



The most esteemed Mudgeway Trophy Winners!!

Successful Bluefins team lifting both the Far North Champs and Mudgeway Trophies.

Left to right, Matt, Darren shields, Jackson Shields, Long John, Karl Bottema, Gary Conway.
Note two of our team are 13/14 years old.

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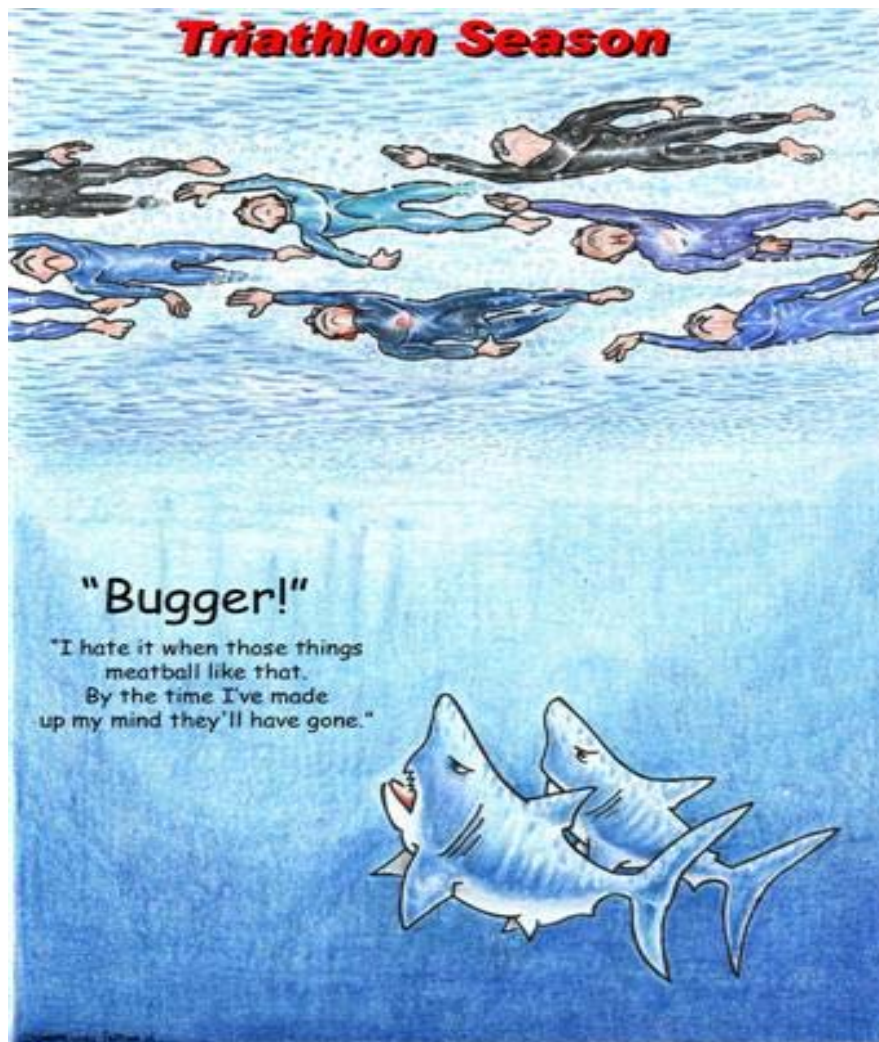
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Club Meeting this Month

September 9th March 2005

Gazza's Gaff.
Beach Rd, Milford.

SUBS are due do please bring your cheque books.



Cartoons courtesy of Graeme Leitch

Photo's (following) courtesy of Dane Hawker

President's report (March 06)

Breaking News...

Elite Bluefins team reclaim stolen treasure...

Sounds so easy but given our numbers I really thought the Mudgeway would remain firmly glued the shelf at the Paihia Swordfish club a little longer. The story has it that Gary Cullen's partner had quite a job letting them release it (no doubt on Chris Browns instruction). Also up for grabs and the main stay of the weekend was the Far North Champs trophy hosted by Port Valley.

The competition had all the desired ingredients, clear windless sunny days, awesome clear, warm water capped off with phenomenal location and spearos. Bugger I forgot to mention our beachfront rental accommodation.

Our contingent was Darren (Pine tree) shields with young Jackson (Pinecone), Long John and Myself, Karl Bottema & Matt. Both Matt and Karl are relatively new to this side of the sport.

