

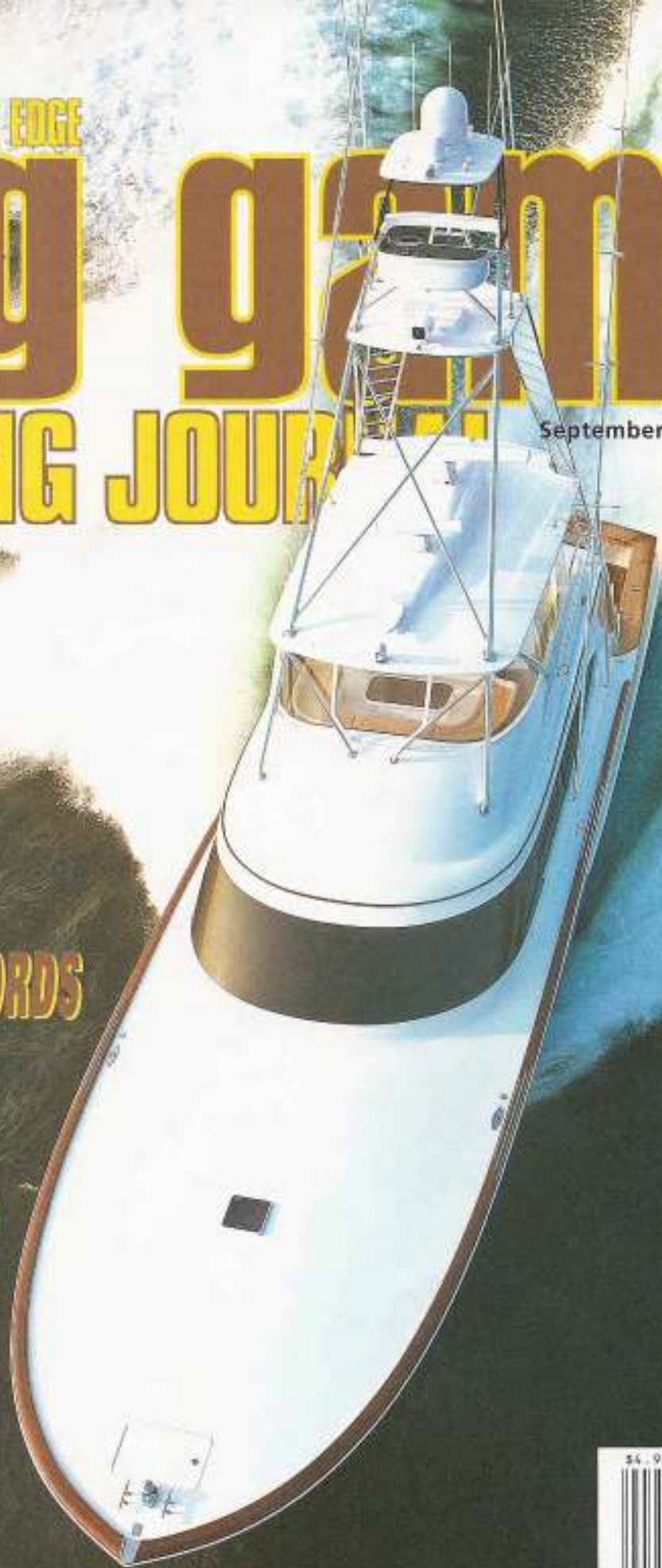
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FISHING JOURNAL

September/October 2011



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DOCK RULES & REGULATIONS

Members of the John Ryan Charter.
Left to right: John, Bubba, Walt, and Lane with some nice bluefin, yellowfin and mahl.

- All Dogs & Pets Must Be Leashed
- No Smoking or Drinking on Dock

OUTSIDE MECHANICS MUST REPORT TO OFFICE

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**Photos &
Text
by
Captain
Fred Gamboa**



The Hoilman Charter. Back Row: Mark, Andy, and Dan. Kneeling: Gator and Rocket. A nice mix of yellowfin, bluefin, mahi and tile.

