

# THE TACKLE BOX



from scratch, *literally*, and purchase every single piece of terminal tackle - hooks, lures, swivels, line (not to forget the rods and reels, tools, nets, etc!) needed to set up a typical coastal trailerboat that was going to see duty anywhere from Bermagui to Boroloola.

The series was inspired by our decision not to keep dragging tackle from one boat to another; with *Whim-Away*, we decided to start afresh and purchase its own tackle platform - so nothing, not even a sleeve or a split shot, was taken from the bigger 'mothership' tackle boxes.

What we have here, is one of the most complete guides to setting up a boat's fishing arsenal ever

## Setting Up For Coastal Sportfishing

Introducing a very special compilation of a set of nine articles written by F&B's tackle guru, Aaron Concord.

The first of the nine columns was published in F&B #95, and the last in F&B #105. However, in real time, with hold-ups, the columns were published over a 15 month period.

As a result, the editorial team at F&B felt that because of the time-

### With Aaron Concord

lapse between the first and last column, a lot of the impact and value of this unique series was lost - and many readers noted they had missed one or two of the columns on the way through.

What makes the series so unusual - and so special - is that Aaron's mission here was to start

published. For boatowners starting from scratch, it's a working 'shopping list' right down to the part numbers. For boatowners wanting to upgrade, what you have here is a complete guide to the latest thinking in terminal tackle.

- PW, F&B



## Fitting Out A Brand New Rig

### & Why Defining The Task Is So Important

**I** first became involved in this project when it became apparent that Peter & Ruth simply didn't have enough time to contemplate what was needed to make a truly flexible and versatile tackle system for the new cat.

In truth, they were so busy coping with the production of F&B every month, I felt it was my humble duty to offer to look after the 'cat for them, and suggested Ruth could just write out the cheques, Pete could hand over the keys - *hey!* - and I'd send them lots of really good pics from the remote corners of Australia . . . It seemed like a practical solution to me, that's for sure, and under the circumstances, the least I could do . . .

"Aaron," they said, "We are grateful for your offer to fish the cat all over the place for us, but the answer, mate, is, um, *No Thanks!* It's gonna be a tough job, and having worked our bums off this past ten years, we're gunna do it, come hell or high water."

Still you can't blame a bloke for trying, eh? Apart from which, starting out from scratch and setting up an entire fishing system for a new boat is a fantastic opportunity and challenge, so I was sort of happy to settle for *second prize* . . .

Actually, the more we delved into it, the more we realized that we were doing what new boat buyers are always doing - starting from scratch, and building up systems that will enable the boat owner to fish an incredibly wide variety of species.

So, here is a range of ideas and

thoughts that have gone through my head every time I see a new boat being fitted out for the first time.

It was PW's view that readers generally felt fitting out a new boat with fishing tackle is a *bank-breaking* chore. Unfortunately, it is a process that people who want to fish from their new boat can't bypass, either.

So my view is that we should thus make sure the process is ultimately rewarding in every sense - purchasing gear that suits both the budget and your needs; gear that will be a pleasure to use; gear that won't fail under pressure - and gear that will last as long as possible.

In the bigger picture sense, I also see it as an exciting challenge that will lead to many enjoyable expeditions on the water, chasing wonderful seafood with friends and family.

### Starting Out

People are bombarded with too much info too quickly when they enter the local tackle store, or at least that's the way they felt when I still worked in one.

At the other extreme is having far too many choices and no one qualified to help you wade through all the possibilities.

Confusion, particularly for people unfamiliar with fishing gear and the varied techniques of successfully hooking, playing out then landing a fish, is higher than you'd think.

Think of the last time you purchased an item (a fishing "combo" rod and reel is a classic) that you paid \$40, \$80, or \$150 and subsequently discovered it didn't go anywhere near living up to your expectations. Most people then get frustrated by the gear; the item gets put in the shed or closet, never to be used again.

It leaves a bad taste in your mouth about buying more gear that could cause more heartache.

