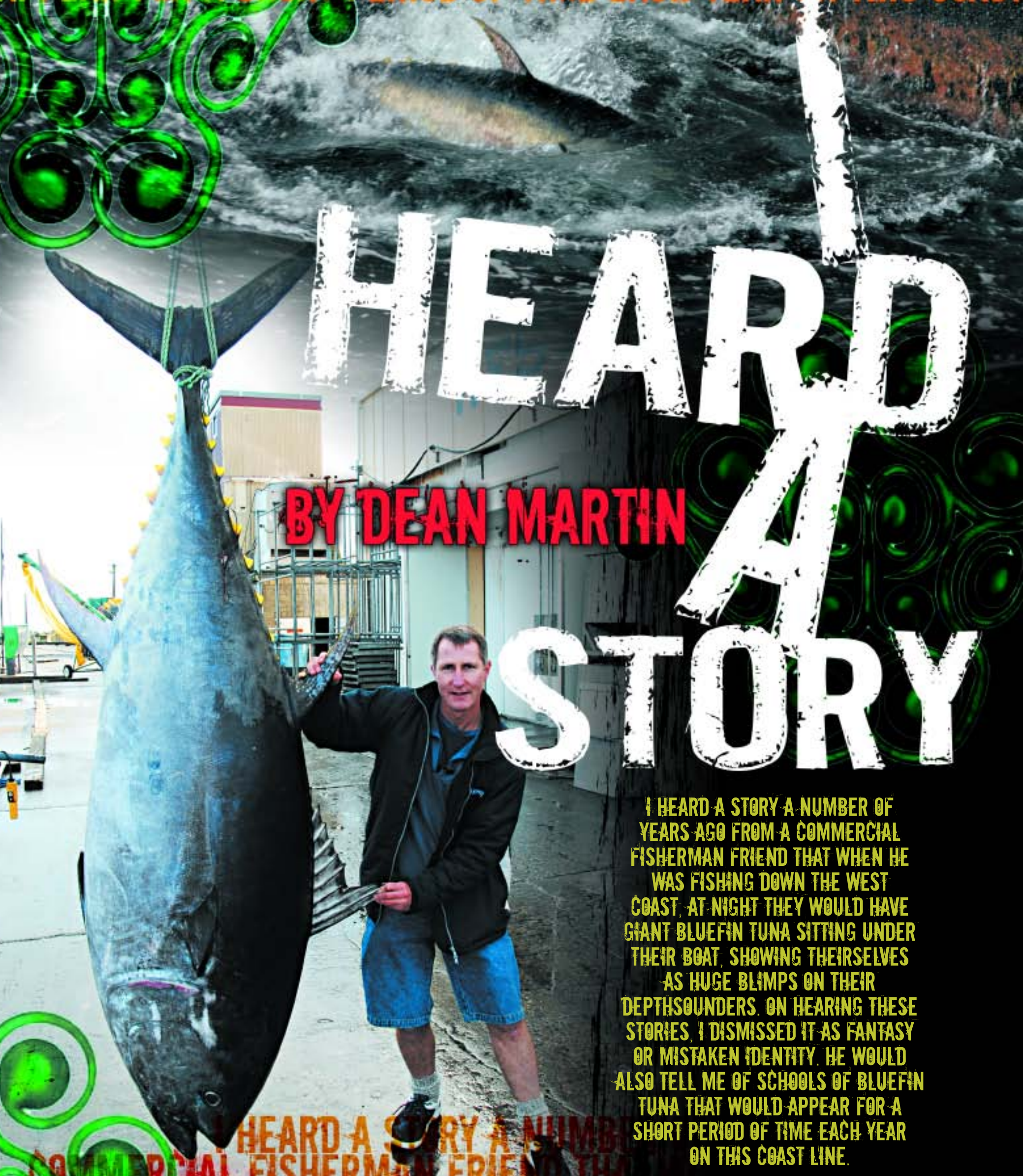


DOWN THE WEST COAST AT NIGHT THEY WOULD HAVE GIANT BLUEFIN TUNA SITTING UNDER THEIR BOAT SHOWING THEMSELVES AS HUGE BLIMPS ON THEIR DEPTHSOUNDERS. ON HEARING THESE STORIES, I DISMISSED IT AS FANTASY OR MISTAKEN IDENTITY. HE WOULD ALSO TELL ME OF SCHOOLS OF BLUEFIN TUNA THAT WOULD APPEAR FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME EACH YEAR ON THIS COAST



