giant bible's lure. To see the skill of his work was amazing. The belly was sewn, lead put inside the head and the hook sewn on at just the right place to get the bait to dig down into the current. The backbone was cracked several times to allow plenty of life like action and it was over the side on the port rigger at 1:08pm.

Moose watched carefully for a few seconds to make sure it was tracking correctly. Satisfied, he took three steps up to the skipper's steering tower to get a better look. "We've got one up" yelled Kim. "Les, bring the starboard bait in, Moose get back down and drop it back. Hell it missed! Les put it back. No, hold on its back. Give it some action, Moose. It's gone. No, it's back again. Les, get that bait out and drop a small rigged stripy down to it. Hold on it's back. Moose get ready. No, gone again! #@!%" Hell, I though computer work was tough on the reflexes!

We've finally got her on - after five attempts the lit up marlin snaffled the queenie and took off on a blistering run that has the backing showing in no time. I was still struggling to bring the skipping scaly back to the boat when Akashi was in the chair, the rod put in the bucket, and the reel clips put on. Gees, that 500 pounder sure had some power! Poor Akashi wasn't sure whether he would go over the side as the marlin forced him up to full lean on numerous occasions.

There was diesel fumes all around as we backed up on the big fish. Kim barked orders, Moose took a wrap only to be blown away by the sheer power of an obviously still very green fish, and I stood by with the tagging pole.

Four more times the fish jumped, not skywards, but away from the boat in shallow powerful runs straining every muscle and putting the pressure on skipper, crew, angler and gear while Tomiko took the more photos. "Les, if I get caught up in the trace you just cut the leader with this tool" pleaded Moose "but make sure that there is a swivel behind me first!" Never really figured that one out in all the rush but luckily I was not called upon to do the deed.

"I'll give it one more try" yelled Moose and the fish came up again at the back of the boat - just tantalisingly out of reach of the tag pole. Moose took a wrap, the fish almost took him over the side, there was a faint crack and it was all over.

500lb of lit-up giant black marlin was free to fight another day.

The sheer power of the fish was awesome. The brilliant colour of the lit-up fish was beauty to behold, and the adrenaline rush was superb - but at 1:18 pm it was all over!

Akashi was shaking, his arms ached, his legs were sunburnt, but he had the broadest beamy smile on his face that told of a dream come true. On his honeymoon, with his new bride taking the photos, in one short part of the day, he had caught a monster GT, landed a prime yellowfin, and done battle with a giant black marlin. That's an experience to remember forever.