It's bad enough to have a rod and reel that is lack lustre, let alone a range of terminal tackle that is inadequate or simply not needed. Most of these are impulsive buys, without any real forethought as to how it will help as part of your armoury. Ends up being money wasted.

### Research Is Needed

New clients generally haven't put in the necessary research into what they want and more importantly, they rarely explore the cost involved purchasing adequate gear to do the job. Once purchased and used, you can't give it back for a refund.

The grape vine, particularly word of mouth recommendations from friends can carry massive weight. Use the information taken from like-minded friends to base your own individual slant on your gear.

Another useful resource that is worth tapping into is any fishing club or association. I have been a member of the Brisbane Sport Fishing Club for over a decade. I am also a member of the Sunshine Coast Game Fishing Club.

Though the emphasis is on sport and game fishing, it is surprising to most to find the degree of depth on all facets of the sport. Members regularly participate in a vast array of fishing styles and target species and the next little pearl of wisdom relating to catching bream on live bait down by the old oyster lease from a person you believed only targeted billfish, won't be the first, or the last.

Remember, all of the people in these clubs had a starting point, whether it is chasing bream, whiting, bass, flathead, yellow belly or some other bread and butter species, before scaling through the ranks to the top of their sport or specialising in a particular species.

Reading material, including books, magazines and internet sites



(particularly on-line forums), can see a massive amount of information that can be waded through at your own speed and not someone else's.

Magazines such as our own F&B, allow people to use an article of interest as a reference for years to come. Having the gear and methods used as part of a feature article allows for a more focused approach to selecting gear that will allow the reader to become a proponent of that facet of the sport.

I grew up absorbing all manner of reading material, though the fishing I wanted to do saw the relevant articles deconstructed into location, species and relevant gear. Then I would save up and buy the best gear I could afford that would do the task easily, not necessarily the top of the line models.

On-line chat boards allow novice anglers the opportunity to ask questions relating to their own set of circumstances and receive advice from a global network. Sites such as Fishnet, Sportsfish, Ausfish or the Pakula Marlin Bar are great starts as they are Aussie based: the info will relate to local conditions and tackle.

To help prevent recreational anglers buying gear that is inadequate or not needed, I simply ask questions relating to their own individual situation.

Frequently asked questions directed at clients cover the whole spectrum.

- What is the boat and crew's level of competency? ie, are they tournament based fishos or new chums to the sport?

- Do you wish to target fish with live bait, dead bait, lures or fly gear?

- Do you wish to troll or cast for your fish? What level of quality can you afford?

- How large is the boat and what is its main functions i.e., dam, river, estuary or offshore fishing?

- How many are to fish at any one time?

- What are the species that the customer wishes to target?

- Are they after a "catch everything" approach. Are there women and children fishing as well?

- Do you mostly fish locally, or is more emphasis placed on holiday destinations?

- How differently do you fish in these areas compared to closer to

home?

*(No point having barra outfits on Fraser Island trying to surf fish tailor if this is the basis of your annual pilgrimage)*

Like a computer, the more relevant detailed information you can give me or another tackle

professional, the more concise and accurate



the answer will be.

If you say "I wish to catch bream", I can come up with dozens of outfits to cover the dozens of locations bream can be caught from.

If the question is "Can I target bream lure casting small minnow lures around sunken trees in the rivers of Northern NSW", then you have eliminated many otherwise useless outfits to your situation.

The reason for the range of personal questions is to develop answers for your personal situation. It is your boat, your gear and your money being spent and as such, it ends up being VERY personal.

I am only too happy to guide people to the tackle that will do the job.

In general, there will be three tiers of quality, from starter, mid range to top end product. All will do the job but it becomes a personal choice as to which way the client will go, based on experience, level of enthusiasm and their overall budget.

If you run out of options or people to ask these questions I am only too happy to help guide people to the outfits that will be a pleasure to use and not a hindrance.

Starting a rapport with your local tackle store can help in the long term at fitting you out with the right gear for your situation. Like any circumstance where purchasing goods is envisaged

over the long term, having a relationship built on trusting a professional's judgement goes a long way.