An Elite strike-force, actually a piss poor turnout but lets look past that miner aspect for now and a fine support crew (the girls). We spent the day fishing from two boats with LJ & I pacing ourselves with the shields and Karl and Matt on their own (sorry chaps but pressure was on).

The outcome was Darren and Jackson 1st place with 18fish, LJ & myself 2nd with 17 fish and not sure who was third.

On the presentation for the Mudgeway the Bluefins combined score utilising fish from all three teams just pipped Port Valley by I believe 15 points. Phew..!

The weigh-in was followed but a great feed of northern beef, much piss drinking and a little gloating.

The following day saw the juniors comp at The Rimirikis with yet again great vis and calm seas. Watching the young develop is an interesting mix of pleasure and pain but something that is overall Good. Given the location the fish list was reduced to avoid damaging the reef species and all the fish landed were great for the table.

Jackson Shields with Darren as his sweeper took out 1st place with 5 fish, while Karl Bottema with myself as coach managed 2nd.with three. Apologies for not mentioning all the other placing's but I'm sure Gary will post them shortly.

Thanks a heap Gary and those that assisted in putting the weekend together. I know I'm speaking for all our attendees in stating it was an absolute pleasure of a weekend regardless of the placing's.

Apart from that it's the best time of the year, the water is premo so get out there have fun and be safe.

Gary Conway
Club President



Clubbing Seals (The Captain tells it how it is ..)

Killing fish for points in a competition presents for some of us a moral dilemma. Should an animals life be reduced to a score, a ranking to sate our egos? Opinion ranges on the matter from those who find the concept of spearing purely for sport unacceptable and thus refrain from participating in spearfishing competitions to those who kill in comps without giving the matter a second thought. Most of us, I think, would fit somewhere in the middle; slightly uneasy with the idea but justifying it by reasoning that the fish speared are table fish worthy of eating and that their populations are sustainably managed, mitigating to an extent our activities.

Some time ago, the reefies, with the exception of golden snapper, were removed from our lists (I suspect goldies remained as the vast majority of their populations live beyond divable depths, safe from our depredations. You could kill every goldie you ever saw- the effect (on the population as a whole- not on individual schools in individual locations), would be negligible) to bring them into line with what the spearos felt was acceptable and what the general public would feel was acceptable. This pattern of refining our lists continues to this day- there is a building movement within the Bluefins, for instance, to remove porae from our list. At this years Nationals, there was healthy discussion about spearfishermans take of kingfish and what affects our activities, both as recreational and competitive spearos, were having. Such debate is a good thing, keeping us thinking in these times of increasing awareness of environmental issues and extractive use of the oceans. We must be mindful of how our activities are viewed by the general public and how we can refine our behaviors to fit with 21st century ideals.

Which is why I'd really like someone to explain to me, why, when we return to Tairua for another try this Easter, we will be shooting scarlet wrasse? Oh yes folks, for this year's nationals, the committee have decided to remove golden snapper from the list and replace them with scarlet wrasse. The decision to regress twenty years and start killing reefies again is a cock-up of monumental proportions and better yet, a cock-up with an interesting tale to it. Let's get it straight- I have no problem with the removal of goldies from the list. That said, I believe those who feel we are having anything but the most minor effect on their populations are mistaken. But whatever, remove them from the list if you want. I don't believe doing so would affect the outcome of a competition.

But who are we fooling, goldies weren't removed because they would get shot up-they were removed because they wouldn't. Confused? Let me explain.

Any competition diver who knows the Aldermans could tell you well in advance where the comp areas would be and the likelihood of golden snapper being taken in those areas. They would tell you that the entire take for the two days of the competition for the sixty odd divers would be no- or possibly one- goldie. This talk of removing them from the list in order to protect the populations was all so much bullshit.

The real reason for their removal was that there are those who believe an expansive fish list is required in order to allow 'the cream to rise to the top'. With no goldies in the areas, the fish list was effectively being reduced by one species. This simply wouldn't do. Why not remove goldies from the list and replace them with another species?

So, the expansive fish list brigade had a little meeting. There were no bluefins present (Good to know your input is appreciated eh?) The end result of that meeting was when, at the competition briefing, we were fed a "shit sandwich"- the inclusion of scarlet wrasse on the fish list.

