



Neil Dunstan:  
*Ebb &  
Flow...*

# A Yarn With Les Brown

**S**ome weeks ago I got a phone call from a chap whom I had met a couple of years ago when he bought a Quintrex thirteen foot hull off me that I had for sale.

The chap's name was Les Brown and he was a bit of a local character around Sarina. Les was well known around the local fishing circles as he was the local expert at catching Black Spot Blue Parrot fish which are a sought after fish for their very good eating qualities. Les asked me if he could come around to talk to me, so we made arrangements to meet that afternoon at my house.

When he arrived he asked me if I remembered me telling him that I knew a couple of spots where Bluies could be caught locally and I said that I did remember the conversation. He was wondering if I could show him these spots as all his usual fishing spots for Bluies would soon be out of bounds due to the construction of a new set of coal loading wharves to be built in the area he fishes.

With all the stupid new security rules banning fishermen from fishing near strategically important structures such as the Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay coal loading wharves, and the new facility to be built at Dudgeon Point by an Indian company, he had nowhere to go that he knew.

In our previous conversation I had suggested that he purchase a simple, cheap, hand held GPS and when he arrived he had his

brand new Garmin GPS 72 which he had no idea how to use.

Now Les is seventy seven years of age and had limited education. Like many of his generation, he was raised on a farm near Stanthorpe and worked on the farm from a very early age at a time when education in the bush was pretty sparse.

No matter, so I set too to get him started on the GPS and after some time he began to get a bit of a handle on it, however he was struggling, so I said that maybe I should take him out one day and show him both the GPS and some spots I knew that might be worth trying for bluies.

We made the arrangements for me to go out with Les to his favourite fishing spot at Dudgeon Point so he turned up at my place at 6.00 am ready to go. We took off in his old Ford station wagon along the bush track to a place called Bally Keel where he has a fishing shack which he shares with another old fishing mate.

He got out the old grey Fergie tractor with the tinnie on the back, and we went down the track through the sand dunes and launched the boat on the beach in a lovely sheltered bay. We did not catch much that day as we were targeting school mackerel and they were just not around, but I got to talk to Les a bit, as he seemed to be a really interesting character.

As I mentioned he was raised on a farm and knew all about hard work from a very early age, even

though he was quite a slightly built fellow. I reckon that he would be lucky to be five foot six in his high heeled boots and eight stone wringing wet.

He shifted to the Mackay area as a young fellow and went cane cutting to save enough money to buy a bush block which he cleared by hand using an old tractor and a chain saw. He cut logs from this block and sold them to the local saw mill until he had enough cleared land to start his market garden where he grew mainly tomatoes and watermelons.

He also earned money as a horse breaker and was well known for his ability with horses and bought, broke in and sold horses for many years. I guess once I started to realise how he had spent his working life I could see how he was still able to go fishing regularly at the age of seventy seven.

I mentioned to Les that he seemed to go fishing fairly regularly and he said that he went usually four times a week, so I said that he must eat a fair bit of fish. His answer was a bit of an eye opener as he said that he had steak for breakfast, then had fish for dinner, and also fish for tea every day, with an occasional roast on Sundays.

As he had never smoked or drank alcohol, tea or coffee, his only drink that he enjoyed was raspberry cordial - so I guess that would explain why he could still wear me out on a day's fishing trip.

Interestingly he also had no TV and no radio, and his relaxation was to read





the paper after tea, and was then in bed by 7.30 pm. However, he was up at 4.00 am, working in his garden or going fishing. No wonder he turned up at my place at 6.00 am.

Les asked me if I would like to go for a trip with him out to Rocky Dam Creek which is about twenty k's south of Sarina, so I arrived at his place for a late start at 7.00 am, and off we went, towing his other boat which is used mostly to fish Rocky Dam Creek.

We spent the day fishing out of his thirteen foot barra boat with a 25 h.p. Yamaha, and he had a series of specific fishing spots which he fished at specific times of the tide and apart from lots of catfish and small Jewfish, we caught a number of nice blue salmon and he caught a nice king salmon as well.

While we were sitting on one of his spots another boat came around the corner, pulled over to the far bank, and all on board hopped out with a couple of big dogs, and disappeared into the bush. I said to Les that maybe they had some crab pots up one of the gullies that run off the creek, however they did not appear for quite a while that we were there.

Eventually when we were back at the ramp loading the boat, they turned up, so I asked the guy driving how they went, as you do, and I got a bit of a shock when he said that they had got two and indicated to look in the boat. There were two dirty big wild pigs on the front seat which were still alive but were tied up - so that explained why he had taken a couple of whacking great big dogs on a fishing trip!

