

“My Favourite Tackle . . .”

with Aaron Concord

This fascinating new series kicked off when a South Aussie reader had the presence of mind to ask Editor PW, if we could pick Aaron's mind to learn about the gear that Aaron actually *uses himself* - not the stuff he's got to test, but the gear that's gone past *that* stage, and joined Aaron's personal tackle box . . well, it looks more like a shipping container than a tackle box! We tried to explain this would require a 600 page edition of F&B just to cover his rods and reels, but we agreed to make a start; it is a good idea. We should finish the series sometime in 2017 . . .

I figured it was timely to look at some of the gear that has made itself invaluable over the last 12 months.

With the variety of fishing styles and destinations that I have undertaken, I believe its worthwhile discussing some of the top performers.

Please bear in mind that the older, established tackle that has been picked is due to its ability to stand up along side the more recent additions. In other words, it's a classic.

Anything new has been added due to its advancement of our sport and any technical advantages the product offers.

Having spent 8 weeks on the Barrier Reef from September 2004, a follow up 9-day stint to Cairns and Cardwell

in December, then a 7-day trip to Townsville in February this year, I have given some gear a real workout.

Along with the extra fishing back down in South East Queensland over summer, I had the opportunity to stretch gear to breaking point on a frequent basis.

Here are some things I found just a little more than valuable.

Rods

Precision Rods-Marlin Master 60kg

I appreciate that these are far heavier than what the average trailer boat angler can use, though I was so impressed that I felt obliged to relate their accomplishments during the 2004 heavy tackle season.

The largest billfish I have seen with my own eyes, which was accurately estimated at 1000lb, was caught and subsequently released on a Precision Rods 60kg class rod. It didn't even puff, let alone break into a sweat.

Damon Olsen has a full compliment of light and heavy tackle Precision Rods on his vessel *Nomad*, which is where I saw these feats unfold and man, you appreciate every bit of thought that has gone into making these things when a 450+ kg Marlin is on the end of your line.

One good fish may seem in some peoples eyes as a comparison not worth telling.

Well, those rods racked up, according to Damon's stats, 4 Black Marlin over 1000lb, the biggest estimated at 1200+. There were 3 others between 900 and 1000 lb released during 22 days of fishing.

If there were any fish that would show up an imperfection in quality, it is these massive fish. Combined with the number caught, the rods performed flawlessly.

Stuart Mackenzie puts in a massive amount of time and effort building each rod, so not only do they look the part they perform it as well.

Precision Rods Wopper Stopper and Enforcer.

These are the 2 heavy popper-tossing rods that we use for our Giant Trevally obsession.

The Wopper Stopper is a solid 50 to 80 lb braid rated spin stick, whereas the Enforcer is a true 130lb.

These rods really need no introduction, though again, the reliability and durability of these products were surely appreciated during a heavy spin session with big poppers. Species that we took included giant trevally over 30 kilograms, big

red bass, coral trout (some would have been 8-10 kilos) and big bluefin trevally.

The terrain I pulled these fish out of was ridiculous at times.

Hooking 20 kilos of GT on the far side of a bombie and managing to stay connected was impressive for any spin stick.

Shimano Backbone 24kg Stroker.

Again, it was on *Nomad* that I saw these rods used as all rounder, thrown into a variety of roles in the course of a day's fishing.

Matched with an Accurate 665HXM 6:1, lever drag jig reel, these rods were used for jigging, live baiting, floating strip baits and trolling lures for bigger marlin baits such as shark and spanish mackerel.

With the drag pressure running up to 12 kilos over these rods, they handled roughhouse treatment surprisingly well.

Though the largest fish I have seen caught on these rods would be around the 22-kilo mark, I believe they can cope with larger fish. Not bad for a rod that sells for under \$150.

G.Loomis L905 Spin Rod.

Whenever I am out on one of the big bays or well offshore, a quality 6-8 kilo rated spin stick is always with me due to their versatility.

Its ability to cast light lures into the wind, be used for trolling or bait fishing makes these class of rods invaluable.

This particular rod is actually a custom built rod built up around a G. Loomis L905 blank.

Its main purpose in life is high speed spinning from boats for pelagics.

It makes a beautiful 6-8 kilo spin stick though it is rated to 12 kilos.

As an all-round outfit, mated with a Shimano Stella 4000 and Yamatoyo 11kg PE casting braid, it was my favourite outfit for sportfishing with smaller poppers and jigs on the inside of the Ribbon Reefs.

It casts long and with accuracy and coupled with a braid loaded reel, I stopped coral trout, lunar tailed trout, coral cod, red bass, shark mackerel,

Not so many years ago, there was only one or two genuine 'lever drag' reels available.

Now there are many, but this Accurate 665HXM remains one of Aaron's fav lever drag reels; it's been worked hard, too.

giant trevally, bluefin trevally, maori wrasse and a lemon shark that would have been 200 kilos.

Back home, it's taken spotted and school mackerel, mack tuna and longtails on poppers and slugs inside Moreton Bay.

It is light and comfortable to use for extended periods and it had enough stopping power to turn the majority of fish up to 4 kilos in shallow, coral studded water.

On the blue water, it's accounted for longtails up to 15 kilos with no problem. It makes for a nice light tackle billfish rod as well. That's pretty versatile.

G.Loomis SB700 GL3 spin rod.

This is another custom built rod of mine that has been invaluable for casting small jigs and minnows at bream, small tuna and any other species of fish that likes small food.

It's only 5'10 in length so it's great for travelling, though a trade off lengthwise does make it a little less suitable for serious jigging with rubber tails. Since it's a rod I take everywhere, I seem to make do with it very well indeed.

It's light and has plenty of grunt in the butt, bearing in mind that this is really a great 2-3kilo mono rated rod. I even fish 1 kg mono over it as well.