The comp was postponed in the end, but the swim off went ahead. You should have seen the weigh-in. In was, to quote one member of the public, a 'fucking disgrace'.

The expansive list brigade don't seem to understand the importance of public perception. They seem to think that showing up to a public weigh in with a pretty little Scarlett is a good idea. Who cares if they are fast growing, abundant or whatever? Certainly not the public. All they know is that they are unfamiliar with the fish and that it is really pretty and that, folks, makes us murdering bastards. For reasons of public perception alone we should not be taking these fish. It seems blindingly obvious to me. It's going to be a PR nightmare, make no mistake. One of those deluded propagandists from *Dive!* magazine will get hold of our dirty little secret eventually, show up wanting to know what the hell we're doing. It's a good question. The ITM Fishing Show might be at the comp, giving the sport a bit of publicity-bad publicity, when they demand to know why we're killing reefies. Where will the expansive list brigade be then or when someone in the crowd begins to boo?

"Daddy, why are those men killing those pretty fishies. Aren't they the same ones you fed the sea eggs to when we went to snorkeling that time?"

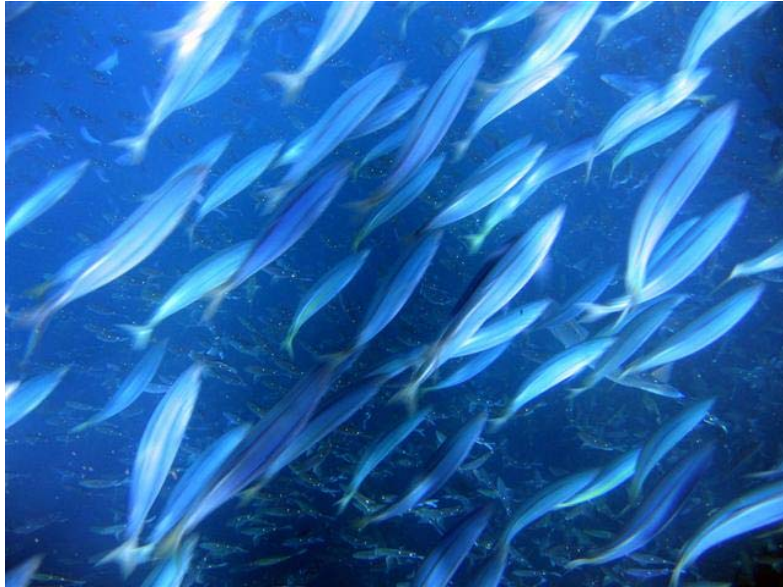
"B'cause they be a bynche of quentes , dear"

And to think there are those who wonder why the sport is waning-why so many choose not to participate.

As for me, I don't want to shoot scarletts. I don't eat them. And I won't be bullied into it by a committee out of touch with what I as a competitive diver want. So I won't.

Gary and myself will not be presenting scarletts at this years, or any, weigh in. We would encourage you to do the same or, if you are made of sterner stuff than us, boycott the entire event. We believe shooting dumb reef fish is not the way forward for our sport.

End of story.



Clubbing Seals Pt 2 (The President Responds)

Gary Conway continued....

Before forwarding his article to print Long John contacted me to see if my views expressed at the Bach and various group meeting over the January National week were still alive. Yes they are. My protests at the removal of the Golden Snapper which are a well accepted and targeted table fish and subsequent replacement by the scarlet Wrasse, a largely unknown fish to the greater public was completely out of line with the refinements achieved by our group in recent years.

Most fishermen will know the Scarlet Wrasse as one of those annoying fish that invariably end up floating out the back of their boats with the bastard cod and Red pigfish after being ripped off the hook and discarded.

Any refinements to the general competition fish list should be carefully discussed with all competing clubs hierarchy with the opportunity to be further discussed at a club level before decisions made.

If these courtesies are ignored the sport will invoke the wrath of most normal folk.

John sums it up perfectly in one line, "We must be mindful of how our activities are viewed by the general public and how we can refine our behaviours to fit with 21st century ideals."

It's not that we should cave in to public views but our sport is so open to public scrutiny that we simply have to behave ourselves. We don't deliberately pinch the ball from a offside position to score a try, we actually take the life of a creature or several of to prove how good we are. A very simplistic view of our competitions but one easily adopted by a unqualified onlooker. In reality the sport involves massive effort to swim for 12 hours over two days, clever time keeping and location/specie management coupled with the ability to dive beyond say 25 meters and find single species. Bloody hard and extremely rewarding stuff.

