

ROD & GUN

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features - **Game Fishing in Australia**
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HOW TO CATCH A \$1,000 SWORDFISH

By JOHN McINTYRE

Because of the interest generated by the Ansett Airlines of Australia \$1,000 Broadbill Swordfish Contest, now may be a good time to examine the elusive target though I am probably the last bloke to be writing about the Broadbill, particularly as I have never even seen one, dead or alive.

However, undaunted, we will press on with a little information gleaned from overseas publications. This data is bolstered with a certain amount of horse sense extracted from knowledgeable local anglers.

The Swordfish, incidentally, is known officially only by that name. Broadbill was dropped some 15 years ago, but I suspect that the vividly descriptive name will be linked with the official name for a long time yet. The scientific name is *Xiphias Gladius* and he is regarded throughout the angling world as being the supreme prize. This reputation is reinforced by his exasperating, cantankerous behaviour.

By nature the Swordie is a bottom feeder, foraging and scouring the reefs and deep water for food. The formidable sword that is his main weapon admirably suits this purpose. A more efficient method of slaying smaller fish is hard to imagine.

After gorging himself on food he rises to the surface to sun himself and generally relax. As he has very few natural enemies, Mr. Swordfish must feel secure in the knowledge of his own strength and speed. It is during these times of laying about that the angler sees him, showing the fixed dorsal fin and upper tail fluke. The Americans have christened this habit as "finning out".

Of course, the swordie has not the least desire for food now. He will not evince the slightest interest in a bait trolled past his nose. Frustrated anglers have spent up to half a day baiting a Swordfish under these conditions. When it seems that all is in vain, he may come to life and slash at the bait with savage fury.

While a lot of fish have been caught by feeding the bait to a cruising specimen, drifting has proved successful. The giant squid beds off the Chilean and Peruvian coasts of South America have been real hot spots. Adventurous U.S. anglers drifted the

Humboldt Current, 30 to 40 miles offshore and had amazing results.

Two of the most successful big league anglers were the late Lou Marron and

Alfred C. Glassell Jr. They had spectacular results and their efforts were capped by Marron's all-tackle record fish of 1182 lbs.

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● This month marks the start of Ansett Airlines of Australia \$1,000 Broadbill Swordfish Contest in Tasmanian waters. The contest is expected to attract anglers from all parts of Australia. Pictured checking rules and entry forms are Mr. R. G. Roach (right), Tasmanian manager, and Mr. Tas. Kerrison, of Ansett Airlines.

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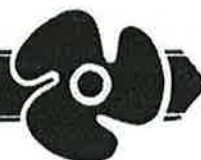


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A \$1,000 SWORDFISH

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on 130 lb. line. This record, established in 1953, has never been topped.

Glassell, of course, is famous for his 1560 lb. all-tackle Black Marlin. He must rank as one of the top anglers ever in this most exacting of all blue-water sports.

The most extensively fished, and probably most prolific known grounds are off the East Coast of the U.S. In the area of Montauk and Long Is. is the greatest concentration of swordie anglers in the world. Before about 1958 only 600 swordies had been taken on game rods throughout the world since Boschen boated No. 1 back in 1913.

The accepted method of capture had been to bait with large whole tuna baits rigged on heavy cable traces and double hooks. Some adventurous soul relegated his cable traces to the garbage bin and tried heavy monofilament.

To back this up new, smaller baits were tried on 10/0 and 11/0 hooks. The combination proved a killer. The flexible mono gave the baits a beautiful action and a breakthrough was achieved in the art of luring swordies.

The pattern established has been carried on since then and many, many fish have fallen to the rods of U.S. anglers. Probably the most successful angler for Swordfish in U.S. is Jack Rounick, of Montauk. He is the first, and only angler to land three in one day. They scaled in at 202, 213 and 194 lbs.—not huge fish maybe but what an achievement.

The bait for these billfish is usually small squid, black eel or ballyhoo. The latter fish

is closely allied to our ocean garfish.

The monofilament nylon traces used are in the range from 200-400 lb. breaking strain. I must confess to doubts at using mono traces. Having seen a swordie's bill, the first thought is of the damage that it would do to this material. Imagine three feet or more of slashing, bone-hard bill backed up by a couple of hundred pounds of furious fish would make mincemeat of most metal traces.