If advice is shortcoming, or you do not have the luxury of a capital city sized store to rummage through, you are more than welcome to contact me through Sea Media – with emails the preferred communication tool.

**What are we doing with *Whim-Away's* tackle?**

Well, to put it mildly, I have been busy applying all of the above to purchasing and organising the complete tackle arrangement for the new cat.

Over the following pages, I will deconstruct the tackle that I have chosen to make the boat a totally independent rig from Sea Media's principal project boat, *Dusty Rover*.

From the line chosen, to the terminals, lures, hook rigs, lure spreads, tackle storage and any other necessary accessories from gaffs to de-hooking devices, all will be revealed and why.

Every possible scenario must be accounted for. It does no one any good if the boat is fishing for yellowfin tuna out of Narooma to find

the crimping pliers are on *Dusty Rover* in Cairns!

Likewise, the

leader material you need up in Borroloola for javelin fish does you no good if it's been left back at the Gold Coast.

It is this need for self-reliance that sets *Whim-Away* apart from any other of Sea Media's vessels that led me to writing about setting up new boats in the first place.

**F&B**

## Creating A Shakespeare 'High Five' Package

**P**W wasn't sure if he'd asked the right guy to help him outfit F&B's cat with fishing gear.

The base parameters are simple: Prepare the boat to fish from Borroloola NT to Eden, NSW !

There is an emphasis on offshore fishing, though casting baits and lures in rivers and creeks will be part of the scenario.

Most of the offshore fishing will revolve around trolling for “fillet release” species, such as spanish mackerel, yellowfin tuna, dolphin fish etc. There must be outfits to be able to deep-water jig for amberjack and yellowtail king fish as well.

PW also wants to revisit the NSW Southern grounds around Montague Island to live bait for yellowtail kingfish, whilst cubing for yellowfin tuna on the Twelve Mile off Bermagui, rates highly on his ‘most desirable’ list.

Sport fishing in the Gulf of Carpentaria is another region on his wish list.

Now, here is the rub...*there can be only 5 outfits to cover all the above!*

Having perused the annual Shakespeare catalogue from cover to cover, PW wanted to have the outfits made up from the Shakespeare collection of rods and reels. Only.

Okay – so this made the project a helluva lot harder of course, and I couldn’t help myself; I had to ask the obvious – why is it so? As it happens, the Shakespeare catalog is a very good one, especially the way they outline their line capacities and ratings as well as provide other useful info on their gear. But for PW to be so insistent, I figured there had to be a reason . . . and there is.

I’ll let him tell you the story, coz as an unrepentant tackleholic, no-one will ever believe I understood, much less accepted his reasoning . . . well, almost, anyway! I let him explain:

*“When I started fishing as a kid with my Dad on Tuross Lakes, NSW in the 1950’s, we all used handlines, and we caught plenty of flathead, bream and whiting. In the 1960s, I graduated to a solid glass Jarvis Walker rod with a little Mitchell spinning reel. Fishing in places such as the Goodradigbee River, Lake Eucumbene, Burrinjuck Dam, Tuross Lakes, Batemans Bay, Bermy (etc) I caught everything from trout to flathead, flounder to tuna on that one unbreakable rod and long suffering reel. In the 1970’s, after a stint building my own gear from ragoon poles (for beach fishing) to specialist ‘glass blanks for LBG pelagics, we started serious offshore boat fishing (in our 15’6” Hartley half cab) on the NSW south coast using Gospel jigs,*

*WK lures, Penn Senators and the early “Fenwick” game rods. Rods and reels started to sprout off the boat(s) in a mad profusion of length, types and commitment. Boy, were we committed!*

*We used to carry enough gear to start a tackle shop. But it was a wonderful fishing era, and through the 1970s and into the 1980’s, we fished the spots off the charts along the NSW south coast with increasing intensity and sophistication of effort, gear and boats.*