Lets not stuff it all up with ridiculous decisions on fish lists.

Please note and feel free to comment. Our northern Area completion will not have Porae nor Scarlet Wrasse. It will very likely have Golden snapper and also very likely have up to 4 Snapper and 4 John Dory. The Snappers could be required to weigh 1 kilo gutted and gilled to qualify.

Our aim is to have excellent fish that we would be proud to target on any day in a format that will also determine the best divers.

Gary Conway
Club President

Oke Bay - Marcus P AKA Bounty Hunter

A few days of strong southerly winds and a forecast for it to continue another day or two, provided a perfect opportunity to revisit a favourite old stomping ground of mine in the Bay of Islands.

After an early start from town, I arrived at Oke Bay in the dark – a couple of minutes snoozing in the car whilst I waited for the sun to lighten the eastern horizon a little – I didn't fancy descending the 'goat track' to the beach in the dark. To my surprise I didn't quite have the place to myself – but I guess it is an obvious anchorage in a southerly.

From the time I slipped into the water at the beach, paddled past the couple of yachts and covered the half mile or so to the little island at the entrance to the bay, the sun had climbed over Brett Peninsula and let me see out to 8 or 10metres.

Holding up in the shadows, the first snapper of the day could be seen in the sun, hanging off a little in midwater. Nudging forward around the island, I was looking for but not finding a nice little ambush spot. I decided to dive down to a slight rise in the slope – small snapper were holding off what they considered to be a safe distance – bugger them. Settling on the bottom and looking left, 4 or 5 big snapper up to about 10kg were circling just on the limit of gun range. Shit! Where did they come from?! I was out of air and bugged out back to the shallows. My heart was pounding from the first dive and the big snapper!

Gathering my thoughts for a few minutes in the shallows, I decided the fish hadn't spooked and I would ease down to them again. They were still there – I waited as long as I could, and finally one of the big ones circled a little closer than the others – it was heading straight in, so I darted forward and just as it turned to bolt, I fired a long shot at it. I got a hit, but once I had a look at it I could see the flopper just holding on some skin in its guts. Playing it gently, I thought I might have had a chance, but was lost when it dragged the lines through the kelp.

This pattern was to continue for a while – finding good fish holding off in midwater where I couldn't really get to them.

Heading around the corner, down towards Albert Channel, the sun was well behind me and persistent Bol swell had well and truly been shut down by a week of wind – I was still hopeful of good results!

I managed to pick off two nice snapper which had parked up in the calm conditions, and was transiting a 'dead' area when I noticed a John Dory in my peripheral vision, which appeared to be stalking some baby Jack Mackerel. He saw me turn and decided I was a threat. It became a bit of a race to see who could make for the deep water first – he lost – hahaha! I love taking down Johnnies – sometimes when they see you coming – they run at first and then appear to almost resign themselves to being shot – so they pull up and just wait for it.

Another John Dory was found a little further up the coast, a little smaller – but worthwhile nonetheless.

When I ran out of shoreline, I swam to a rock a couple hundred metres out, thinking it could be kingfish central – none found, but again some big snapper – some certainly over 9kg. Unfortunately, the rock didn't lend itself to snooping, with mostly open terrain. I tried to burley them back in – but they would just hold off about 10metres away – laughing at me most probably.

I was getting tired now, so did the long swim back to the beach – made longer with the fish on the line. My legs were shot by the time I hit the sand, so had a snooze for a couple hours before getting kitted up again for another swim. With the sun now in the west, the obvious choice was to swim down the shoreline that heads out to Brett. Another swim out through the boats – more now – shit I was doing some mileage. It was a fair distance before I found some deep water adjacent to the shore. Things were looking grim though. This area wasn't as well protected from the wind and it was quite bouncy. Also the tide was now fairly high leaving me a long way from what weed cover there was – only that thin grassy stuff as opposed to the good kelp.

Persevering for a while, I found a small snapper of perhaps 2.5kg – don't know why he didn't bolt – I was looking the wrong way initially and then spun the gun around as he swam into my vision – whack! – stupid snapper.