HEARD A STORY

BY DEAN MARTIN

I HEARD A STORY A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO FROM A COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN FRIEND THAT WHEN HE WAS FISHING DOWN THE WEST COAST, AT NIGHT THEY WOULD HAVE GIANT BLUEFIN TUNA SITTING UNDER THEIR BOAT, SHOWING THEMSELVES AS HUGE BLIMPS ON THEIR DEPTHSOUNDERS. ON HEARING THESE STORIES, I DISMISSED IT AS FANTASY OR MISTAKEN IDENTITY. HE WOULD ALSO TELL ME OF SCHOOLS OF BLUEFIN TUNA THAT WOULD APPEAR FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME EACH YEAR ON THIS COAST LINE.

HEARD A STORY A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO FROM A COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN FRIEND THAT WHEN HE WAS FISHING DOWN THE WEST COAST AT NIGHT THEY WOULD HAVE GIANT BLUEFIN TUNA SITTING UNDER THEIR BOAT...



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The wheels of motion were in place, it triggered the thought that maybe it was possible to spear a Bluefin Tuna in New Zealand.

Months prior to our trip I had been talking to numerous local commercial fishermen, trying to find out as much as I could about these fish. I would hear stories of their sheer power enabling an individually hooked fish to pull up to 7 large commercial fishing floats below the surface. (even the small ones can pull down 3). Or hearing stories from each one of them, about catching one of these huge Bluefin, and trying to pull it on board, having the mouth of a huge Mako shark or Great White appear from the ocean and completely biting off the fish from behind the gills. Very sobering conversations to have!

It was made very clear to me that not only did they think we were crazy to want to try and spear one, but also, that each one of them made it very clear that there was no way they would swim in that ocean, due to the huge population of very large Mako sharks that co-exist with these fish. One conversation with a fisherman was had as he was coming in from a fishing trip. It went along the lines of "...the Makos are in plague proportions this year, I have 3 on board and one of my mates has 6. I have never seen it this bad before, we are struggling to catch fish" Hmm!!

Sometimes after these talks I would come away with serious doubts about whether it was

possible to land one, also considering the South Islands West Coast is not only one of the most beautiful areas for scenery in New Zealand, but it is also our most isolated and exposed coastline, known for its uncompromising weather that comes from the south, which brings huge seas and high winds, for weeks and sometimes months on end, making it our most treacherous area for boating. You only have to look at the dozens of plaques remembering those lost at sea, and during crossings of the notorious river mouth/bar crossings necessary for access to the ocean, to get a sobering reminder of what a dangerous place this is.

Despite the negatives we had heard about, we decided it was not only possible to land one, but also get away shots that would significantly slow one down. We booked a boat with a skipper that started the commercial fishery for Bluefin Tuna in New Zealand, who shared many of his encounters and experiences with these fish...but remained dubious that it was possible to land one with a spear. Up till this time there had been 2 fish landed locally. A 204kg fish shot and landed by 2 divers and a 168kg fish the previous week, but reports were rife amongst annoyed locals about numerous fish being shot and lost by a couple of spearos.

Our plan of attack was that Dean would be first up in an attempt to spear a fish, as we considered it foolish if both got onto a fish at the same time, being dragged to opposite ends of the ocean!

Upon finding an area that looked like there were fish, we ground baited from the boat, trying to get these fish to come in close for us to get a good shot. While the ground bait worked well to pull in the odd fish, because of the visibility being only up to 15m with fluffy stuff in the water, and the coloring of these fish that makes them blend into the color of the ocean, these fish would just appear from where you were not expecting them, engulfing the ground bait then disappearing into the gloom.

Each time we ground baited, the fish would only make appearances during the first 15 to 20 seconds. Then would totally disappear, and we would have to start the process again on other fish. Finally a fish could be seen on our outer periphery, and I had a gut feeling it would come into some bait in front of Dean. Sure enough it quickly changed direction and came for a piece of bait below Dean.

It all happened so fast, but looking at this fish front on I could see it was a very large by it's width. It presenting itself for a shot, (which from watching Dean, he had to turn quickly and shot it perfectly through the top of the head). I couldn't believe what I had just seen, it was phenomenal, the combination of the size and grace with which this fish swam and watching the skill and preciseness of Dean's shot under the circumstances. Yeehaaaa!!

