



by *Richard
Le Cornec*

Fishing with Me 'n' Dave

THERE are only three things that I will wake for at 4:30 in the morning. One is to make it to the airport on time so we can wing away to some tropical paradise and partake in a gratuitous overindulgence of fishing, diving, laying on the beach and, (of course) over eating and drinking.

The second reason for me to get up at that god forsaken hour, is to get to a favourite, local fishing spot while the tide is right and the weather good, so that we can partake in a gratuitous, overindulgence of fishing, diving, laying on the beach, overeating and drinking.

The third reason involves a bit of gratuitous overindulgence, and the good thing is, you don't have to get out of bed. Not unless you really want to, but enough said about that.

On this one occasion I staggered out of bed for the second reason on my list. Tip toeing in the dark, so I wouldn't disturb my lovely wife, I headed for the bedroom door. A slight navigational miscalculation saw me crash into my wife's bedside table and then into the wall. Hot footing it down the stairs with a barrage of expletives at my back, I thought to myself, "Well, I'll have to do a hell of a lot of grovelling when I get home if I plan on waking up for reason number three tomorrow."

I was hoping for a quick get away and luckily I had already loaded the car with fishing gear and kayaks the night before. Past experience has taught me, that if the car isn't pre-loaded, the temptation is too great to re-think the whole fishing idea and to just snuggle under the duvet and go back to sleep. Or to revert to reason no 3, and then go back to sleep..

As usual, my fishing partner, (I know everything), Dave was late so I stamped around the driveway impatiently, my mood getting heavier than the early morning dew. Just as I was about to give up and go without him he pulled up with a screech, bounded out of his van, well, rolled is a more apt description, after all, he is 110kg and only 5 foot six, which would be fine if he was a blue fin tuna, but he isn't, and, he ain't that good lookin' . "Hurry up and help me get my gear in your car," he barked at me, "time is marching on you know, it's a two hour drive and I don't want to be held up!"

The drive north to one of our favourite fishing spots was beautiful. This spot will remain nameless. If we tell you guys where it is, it will cease to be one of our favourite fishing spots, because as I know, all you greedy buggers will go up there and catch all of our fish. So having said that, we kept on travelling in that early morning tranquillity.

There is something special about that time of the morning. The rest of the day may prove to be blustery, have torrential rain and hail or hurricane force winds with a bit of blizzard thrown in, but that time of the morning is almost always clear, calm and tranquil – spoiled only by the fact that Dave was rabbiting on about all manner of things that he knows just enough about to declare himself an expert on the subject. Dave is what I call a techno-fisher. This time I was getting a lecture about braids and flouros and absolute breaking strain. He then produced yet another one of his innovative designs, that would take the fishing world by storm. It was all swivels, metres of trace, crystal flash, holographic material, hooks and possibly a few sequins. Although it looked like one of Elton John's cast offs, it certainly had an aura of deadliness, (to people anyway), we were yet to find out what the fish thought of it. As usual Dave pronounced the whole thing as "Brilliant!" and I just accepted it as such, till there was proof to the contrary.

The sun was on the verge of bursting onto the horizon when we reached the launching area where we would paddle to our spot. The sea was like rippled, amber-tinted glass and we busied in silence, striving to get the kayaks and gear into the water as quickly as possible.

Packing a kayak for fishing is a lesson in effective space management and lateral thinking. Working it out is part of the charm of this method of fishing. Additionally, the manufacturer's placement of the scupper holes that blast a stream of freezing cold water over the kidneys when you initially hop in to it, is part of the charm of my particular brand of kayak.

We got in the kayaks and were paddling in record time.

Ten minutes into our paddling we discovered Dave had left our bait in the car. "No Dave, it wasn't me, bait was your responsibility that trip!!!" More time wasted!!

Three hours after hopping out of bed we were finally anchored over the fishing site. By the way, earlier when I mentioned we drove north 2 hours it was actually south 2 hours. Easy to get directions mixed up. So if you think you have worked out where we were, you are probably wrong, and I would suggest you forget about that spot and dismiss it as a waste of time. In fact, we actually travelled in an east/west direction.

We got ourselves anchored in about ten metres of water and were only twenty or so metres from the reef. It was still a few hours before high tide and much of the jagged rock was still showing. Within minutes my ledger rig was baited up and over the side. Dave was grunting and blowing and blinding and effing. I looked over at his tangled mess of hooks and swivels. "This is going to catch some fish you know!" he said with completely unjustified optimism. I'd be surprised if he got it baited up and in the water before it was time to go home.

First fish of the day. A nice 8lber. Dave was still dealing with the birds nest that was going to rock the fishing world.

Second fish in the bin. Dave finally had everything ready and was swinging the rod over his head dragging with it a kilo of sharp objects and sparkles. Having become quite

fond of my eyes and ears and not wishing to lose either I tried to duck down as far as is possible in an open kayak. Although, looking at that mass of hooks you could quite easily lose it all.

Plunk,.... Plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk,.....kaPLUNK.

The outfit plunged into the water. I could imagine all the fish looking up going, "Hey man what's that? Yeah man, look at all the sparkling lights, what a show, wow, dig that man, what a trip!!!!" as it rushed down, all sparkle bits and holographs. All it lacked was some LSD and Jimi Hendrix playing in the background to complete the ensemble. (I'm showing my age now!)