Not much further on, I saw two snapper trying to munch something off a rock. They were having a good go at it, and didn't see me easing up to them. Even when I slipped beneath the surface they didn't budge. Haha! This one should be straight forward. I settled on a corner just a couple metres away as the big one – 8kg perhaps – picked up and turned side on – unbelievable! – thunk! – and then – clank! – as the spear shaft collected the rock that he was chewing on just a moment before – NO!!!! – some choice single syllable, four letter words were screamed as I moved to the surface for reloading. The fish moved only a few metres off and I could see him in the distance as I reloaded – and only then did it move off beyond vis. Range. Grrrr....

I'd had enough excitement for one day and another long swim for the beach beckoned. It gave me plenty of time to consider the day. What had gone right, what had gone wrong – what to do different next time.

So many big fish. More decent snapper than I had ever expected in this little corner of the Bay. Today I saw more snapper for 10 to 20pound I think than I've seen all season.



I will be back again for sure. Keeping an eye on the weather for more southerlies...

Poor Knights – Lucky Divers

Scoobie-Steve AKA Spearo-Steve AKA The other McDonald – e eye e eye o!

On Saturday the 25th a group of 24 divers, including a good few of the Bluefins, climbed on board Pacific Hideaway and headed out to the Poor Knights marine reserve.

It couldn't have been a better weekend for the trip. Friday had little or no wind all day, which was repeated on the Saturday so the swell was non-existent. This made for a relaxed trip out where everyone got a chance to chew the fat and share stories of previous trips to New Zealand's diver's paradise.

At the Islands the visibility wasn't as we had hoped, well at least looking from the boat. There were patches that looked very clear, but the in-between bits looked to be a cloudy blue. The first dive site was chosen to be the Northern Arch as it provided good terrain for both scoobies and freedivers and we hoped that the vis would be a little bit better.

In the water we realised that the vis was a reasonable 15-20m, we also realised very quickly that this was going to be a special dive. Directly under the boat there were snapper of various sizes just hanging out. They ranged in size from a mere panny to a healthy bus and as we dived we found that every where you looked there was a very relaxed looking school of snapper.

We moved through the arch and found the current along with the most fish I have ever seen in one spot. Snapper, Koheru, Kawhai, Kingfish, Blue Mao Mao, Trevally, Pink Mao Mao, were all there in abundance, and even a few Golden Snapper at 20m in the cave. It was a buzz to hang out with the fish like that, especially as they weren't afraid of sharing the space.

It was as easy to swim into the middle of the Trevally and Blue Mao Mao and see the tiny krill that they were eating as it was to sink down on the Snapper and test how close you could get to the big ones. Just a lovely feeling, and although a few wicked thoughts crossed my mind I was happy to let the fish be and look forward to seeing them at the same location the next time.

I also got a chance to see a few Blue Fish, and some Green Wrasse, species I haven't come across before. It's always nice to identify a new fish, feels like you have progressed in some way (fish wisdom?).

From Northern arch we did a half lap around the eastern side of the islands and headed south to Blue Mao Mao arch for our next dive. It was a bit clearer here and not at all difficult to see what was happening 20 meters away. Again the fish life was abundant, although interestingly there wasn't a lot of weed on the floor, it was quite barren really. Andrew and Grimmer headed through the arch and out another 100m to a rock that looked interesting. They were treated to some good kingi action, having a school circling them for the best part of half an hour. Dane and myself thought it time to try some deeper dives as the clear and warm (21 degrees) water lent itself to achieving ultra relaxation. We had a good time dropping down on the scuba divers below and saying giddyay.

Around about 4pm we were all on board the boat again and heading back to Tutukaka. Everyone was sharing their stories again, this time of the past 8 hours of diving bliss. It made me wonder why I don't get out to the Poor Knights more often. Of the times I have been there I have never been disappointed and the cost for freedivers is very reasonable. I think I'll have to make it a bi-annual trip from now on, though I wonder what I'll see next time?



Clubs Points

Name	Grade	Points
Marcus Petraska	O	78
John Anderson	O	77
Gary Conway	O	72
Blair Herbert	R	47
Steve McDonald	R	47
Julian O'Neale	O	31
Dane Hawker	O	30
Andrew MacDonald	O	24
Daniel Daulton	O	24
Reid Quinlan	O	23
Scott	R	17
David Hansen	O	16
Russell Nelson	O	9
Chong Looi	O	3
Andrew Tasker	R	2
Jared Rehm	O	2

Be Careful

If you overpower your gun
it can