*In 1985, this period culminated in the launching of the big 44’ Outsider game boat, Tracey-J(5). It had to be that long to carry all the tackle. Jack Erskine took an early retirement on the spend for gear. We had the best; it WAS awesome equipment. We had pairs of 6kg, 10, 15, 24, 37, 65kg IGFA Penn International outfits, and a dozen or more secondary outfits including multiple Shimano TLDs and specialist, Erskine-modified Penn spinning outfits, a full time deckie and a highly polished Diners card. We caught heaps of fish, learned a lot, wrote zillions of words, published countless magazines, including the very special “Tournament Fisherman”.*

*It’s modern history that we lost the lot in the late 80’s for reasons that are best forgotten, except to remind today’s heady borrowers that it’s hard to keep your head above water when bank interest rates top 20%.*

*It’s taken many years to claw our way back up to the point where we can once again contemplate spending more hours fishing and exploring this wonderful country than staring at a computer, or leaving the office a 3.20 am after beating down the 347th deadline!*

*So to this writer, going back to fishing is almost like starting over. I don’t need, or want 26 outfits anymore. I’m not sure I even want five; I don’t want to work at the tackle, I want to use it. I don’t want to spend hours rigging; I want to fish. I want to study the currents, the birds, the sea, not text books and rigging manuals. And I don’t really want to catch and keep anything other than a good feed of mahi-mahi, mackerel, or the occasional albacore . . . hhhmmmmnnn - yes please!*

*I haven’t got time to maintain more than a handful of outfits in perfect condition, and I’ve learned it is far better to keep just a handful of outfits – and the terminal gear - in PERFECT*

*condition, than it is to have 20 outfits running at 80-90% of their potential - outfits you’ve hardly had time to learn how to use, let alone master.*

*I think I’ve learned a fair bit about fishing these past 50 years. I’ve learned that you can’t buy fishing success, no matter how much you spend on tackle. I’ve learned that the guy with the biggest boat doesn’t necessarily get the biggest fish. And it doesn’t matter a stuff if you have 30 state-of-the-art outfits on board – you can’t fish in a green zone, and you’ll catch zip in a desert.*

*Through my lifetime of fishing, the most memorable catches were all caught on some of the most basic outfits that I’d learned to use really well. I had to – I couldn’t afford anything else.*

*One was a special 7’0” glass boat rod I assembled with a classic 650 Alvey sidecast outfit. I’d caught some 40 species of fish – from marlin to trout - on that rig before some bastard stole it out of the boat. And another was a very old Ugly Stick (Aaron, I’m sorry to say I have utterly no idea what the model numbers were) that didn’t have roller guides but together with my trusty star drag Penn Senator, we used that outfit for years and years and years. It was a wonderful rod/reel combo that caught tons of fish.*

*So when the good people at Shakespeare sent me up their new 2004 catalog a few months back, I have to say this little (old!) black duck got a bit misty eyed, staring at the ‘new’ Ugly Stiks, as my mind rewound the years to all those wonderful adventures we shared on the beautiful South coast of NSW . . . So Aaron, your mission, should you choose to accept, is to select the best five outfits in the Shakespeare catalog for a fisherman very keen to smell the salt and cube the pillies, once again . . . “*

O.K, so now we know the brand that PW is familiar with, along with his target species, let’s look at the trolling outfits.

For the main trolling outfits I would pick for the rods, a pair of Ugly Stik Custom Stand Up Stiks, leaning towards the 15-24kg SUS3050 model. Shakespeare put Fuji hardloy guides and a roller tip on these rods. I would suggest that they would need less maintenance than the TR3050R fully rolled model that is also on offer. I say this since the tropical areas that the

boat will be fishing cause corrosion so easily, even with a good maintenance regime.

The SUS3050 and TR3050R are part of the dedicated range of game fishing rods that Shakespeare has.

With the exception of large yellowfin and marlin, the majority of fish that are likely to be encountered will be 30 kilos or less, so I think that going any heavier in line rating will not be necessary.

