

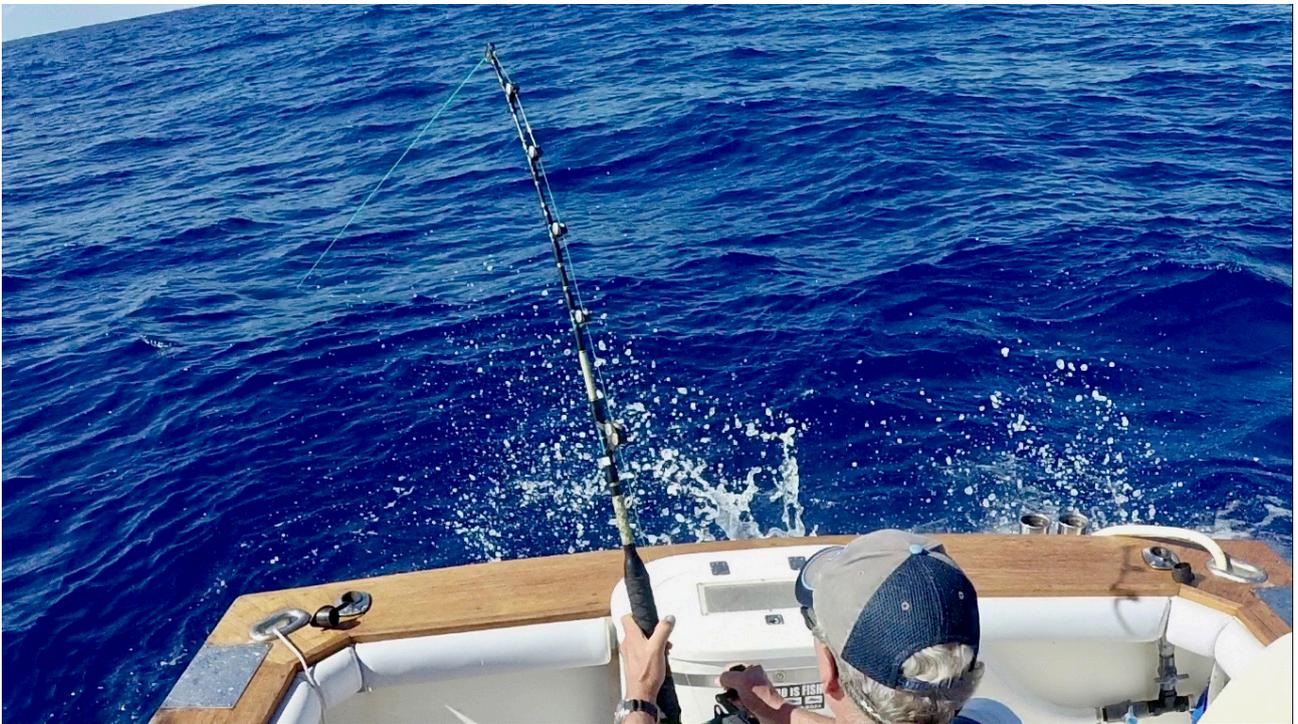
## From the Flybridge

29 April 2017

With last weekend showing off the best Easter weather seen on the Coffs Coast for years, some local big game fishermen went to sea on a glassy ocean under cloudless skies last Saturday to see if there were still any late season blue marlin around. Coffs boats *Hoo Kares*, *Sneaky Pete*, *Black N Blue* and *Foreign Exchange* all drove out into a gorgeous dawn to try their luck and see if some late season persistence would pay off.

The water out wide was a deep cobalt blue, and at 25C was as warm as the daytime max temperature in Coffs, with plenty of dolphins, pilot whales and the odd flying fish all indicating the possibility of action to come.

After a quiet start, things got interesting just after midday when *Foreign Exchange* drove over a couple of blue marlin out beyond the edge of the continental shelf in 1200 fathoms. The first fish tried a stealth attack and woke everyone up by grabbing the shotgun lure and blasting off without jumping - most uncharacteristic of blue marlin.



*Angler John Stafford working on last Saturday's blue marlin onboard Foreign Exchange - photo Rick O'Ferrall*

But while this was happening, a large marlin at least double the size of the first, was apparently planning a simultaneous shot at another lure in the pattern. So when it's pal created all the fuss by hooking up, the second fish was startled and treated the crew to the sight of one hooked marlin running away behind the boat, and another that nobody had seen, appearing out of nowhere going like a bat out of hell past the boat at 30 knots in a spray of white water with a huge sickle tail stroking back and forth like a drive piston on the Flying Scotsman.

The first fish turned out to be a very well-behaved 150kg blue that was brought to the boat in short order by angler John Stafford before being tagged and sent on its way by deckie Sam French. The second fish is probably still going hard and passing New Caledonia by now.



*John Stafford's blue marlin swimming away from the boat after tagging and release - Photo Rick O'Ferrall*

While this was going on, *Black N Blue* was looking for swordfish and instead had a close encounter with another blue marlin which totally ignored the boat, busting up just 30m away chasing a school of flying fish, and not interested in anything else.

There has been a lot of strange stuff happening out off Coffs this summer, with weird weather, strange current behaviour, and as regular readers of this column will know, a distinct lack of marlin activity for months now. But when a couple of boats get a good look at three blue marlin in a day in late April, you know there's possibly still some life left in this season after all.

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