However, the pattern of hookups with swordies shows that many are foul-hooked. This often saves the trace but ensures a dour, savage battle. A large number seem to be hooked in the eye and apparently they go mad, pounding the water to foam for yards around.

Baiting the fish is considered the easier part of the task. The hardest problem involved is to find one. The method used in the U.S. usually involves high speed cruising, covering large tracts of ocean. Experienced anglers prefer hazy, overcast days with smooth seas, a fairly common pattern during the season.

Baits are rigged and kept in the bait box until the quarry has been sighted. The helmsman then attempts to place the boat ahead of the cruising fish. Swordies, by the way, suffer from severe myopia (short sightedness) and apparently are not unduly worried by a craft working close. This makes them a sitter for harpoon boats, who command high prices for their catches.

The bait is put over and let out 60 to 80 feet astern off the craft. Great pains are taken to ensure that the bait is submerged

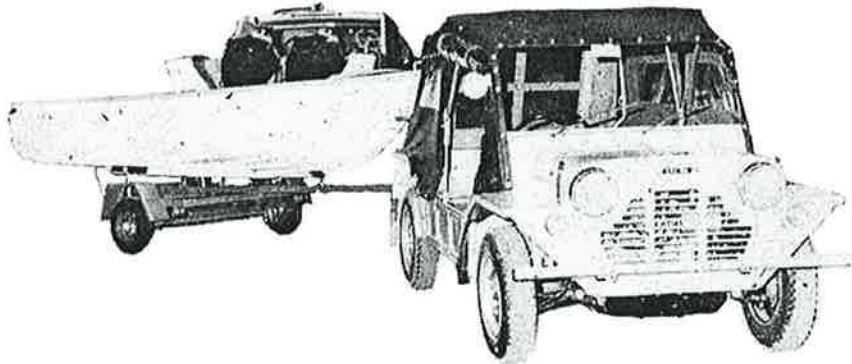
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● This 4 h.p. Johnson outboard valued at \$232 has been donated as a prize for game fishermen by Lloyd Campbell Marine, Launceston. Mr. Philip Fisher (left) secretary of Game Fishing Club of Northern Tasmania takes delivery of the motor on behalf of the club from Mr. Geoff Smythe, manager Lloyd Campbell Marine. The club will decide at their committee meeting this month on how the trophy will be fished for during the 1969-70 season.

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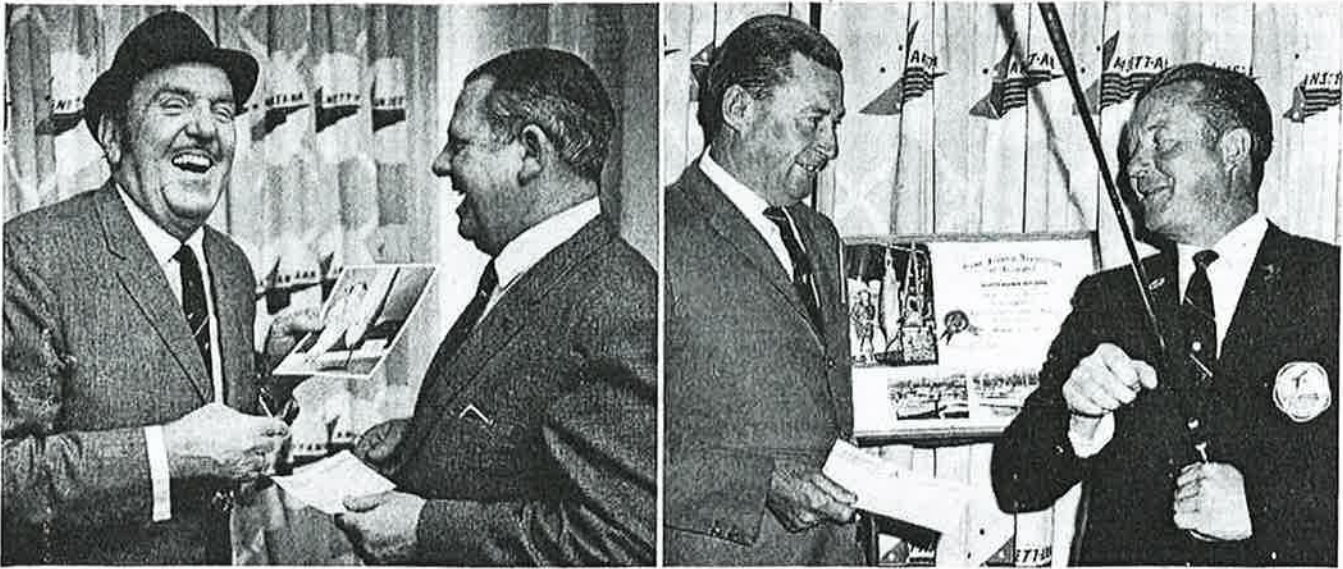
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ANGLERS' THOUSAND DOLLAR SMILES