Coupled to these rods, you couldn't do much better than the Albacore Big Game reels that are made as their top shelf game fishing reel range.

The Albacore 2975-031 which holds 600 metres of 20 kg line will more than suffice, particularly since EVERY outfit will either have a Gsp (Braid) top shot of 300 metres or will be filled completely with a Gelspun product to increase reel capacity.

If you filled two Albacores with 24 kg mono as backing, then top shotted with between 300-500 of 24 kg braid, your total capacity would be closer to the 1000m mark. More than ample for the vast majority of fish that are likely to be pursued and light enough to jig with, or to stand holding the outfit waiting for your live bait to be eaten.

If I had picked

the 2975-051, which is the 50 lb class reel, you are adding 500 grams of weight to the reel, which in my eyes is too heavy. I have to take into account that Ruth Cunningham is the other angler, and she certainly is NOT 6 feet tall and 110 kg! It would be too heavy for her to hold for any periods of time.

The third trolling rod would be a utility player: something you can cast slugs and poppers at tuna, mackerel and queenfish. It can be used for jiggling in shallower water. It would also be a handy live and dead bait rig.

The most versatile outfit here would be a blue water spin outfit.

I think most people who fish the big bays and close offshore Australia wide,

would have owned an Ugly Stik BWS 1101, 1706 or GB1800 at some point.

All of these rods are 7 to 8 feet in length and are rated at 6-10 kg in line class.

The Ugly Stik 2000 Plus BWS 1706 has the length (at 7'6) as well as the line rating of 6.0- 9.5kg that would lend itself to casting baits and lures, as well as the third trolling rod as the long or "shot gun" position. I would have the rubber butt cap removed and a gimble fitted so that when trolling, the rod won't rock around in its rod holder.

If you filled a Catera Saltwater 4570 spin reel full of 20 or 30 lb braid, you would go close to having 500m of 20, or 430m of 30, which is enough capacity for serious blue water and bay work. If anything, the retrieve ratio of 4.3:1 might make it

at snags or troll snaggy banks and sand banks for bream to barra.

The key here is having versatility. Baitcasters of appropriate weight could also be used, though they lack the ability to cast light lures or baits, especially into the wind. This one will come down to personal preference.

However, sticking to the spin outfits I would choose the Ugly Stik Lite SP1170-2M, which is a 2.1m (7 feet) rod that has a line rating of 3-7 kg and more importantly, a lure casting weight of 3.5-17.5 grams, which covers all of the likely soft plastic and hard body lures that are going to be used, be it Boroloola or Eden. The Ugly Stik Lite rods come with stainless steel guides and importantly for lure casting, cork grips for better feel through the rod blank.

The reels I would match to this pair of rods are the K2 Xtreme XFD, model number 2525-040. These reels have a snappy 4.8:1 gear ratio and will

accommodate around 380m of 4.5kg braid or 300m of 6.8kg braid.

The K2 Xtreme reels are Shakespeare's performance based spin reels, with a dependable front drag, 8 bearings for smooth operation and a use of corrosion resistant materials to ensure they are around for many seasons of work.

So, there you have it. Five outfits that will cover all aspects of fishing that the new project boat will likely encounter.

Sure, some of the items I have chosen are a compromise, though I reckon for those who have a limited budget, fish from boats that don't have the storage for 32 outfits or travel constantly, you can get your gear down to some core outfits that will multi-task. And these days, it is more vital than ever that we try to get more versatility for your money.

**F&B**



a sweaty affair if high speed spinning for fussy pelagics, though there aren't many big spin reels made that have a retrieve ratio of 5:1 or better.

Well so far, we have taken 3 of the 5 allotted slots for our tackle.

Did I hear PW say he wanted something to cast baits and lures in the estuaries with?

Perhaps a pair of spinning outfits that can handle 10-14 lb braid?