What a great shot. It didn't take off as quickly as we had thought, but stretched out Dean's Riffe bungee to the max, it was

NEW ZEALAND



obviously hurt as it couldn't pull down the 35lt Rob Allen float below the surface. Now the battle began, there were times I was having to freestyle after Dean trying to keep up (also carrying a video camera, trying to document the ensuing battle at the same time- not too good for the breath holding!!)

Dean slowly managed to gain some bungee by clipping it off and resting, before going for his next gain. Finally after approx 55mins he managed to get his second gun loaded and put a second holding shot in it, then with another 20mins managed to struggle the fish to the surface. I don't know how he did it, it is a horse!! At the time we knew it was big, but not having a reference, we had no idea how big, until it was gaffed and with 5 men struggling to pull it on board....we then knew it was huge!!

As you can imagine there was a lot of yelling and excitement on board, the skipper predicted it would be approx 300kg. We could not believe our eyes, this was surreal, not in our wildest dreams would we have dreamed of spearing a fish like this. The time was now about 12.30pm, and we only had 3 hours until we had to give up targeting a fish for myself. (this was a self imposed time, that would allow up to 2 1/2 hours to land a fish, before darkness set in, if it was needed)

It took an hour to cut both icepicks out of the fish and to put new 300kg mono on the gun, which left only 2 hours for my attempt! After attempting 3 separate ground baits, with no success, the skipper gave the word that this is my final chance. It was 3.30, I am beginning to wonder who the idiot was that made such stupid rules....oopps that was me. Talk about pressure!! We found some fish on the sounder and start ground baiting, I am telling the guys on board that there is no way I will shoot a fish in the side, I will only shoot it in the head, I roll over the side to be faced with not only a few Bluefin cruising through the ground bait, but the words of the skipper echoing in my head...."last chance" So knowing this is it, I see a fish coming through just within range and shoot it down through the top of one side and out the other (Yes the boys gave me heaps

about this!! They have evidence on camera saying I will never shoot one in the side).

Bad mistake!! I was at about 3m when I took the shot and by the time I was 1/2m from the surface, my 30 m bungee had totally stretched out and disappeared with a 35lt Rob Allen attached, with my 10m bungee also stretched out and boogie board shooting past me, that I managed to catch. The next hour I was pretty nervous whether my shaft would hold, with the massive surges that the fish was displaying and also very conscious that the daylight was disappearing, and with it the chance to land this fish unassisted. I had made up my mind I was getting out just before dark, I'm no hero. Going for one of these fish is dangerous enough in the light! We both knew that if we accidentally got caught in the bungee or line at any stage, would more than likely be a death wish. I think especially if you got caught up on the first run, it would be all over before you knew what had happened.

Thankfully the power of the fish slowly abated, but the skipper drove past and said my fish was down at 60m, he could see it on his depth sounder. The next hour was the hardest I have ever experienced, lunging up with all my strength to get 100mm gains on my fish, then resting to have another go.

By 5.30 I landed my fish, and was a very relieved person. Both fish were landed unassisted and both followed the rules of the IUSA to the letter.

On board the boat there was a very happy crew, that shared many awesome stories on our journey back to shore.

The following morning 22 hours after Dean had landed his fish, they were both officially weighed, with Deans weighing a unbelievable 292kg and mine 235kg. Taking into account that Deans fish lost lots of blood and moisture over that 22 hours is unbelievable!!

This gives you a idea from my perspective, and you can use any of this for the Hawaiian magazine, but I would love the opportunity to pass on my version to any other magazines that may be interested. Please let me know your thoughts on this.

A personal invitation from Rob Torelli to hunt Blue Fin Tuna off New Zealand in August 2007

A World First...
Blue Water Hunting International are proud to be the first spearfishing charter business in the world to offer a "guided" charter to hunt monster Pacific Blue Fin tuna off the West Coast of New Zealand in August 2007.

Join your guides Blue Water Hunting International principal, **Rob Torelli** (6 Times Australian Open Spearfishing Champion) and **Dean Martin** (current IUSA World Record holder of Pacific Bluefin Tuna, 292 kg) on a spearfishing adventure of a lifetime.

Blue Water Hunting International are very confident of success and expect each client will have an opportunity to land a Monster Blue Fin Tuna. (Weather permitting)

We are strictly limiting numbers of divers. To book onto a charter or to customise your own private charter, contact Rob Torelli at Blue Water Hunting International.

For more information, contact
Blue Water Hunting International
P.O. Box 60, Narre Warren VIC 3930 Australia
Tel: (+613) 5266 1116 E: enquiries@bwhi.com.au W: www.bwhi.com.au