

EPIC FEATURE

BLUEFIN TUNA HUNTING

# WHITE POINTERS HUNT SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA

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

WORDS TRAVIS GODFREDSON AND JACK MURPHY IMAGES JACK MURPHY

**A**s 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 huon 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 COASTLINE IS GUARDED BY VERTICAL CLIFFS STANDING PROUD IN THE FACE OF THE TASMAN SEA"

**THE BLUEFIN CREW**



BRUCE FRANKS GOES TO BATTLE WITH A 100KG+ BLUEFIN TUNA



A STORMY ORANGE SUNRISE FILLED OUR SQUINTING EYES



'THE ROCK', SCENE OF MANY BLUEFIN HOOKUPS



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



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



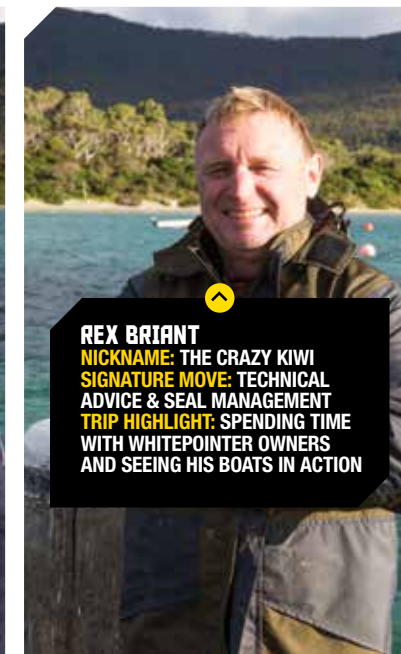
**CAM McDONALD**  
 NICKNAME: CAM  
 SIGNATURE MOVE: MAKING SURE EVERYONE HAD A COLD BEER  
 HIGHLIGHT: FIRST GAFF SHOT EVER. RIGHT IN THE KISSER!



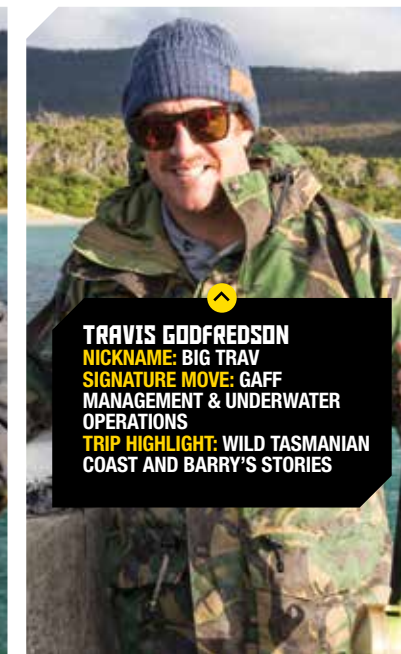
**CHRIS RICHARDSON**  
 NICKNAME: RICHIE  
 SIGNATURE MOVE: FINDS THE FISH & EPIC BROADBILL STORIES  
 TRIP HIGHLIGHT: FIGHTING A BARREL FOR TWO HOURS



**BARRY HAY**  
 NICKNAME: BARRY THE BARREL BUSTER  
 SIGNATURE MOVE: CAN SNIFF A TUNA IN A TRILLION SQUARE METRES OF OCEAN  
 TRIP HIGHLIGHTS: DOUBLE BARREL HOOKUPS



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



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



**DAVID KRUSHKA**  
 NICKNAME: THE KRUSHA  
 SIGNATURE MOVE: EXPERT BOAT DRIVER  
 TRIP HIGHLIGHT: BIGGEST FISH ON HIS BOAT - AND REX POINTING OUT THE WIPER WASHER BUTTON



SCANNING THE HORIZON

EPIC FEATURE // SOUTHERN BLUEFIN

TRUSTY STEEDS AWAIT

Bluefin grows to 170kg, but it's not size its renowned for, rather it has a reputation as a world-class table fish, with sashimi the dish of choice. The biggest tuna I'd ever seen in the flesh was about 30kg, but I'd seen photos of 100kg-plus fish – something my imagination couldn't reconcile. We'd heard fish that size had recently been caught in the area, but it appeared the weather gods cared not for our optimism. Five-metre seas, 35-knot winds and snow above 300m greeted us. Not exactly the stuff of idyllic days on the high seas.

But nonetheless our steeds awaited us at the ramp; two spectacular WhitePointer boats – shrouded in armour of silver and grey – lances at the ready. One was a 730 Sports Hardtop named Cray Nomad, while its older brother, a big, beautiful 800 Sports Cruiser, was affectionately dubbed Lie-ability. Aboard the 730, a gentle and wise old salt called Barry murmured softly through cold, thin lips. "Big tuna love this sordid weather", he assured us. Our spirits were filled.

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 spraying 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, a goliath eventually came to the surface. Seals pounced. 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.



THE 800 SPORTS CRUISER IN FULL BATTLE DRESS



THE SEALS MAKE THEIR MOVE



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

BARRY THE 'BARREL BUSTER' PICKS HIS TOP 5 BLUEFIN TUNA LURES

1 RIVER2SEA, KILLER VIB

With a blue and white body and yellow belly, Barry reckons the Killer Vib is one of the best bluefin lures going around. They take a beating though, and as such Barry has replaced the rear hook eyelet with a D-shackle! Super versatile, they can be trolled from 3-12 knots.

2 JB LURES, LITTLE DINGO

Pink and purple with streaks of yellow, the Little Dingo is the lure that caught the barrel bluefin tuna 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.

3 RIVER2SEA - KILLER VIB

Similar to lure number one, this bigger Killer Vib in a stripy blue and pink pattern is another must have. Not as battered and scared as it may seem, Barry actually scuffs the paint off these lures to bring out a more natural silver sheen.

4 LIVELY LURES, MAC BAIT

Another vibe style lure, the Mac Bait in a 'Blue Bait' pattern is great on the bluefin tuna and albacore, according to Barry. A smaller profile 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 always 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.



### 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 charging for freedom en masse. We manned the rods as the WhitePointer slipped into low gear, bow to the sea.

"THE COASTLINE IS GUARDED BY VERTICAL CLIFFS STANDING PROUD IN THE FACE OF THE TASMAN SEA"

After 15 minutes, I was the only one with a fish still connected. One had pulled the hooks; 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. 🐟



BARREL ON THE BEAM