PW wants to try his hand at using soft plastics, so a spin outfit would be more appropriate. They can still fire small slugs and poppers out of sight and are easy to bait fish with. You can also use them for tossing minnow lures

## Part 2/8

# The Trolling Lures

**Whim-Away's primary fishing functions will be offshore based and as such, the lures and tackle reflect this.**

Any time that *Whim-Away* is doing anywhere from 4 to 18 knots, be it in a pure fishing mode or perhaps to conserve fuel during long voyages, there is a set of lures that can go over the transom. Whether it is for trolling the Gulf's river mouths for queenfish and trevally, or fishing with purpose for Montague Island's yellowfin tuna and kingfish, there are lures that will do the job. And do it well.

### The Skirted Trolling Range.

The selection of lures was purchased from Wellsys Tackle on the Sunshine Coast, so there is an emphasis on the lures that Paul and Helen Wells stock. The associated hook rigs are pre-made custom rigs that Paul has in stock as well to suit the lures involved.

This is a selection of resin and metal headed lures that have vinyl "octopus" skirts attached.

These lures are designed to work within the surface layer of water, smoking, bubbling and swimming along. They are meant to represent feeding and/or distressed baitfish.

They DO NOT come with hooks.

Instead, the angler has to rig the lure by placing appropriate leader material through the head of the lure, then attaches via knots, crimps or shackles the hooks that the angler wishes to use.

Since *Whim-Away* is going to be in areas where toothy fish such as spanish mackerel, wahoo and barracuda hang out, there is a preference for wire to be at least used in some part of the hook rig, if not as part of the leader as well. This helps recover the lure once the fish has been hooked, played out then released or kept.

Monofilament, no matter how heavy, will always get cut by mackerel teeth.

One snip and there goes \$50 worth of lure...

### The Billfish Spread

In times, or in areas where the possibility of, or the desired species are the billfish clan, I have chosen a "spread", meaning a selection of lures that are used purposely for this reason.

*Whim-Away* has a pair of Reelax outriggers to increase the width and length at which these lures can be presented behind the boat. With three main trolling outfits, I have selected 5 resin headed lures that have designated slots. These are the best positions to run these lures, though in times of lure losses, the other lures can fill voids where necessary.

Note that though these lures may have been designed with billfish in

mind, they do take all manner of pelagic game fish.

*Please keep in mind that 1000lb marlin are not the sole drive here, so lure sizes and hook rigs chosen reflect this.*

**Please also note in brackets the 2 corresponding numbers which relate to Wellsys colour numbers for the inner and outer skirts.**

### Short Rigger

**Wellsys Small Kokomo**, black pearl head, skirts purple/blue over with black inner (106/22). Hook rig is a pair of Maruto SS1962 8/0 hooks offset at 60 degrees or a single 7/0 SS1962 if head biting tuna and dolphin fish are not present or wanted.

The hook rig is heavier in gauge than the fine wire hooks I use on 10kg line or less.

This is to prevent hook failure on the heavier 24kg braid we are going to use.

This lure is a sliced faced straight runner, which looks like a little tuna ripping the water apart.

At 220mm (8.5 inches), this is the largest, most aggressive lure of the spread.

The rule of thumb being the largest, darkest lure is positioned the closest to the boat, followed by the smaller, more natural coloured, less active lures.

The Small Kokomo has become a favourite for black marlin and sailfish. I have also taken yellowfin, wahoo, dolphin fish and cobia on this lure.

### Long Rigger

**Top Gun Terminator #2**, skirts lumo with blue stripes and red vertical stripe over, green/chartreuse with red vertical stripe under (29/57). This is commonly known as **Lumo**, which represents a *small dolphin fish*.

Hook rig is a pair of SS1962 7/0s or a single SS1962 7/0. Choice of hook rig on the day is determined again on geographical location and other species that may be present.

The lure has a symmetrical cupped face that causes it to run straight with a prominent bubble trail.

For some reason, this colour lure works ridiculously well out on the long rigger in clear, un-aerated water. Peter Pakula's Lumo Sprocket really brought this lure colour to the attention of the world. This lure is similar to Peter's, though more easily found.

At 200mm (8 inches), this is the second largest lure in the spread and