I have been out a couple more times with Les and I am working on finding some new blueie spots for him where he can apply his secret method of catching them. I have been sworn to secrecy about his method but I can tell you that it is bloody ingenious and he really can catch blueies.

So I have learned quite a few things, lately.

One is that if you have the desire and can look after your health reasonably well, there is no reason why you cannot keep fishing well into your eighties.

The other is that no matter how much you think you know about fishing, there is still plenty more to learn and you never stop picking up new ideas..

-ND

## It's Getting A Bit Hotter Now

**A**s the dry season comes to an end in North Queensland the weather pattern changes from cool weather around 15 to 24 degrees with persistent south easterly trade winds of 15 to 25 knots, to 24 to 34 degrees with variable winds. In the dry season the skies are usually clear and sunny whilst in the wet season it is more likely to be raining and overcast.

One of my favourite past times is to take the Trojan down to Cape Palmerston, an area of mangrove creeks and estuaries where I camp in the boat for between four days to sometimes more than a week. There I just muck around with a bit of live baiting and set a few

crab pots, whilst in between time I do a lot of reading and listen to the cricket and football. Often I will be lying on my bunk reading and a decent fish will take a live bait and hook itself and I complain, because I have to get up and land the fish! I guess I am a bit spoilt.

Recently I decided on a trip to the Cape as once the weather starts to hot up it gets a bit too uncomfortable camping up a mangrove creek. Besides the increase in the population of sandflies and mossies, the barra season closes about this time, too. I picked a time of fairly small tides with some reasonable sea conditions for the trip down of about fourteen n. miles. Travelling at my normal pace of around six knots it took me two and a half hours to get to the Cape where I set my crab pots and then went to my normal anchoring spot to set up for the night.

After a couple of days I had a nice catch of mostly blue salmon and large dusky flathead in the ice box but had caught no legal crabs. I decided to head out around the Cape for the day and see if there were any reef fish around as there is some nice coral along the front of the headland. The last time I

was down at the Cape I pulled lures over these coral reefs and among other fish I caught, I managed to land a nice estuary cod of around thirty pounds or so.

After an hour or so I had nothing so I was heading for the sheltered side of the Cape to anchor and have lunch. When passing through the heavy wash that was coming back off the headland I got hit by a decent fish and went into capture mode.

This consists of steering the boat out to sea, being careful to keep tension on the line and at the same time winding in the other rods so as to avoid getting them tangled together and losing the fish.

Once this was achieved I grabbed the rod with the fish on and had a look to see what line had been taken when I noticed that there were only about ten turns of line left on the reel. That first run had taken 250 metres of twelve kilo mono plus nearly 100 metres of backing! I had to lock down on him or lose the lot, so I started the long haul to get it back to the boat.

After half an hour or so and another dozen wild runs I had the fish alongside and it turned out to be a decent sized long tail tuna or northern bluefin



tuna. As I don't keep tuna I decided to try to get him into the boat with the landing net so that he didn't get knocked around too much and this was quite difficult as I was on my own. However, eventually I had him on the boat but there was no way that he was going to survive.

The fish had taken a Classic 160 lure in Qantas colours, but had hit it so hard that he had completely swallowed it and had the three trebles in his throat and gills and was bleeding badly.

I unhooked the fish and dropped him into the outboard well (one of the advantages of a hull with an old fashioned well) where I bled him out before trying to get him into the icebox. As he had no chance of fitting in the icebox I brought him inside and wrapped him in a wet sack that I kept for crabs. By the time I made coffee and had lunch it was time to head back inside the Cape as it is very difficult to get in when the tide is low so off I went

After an hour or so as I was approaching the beach at Cape creek camping ground, there were dozens of people fishing along the beach where the creeks all run out, and as it was school holiday time there was quite a crowd camped

there. I slowly nosed up to the beach and asked a group of people there if anyone liked to make sushi from tuna . . .

Well, there was quite a response so I said that maybe they might like to make some out of this fish - and I chucked it out on the sand amongst them.

There was a hell of a scatter and most of them didn't believe me that I was giving the fish to them, as most of them had never seen a fish that big.

Eventually they realised that I was fair dinkum, as I started to reverse out from the beach and the last I saw of the fish was a mob of people arguing about who got what, so I hope that they worked it out and it was not wasted, as it was a magnificent fish which would have been released if it had a chance of survival.

*Neil Dunstan.  
Sarina Beach.*