I myself have always lived my life to "Experience all of life's pleasures," so why not apply this principle to offshore canyon fishing? We in the Northeast are fortunate to have the continental shelf in our backyard which holds a plethora of game fish species—the tuna clan of bigeye—yellowfin, longfin and bluefin, the pelagic visitors from the Gulf Stream—mahī, wahoo, the billfish bruisers, swordfish, blue marlin, white marlin, the ocean roaming sharks—mako, tiger, and hammerhead, and the bottom dwellers—tilefish (golden and blue) and snowy groupers. Pretty lengthy list, but with careful preparation and planning, numerous species can be landed in a single outing. Multi-species angling in the canyons has two major benefits, it allows you to constantly have rod bending action, and gives the angler a feeling of accomplishment in

landing different species on the same trip. This article will divulge the details that I have honed through the years that have allowed me to land up to six different species on a single offshore trip.

PLAN TO SUCCEED OR SUCCEED TO FAIL

If everyone had a crystal ball, fishing would be easy, however, there are tools that are at our disposal which stack the odds in our favor. Offshore water temperature charts and chlorophyll/ turbidity charts are a huge advantage. Offshore Satellite Services offers these services and more in the Northeast. When I read these charts, I look for warm core eddies that break off the Gulf Stream. I track them until they hit the continental shelf. When they do, I take a second step by confirming its clear cobalt blue water by checking the turbidity image. I then

do a confirmation on my Garmin GPS to match it all up. Then I take coordinates and calculate fuel burn. At this point, I line up the particular canyon I am fishing with proven tilefish locations and plug in counter way points of inshore hot spots to fish for bluefin on the way out. I also try to line up some of my offshore wreck positions in my waypoints I will follow for the day, and other deep holes that will hold lobster pots such as the Chicken Canyon, Glory Hole, Mud Hole, etc.

PREPARATION IS THE KEY

Presently I run a 31FA Contender powered with twin 250 four-stroke Yamahas. It's a fish around design with a cabin in the middle which allows 360-degree fishing yet a sleeping cabin at night for the crew. Probably the most important feature of this boat is rod storage for all of the rods we

employ for all of the different species we may encounter. My boat is configured with rocket launchers, gunnel rod-holders, and T-top holders to hold 24 rod set-ups. Seems excessive, but when I go into detail regarding the number of different species we hunt for on a trip offshore, it will make sense. When we leave the dock we are completely set up for everything. It's all done at the dock prior to departure. We make sure we have nine trolling set ups ready to go with lures attached. On our boat we employ a nine rod "W" pattern. We deploy single lures or deep-diving lures on the flat lines, daisy chains or dressed ballyhoo off rod tips on the third wake or one wake in front of a spreader bar. Spreader bars are located on the short-riggers fifth wake back, dressed ballyhoo off the long-rigger one wake behind a spreader bar. Let's not forget the time proven green machine with bird or large dressed horse bally in the way, way back position.

Once drags are checked we store the rods above in the rocket launchers where they will be fished. We position four rods in the order they will be deployed on the starboard side and same for port. Next order of business is four heavy duty yet light-weight conventional outfits loaded with 450 yards of 65-pound braid and 25-foot 60-pound fluorocarbon wind-ons.

We use Tallica 12 two speed reels on Terez rods and Torsa 30 reels on Trevala rods. These rods, due to rod rated strength, see triple duty as our butterfly jigging set-ups, deep-droppers for tilefish which have the backbone to handle 48 ounces of lead, yet have the finesse to be used to chunk tuna at night. Next set ups are four spinning rods used for mahi, and two larger models for jigging and pitching baits to marlin or sharks we may see on the surface.

The four lighter outfits are Stradic 4000's with 30-pound braid. The heavier outfits are equipped with Shimano Saragosa's 18000 reels on Terez rods with 65-pound braid. The last set of rods rigged is our heavy guns that we use for sword-fishing and sharking at night. We set up three Tiagra 50W's with 80-pound Momoi Diamond on 25-foot, 100-pound wind-ons.

A check is made of the miscellaneous gear aboard making sure all harpoon heads are sharp, and same with gaffs. All tail ropes are checked, boxes are full of ice, and outrigger clips are in proper working order. As far as bait for the trip, we take ballyhoo for trolling, flats of butters for chunking, mackerel and squid for swords, spearing and killies for mahi, squid for tilefish, clams for cod, and sardines for tuna chunk bait.