Third Fish in the bin.

"There's no bloody fish here." This is a mantra I'm used to hearing from Dave. He says it two minutes into fishing and has usually hooked into a monster about two minutes after.

And he didn't disappoint me this time.

Wham!!!! Something big hooked on. I could tell it was big because half the rod disappeared under the waves and Dave looked as if he was going to burst a blood vessel and disappear into the water with the rod. Grunting and cursing Dave tried to give the fish a bit more line and gain a bit of control.

Then I saw the fish break the surface. It was a monster. I estimated there was over a metre between the dorsal fin and tail.

I have no idea why a large kingi would even look twice at the sparkling spectacle Dave was presenting. My unlikely guess is it had a sense of humour and the subsequent events give this hypothesis some credence.

"It's a bloody big Kingi!!!" yelled Dave, and then he did something really stupid, he released the anchor.

Now let me explain. We have a clever little anchoring system on our kayaks. We can alter the anchor point from front to back and stop anywhere in between with a pulley system that runs a loop from end to end of each kayak. Then we have a quick release rope that drops the anchor rope on a buoy.

Dave prescribes to the Mohammed style of fishing. If the fish won't come to the kayak then the kayak will have to go to the fish. Or something like that.

So he released the anchor and started to reel in. Instantly the kayak started to plane. And to make matters worse Dave lost his paddle.

I have never seen a kayak travel so fast. The fish did a sharp u-turn and headed out to sea toward the Barrier. There was a nice little bow wave forming and I made a quick calculation that Dave would be in Tryphena by midday. The Kayak was completely out of control but Dave was whooping with enjoyment, an ear to ear grin splitting his face. I could hear the sharp whine as metres of line were taken by the massively strong fish.

Suddenly the kayak slowed and stopped. Dave looked a bit bewildered at first and sat there jerking at the rod. Then it dawned on him. The fish was heading straight back toward the kayak. His hand was a blur as he wound in the excess line striving to feel the weight come back on the rod.

Suddenly the rod bent backward over Dave's shoulder as the fish overtook him and made a

'The Kingi Incident'



mad dash back to the safety of the reef. With a whoop Dave lent backward over the hull and the kayak started moving astern before it abruptly turned on its side, almost spilling Dave out in the process. It teetered on its edge before it turned full circle and, complete with bow wave, started making toward the reef.

I had dived the reef in the past and I thought I new exactly where it was heading. Splitting a massive rock from the seabed to the exposed tip was a fissure. There was just enough room for a diver to make his way through the fissure if he swam at a slight angle.

The kingi had the situation perfectly in hand and Dave had no way of controlling or steering the kayak. There was probably no logical reason for me to yell, "WATCH OUT FOR THE ROCKS DAVE!!!!", but I must admit, it did make me feel as if I had done my bit in a crises. Dave's whooping made way for a sort of sickening strangled gurgle as the fish headed for the deep gap in the rocks. Plenty of depth and width for the fish, not quite enough width for the kayak.

With a heart stopping graunch, the kayak ground to a halt and promptly capsized. Dave was half in, half out of the kayak. I could see blood gushing from a cut after he went head first into the rocks. I thought thank god for that, it's only his head. He wouldn't have felt

a thing.

"You okay there mate?" I asked half heartedly because it's very difficult to feign concern when you've been laughing your head off.

Dave was holding on tight to the rod and managed to straighten himself up in the kayak. I winced as I heard the side of the kayak (my kayak) scrape along the rocks as the wave action and the pull of the fish slowly inched him through the gap. Dave had been winding furiously and I suddenly thought to myself he might actually land the fish. With a rush and final graunch that must have grated a couple of kilos of plastic from the side of my yak he was through and out of my line of sight. Hurredly the anchor came up and I paddled like a demon around the rocks. I didn't want to miss out on the action and this trip was proving to be highly entertaining. I got there just in time to see Dave, red faced and grunting, battling with the rod. The fish was near as damn it on the surface and approximately a metre and a half long. Every time Dave took one hand off his rod to pick up the line and haul the fish on board the kingi would regain its fight and pull the rod underwater. Dave had somehow lost his gaff.

"Don't just sit there gawking come over and help you stupid bugger!" Dave was getting frustrated and I couldn't stop laughing. I had almost reached him when the fish went

insane. It was like a mentally deranged torpedo and its thrashing knocked Dave off balance. In slow motion the kayak went up on its side, teetered and then completely capsized. Dave dropped the rod in fright and away went the fish.

Dave held his arms above his head and with a pitiful cry that would have melted the heart of a serial killer he wailed, "I LOST IT!"

Gingerly, I helped a very red faced and dangerously pissed off Dave with his paddle (which I had picked up on the way) and kayak. Blood streaked his face and raw flesh showed from the back of his hand to his elbow which had been deeply grated by the barnacle encrusted rock. I lent him a spare rod and Dave sat silently in the kayak fishing for a while but I could see that he was a bit dazed and his heart wasn't in it. The kingi had definitely taken its toll on him so I suggested to a very dejected Dave that we head home.

On the way back home Dave sat morosely lost in thought. Finally he tuned to me and said "Well mate, that was the biggest kingi I've ever seen let alone had on the end of my fishing gear in the capsized." Suddenly Dave was beaming and his eyes sparkled, "I'll tell you one thing though, it was bloody brilliant!"