● No wonder these anglers wore big smiles. They could well afford to each having won \$1,000 as part of the overall prizemoney offered by Ansett Airlines of Australia for Black Marlin caught off Cairns last season. Top rod Bob Dyer (left) receives his cheque from Mr. Phil Williams, manager for N.S.W., while Eric Howarth is handed his cheque by Mr. Bob Catchlove, sales manager for N.S.W. Eric is demonstrating how he reeled in his fish. Bob's 364 lb. marlin beat Eric's month-old Australian record by 21 lbs. but the money was for records as they were created.

A '\$1,000 SWORDFISH

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about two feet under the water. A long loop of line is held in the cockpit by the angler, and the boat is positioned to allow the bait to pass within about 20 feet of the fish.

When the Swordfish, or should we say, if the fish, charges the bait the loop is released. This gives a big "drop back" and allows the fish to "kill" and consume the bait. The trouble is, of course, that being so short-sighted he often overshoots the mark and is hooked in the head or body. Either way, hooked in the mouth or body, all hell breaks loose.

To cap it all, the prey has a notoriously soft mouth and the hook can easily tear out. Now, if the hook is home the angler is on his own. Provided the tackle holds up, the angler holds up and everything goes right he may just boat the fish. That's all there is to it!

There must be something to this Swordfish angling. A lot of wealthy anglers have beggared themselves chasing him all over the world. The legendary Mike Lerner, co-founder of International Game Fish Association, retired from active participation in the sport some years ago. He has said that if he did come out of retirement it would only be to fish for Swordies again.

In Australia, there have been widely scattered reports of Swordfish seen and beached and even a couple of reported hook-ups, but the prize has yet to be won.

What is certain is that the angler who lands No. 1 will put his name in the angling history books for all time.

The high incidence of captures and sightings by professional fishermen in Tasmania marks it as the most likely spot for the first one to be boated.

Certainly the task is ahead of anyone deliberately searching for this most elusive of all fish in Australia. The odds against landing one must be heavily loaded against the angler. But then, who can tell, the records of the sport are laden with seemingly impossible captures. We had no idea that huge Black Marlin existed in this country up until about 10 years ago. Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef are a too-well known facet of fishing life now to go into again here.

Congratulations to Ansett Airlines of Australia for having the good old Aussie "give it a go" spirit and backing their faith in the local waters with cold cash. The prizes in these contests can be won as evidenced by the contented expressions on Bob Dyer's and Eric Howarth's faces elsewhere in this issue.

Go to it boys, in Tasmania you have whittled the odds down slightly, at least there is conclusive evidence of the swordie's existence. Up here in N.S.W. we will watch the news with interest and wait for that supreme prize falling to a Tassie-based angler or a visitor who can gain a bonus prize as well.

ANSETT AIRLINES OFFER \$20,000 FOR CAIRNS MARLIN

Ansett Airlines of Australia again offer a total of \$20,000 in prizemoney for their Black Marlin Contest off Cairns.

The prizemoney is offered for world or Australian record captures of Black Marlin off Cairns between midnight on September 30 and midnight on December 31, this year.

To be eligible for the prizemoney the angler catching the record marlin must be a member, or visiting member, of Cairns Game Fishing Club and the fish must be weighed-in at Cairns Club weigh-station.

The airline offers \$2,500 for an all-tackle record, \$1,750 for a world record in any one of the line classes or \$1,000 for an Australian record in any one of the line classes.

An additional amount of \$300 as a bonus will be paid the successful angler, provided that he travelled from and returned to another state by Ansett Airlines.

All fishing will be strictly in accordance with the rules of the Game Fishing Association of Australia.