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The Ken Switzer Charter. Left to right: Ken, John, and Bill with some yellowfin, bluefin and mahi.

GAME PLAN TO WIN

When we leave the dock we know we have a 75 to 90 mile run, but we are always vigilant for what we can encounter on the way. Many a trip has been successful before we even get to the canyons by looking for bait slicks, birds, mammals, or breaking fish starting at the 20 fathom line. Hence, the reason why all of our spinners for mahi, and jiggging set-ups for bluefin are ready with lures attached. There are two different approaches we take when fishing the canyons to accomplish our smorgasbord.

Day Troll

On a day troll we try to arrive at first light to employ our nine rod spread. We troll the canyon edges working as shallow as 70 to 80 fathoms zigzagging out to 120 fathoms looking for life. If a couple of hours have passed with no action, we spice

up the troll by running close to lobster pots. Once we observe which way the current is running we run straight into it. This avoids tangling lines that can catch in props, also mahi and other species are usually feeding into the current as we approach from behind. As we near a pot my mate will walk to the front of the boat and toss a handful of cut bait towards the poly-ball, that will bring the fish to the surface allowing us to inspect size and amount of fish, this gives us the choice to either catch them on the troll or come back after the spread has passed them and target them with light tackle. After some mahi hookups gets everyone pumped up, we look for the mammals, and my favorites are Risso dolphins or pilot whales. The Risso's are bigger than common dolphin with white blotches. I will pound the area hard looking for bait underneath them. Another

favorite visual is small skipjack, which I refer to as bigeye candy. Some of my memorable surface flotsam was a weed line that was as long as, and wide as a football field which held hundreds of mahi. Another great visual was longline gear that drifted near the 150 fathom curve off the 100 Square area of the Hudson Canyon. I trolled parallel to that gear getting some mahi and a nice blue marlin hookup and release.

Once the charter has caught enough tuna to fulfill their needs and we have plenty of mahi in the box, we employ an all ballyhoo spread to entice a marlin. We continue trolling until late morning then shift gears all together. At this point we stow away the trolling gear and break out the tilefish rods. During my troll I will make sure that we are in striking distance of my many proven tilefish locations. Once we have landed a

couple dozen tiles we begin to pot hop our way out of the canyons. On our way home we usually make a stop at the inshore grounds to jig a bluefin at wherever the hot spot is at that time of year. On some trips we hit an offshore wreck in 150 to 200 feet of water to jig up a nice bruiser pollack or cod. Usually this track also takes me to inshore pots which have small chicken mahi and tons of triggers—another tasty treat.

Overnighter

Our overnight trips start late morning looking for life on the way to the canyons. We try to get to the canyons around lunchtime and begin deep-dropping for tilefish. This breaks up the trip a bit and gives the crew a chance to see fish right off the bat. Most of my tilefish spots are usually near pots so after an hour of deep-

dropping, we begin pot-hopping for another hour. Usually at this time I am wrestling the mahi rods away from the anglers because they tend to enjoy this fishing too much.

I have to refocus their minds that we still have tuna fishing to do! It's now around 3 p.m., which gives us six hours of trolling and allows me to figure out where we will be setting up for the night. I employ the same trolling techniques described earlier with an emphasis on tuna. I tend to barely move in shallower than the 100 line and will go as deep as the 300 fathom curve looking for my target. Once I zero in on the bait and tuna I pound that area knowing that I will be fishing there at nightfall. Once night comes I deploy the hydro-glow lights and turn on the chum-chucker. Depending on current and wind I will either drift or

throw the hook. My first rods that are set are two sword rigs on Redi-Rig floats 150 and 250 feet from the boat, 150 feet and 300 feet deep. I put a rigged squid on one rod, and a mackerel on the other rod. I then set up a shark rig for pitch-baiting if a mako comes near the boat, this rod will usually have a fresh fillet of skipjack or bluefish. I then set up the squid jigging rods for fresh live bait, and also for fresh calamari for the crew. I also make sure we have two rods ready for mahi that will show up in the slick. Then I stagger my chunking rigs. Depending on current and where I am marking the fish, I will stagger the baits with weight, I will also free-line baits in the slick with no weight.

Years ago I remember one night when we marked the hell of the tuna and bait at 100 feet. After hours of no



Left to right: Dan Bombaci, Chuck Rutar and Fred Monaco with some yellowfin, mahi, tiles and triggers.



Left to right: Art Hoover, Larry Bruskin, Chris Messick, and Glen Palmer with a mako, and some mahi and yellowfin.



Right to Left: Rocco Scollomacchia and Heather, with some mahi, yellowfin and bluefin.

hits one of my customers asked if he could jig with my new butterfly system, I had just got some Glow jigs from Shimano Rep. Doug Rusch and let him try it. He dropped the jig down to 100 feet and worked it back up the column, whammo! That night we brought the fish up to the lights and went 15 for 16 on 60-to 70-pound yellowfin only landing two on bait. So after that night we always have two jigging set-ups with Shimano flat-sided butterfly jigs ready to go.

At midnight I take a count of fish. If we have enough tuna in the box and lots of action I give the charter an option to drift in the deep for swords until daybreak, if not, we maintain the slick. After a night of chunking and previous days trolling we check to see how filled the box is. Normally I impose a two fish per person maximum on tuna since we have the other species in the box. If the box is filled, I will give the charter a choice of trolling for marlin,

pot-hopping for more mahi, or deep-dropping for more tilefish or head inshore for bluefin. If we still have time, I will offer them the option to drop on a wreck for pollock and cod on the way in, or look for triggers and chicken mahi on the near shore pots.

SAFETY IN THE DEEP

Taking a trip to the edge is not for the faint of heart. There are many safety precautions I take and gear that I have checked before every trip. On our canyon trips we like to have a following sea with less than 15 mile per hour winds. I will not venture out in seas more than 2 to 4 feet—that's my rule of thumb. We keep our charters to four fishermen or less, and use a USCG licensed co-captain as a mate. We have an eight man Switlik Rescue Pod aboard, with a state-of-the-art epirb. We also have a satellite phone and have a float plan filed and left at the dock with two fellow charter boat captains. We make sure all of our medical aid kits are restocked with bandages, band-aids and ointments. I always re-check my ditch bag to insure if we ever had to abandon ship I have everything I need to get us picked up quickly. We make sure we carry plenty of water and extra food rations. For the motors, I carry extra filters and plugs, and other essentials.

THE END OF A REWARDING TRIP

At the end of a trip, my definition of success is each angler catching at least three different species, calm seas and plenty of laughs amongst the crew. This type of fishing maybe more work, but the rewards of multi-specie fishing gives us a sense of accomplishment like no other in angling. 🐟

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CAPTAIN FRED GAMBOA

is U.S.C.G. licensed captain. He has fished the coast of New York and New Jersey south to the Florida Keys for the past 15 years. He started his career as a writer and seminar speaker for the Fisherman Magazine under his mentor Capt. Peter Barrett. After numerous requests to take audience members fishing after speaking engagements he decided to pursue his passion and step up to the world of charter fishing. He has been guiding clients with his organization Andreas Toy Charters for the past 10 years. He fishes the inshore waters out to the canyons in the Northeast, and also guides clients to sailfish, tuna and mahi in South Florida and the Keys. He has been a pro staff member for Shimano and Contender Boats for the past eight years. Presently, Capt Fred is actively involved in the tagging program "Save the Bluefin Tuna" project under John Logioxo.

This past winter Capt Fred broadened his horizons and participated in helping to promote catch and release for billfish in Northern Peru. This experience ranked as one of his all time favorite achievements, the ability to share his knowledge with local crews on maximizing fishing. Once the marlin bite slowed he targeted wahoo with hi-speed trolling techniques. He then showed the Peruvian crews how to deep-drop, catching cabrilla grouper which rounded out the Peruvian version of smorgasbord fishing. The key message the crews figured out was maximize their time fishing offshore, and also that billfish are worth more alive than dead which keeps the tourists coming back. Feel free to reach out to Capt Fred at www.andreastoycharters.com to inquire about fishing locally or abroad.

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