

Veteran Captain and WESMAR Sonar Help Angler Land Record Marlin

1,005 pound Pacific Blue Marlin is the heaviest caught in New Zealand in thirty years

As the reigning champion of several sports fishing tournaments and one of the most respected game fishermen in New Zealand, Bob Ash is no stranger to success. The captain of the Reel Passion, an 18-ton, 14-meter alloy catamaran with a five-meter beam, Ash and his team have a staggering resume. They won first place in the Whangaroa One Base Tournament in the Marlin and Shark Sections, qualified as the boat with the most game fish points while landing the 2nd heaviest Mako and the 5th heaviest Marlin in the Hanz Tournament, and led in overall points and landed the 2nd and 3rd heaviest Marlin (both Blue) in the Tutukaka One Base event.

Ash specializes in maintaining the best equipment on his boat at all times and he is a meticulous strategic fisherman. His investment in new technology helps him remain at the top of his trade. One of his latest additions to his vessel is a WESMAR computerized HD800 sonar system, the world's most renowned game condition fishfinder. Ash chose the WESMAR unit because of its legendary success helping sportsfishermen around the globe locate Albacore, Yellowfin, Wahoo, Marlin, and live bait. He also appreciated WESMAR's unique M-18 Hydraulic Hoist, which he chose to install after speaking with sonar experts at Advance Trident Ltd., in Auckland.

The rugged M-18 hull package allows captains to lower their soundome in less than 5 seconds below air bubbles created by rough seas, ensuring operators will not lose their sonar advantage during a competitive tournament.

Ash, his sonar, and the Ellerslie Oaks fishing team (the experienced group from an Auckland pub) embarked on another competitive journey at 1998 Houhora One Base Tournament. The group consisted of Richie Scott, Tony Harding, Greg Taylor, and Warren Farquhar - good fishermen who have caught winning tournament fish in the past. They were excited to fish alongside Bob and his son Chris Ash, who manned the fishing gear and live snapper and was available for necessary advice. Also on board were boat owner Steve Campbell and experienced deckhand Rob Skinner.



The owners, crew and team from the Reel Passion with their record winning 1005 pound Blue Marlin caught with the help of the WESMAR sonar.

The tournament did not begin smoothly for the Auckland group, fishing was tough and luck was not on their side. The final day of competition brought more dubious timing. Ash stopped Reel Passion for a bit to help a stranded fisherman near an upturned dinghy, slowing the crews progress. Then Ash headed for North Cape (a place he once set a New Zealand charter boat record, tagging and releasing 10 marlin on his old vessel Anita Rose). Ash navigated the Passion into 20-knot nor'westerly sea conditions across Great Exhibition Bay powered by twin-turbo 318hp Volvos. After arriving in their chosen location, the team sprung into action. The leading fish on the last day was a mighty 200kg Blue Marlin, but just two weeks earlier a Reel Passion crew had landed two Blue Marlin that weighed in at 205 and 248kg respectively, so confidence was still high.

After a few hours of frustration however, things began looking bleak. A fine 90kg Marlin was landed, but three other larger fish got away in the 240-meter deep water. A winning fish did not appear to be on the horizon.

Just as the group became accustomed to their frustration, their sonar began picking up evidence of fish nearby. Chris Ash quickly rigged three live tuna baits on open-gape 10/0 stainless hooks and 500-pound Hi Seas leader and set them in the wake. All were out on two-speed Shimano Tiagra 80s. About thirty minutes passed, and a gigantic free-jumping marlin exploded out of the vengeful seas and soon the fish struck a live bait and kicked away. A second live bait was the next target and angler Tony Harding held the rod steady as the mighty marlin pulled line out 200 meters. A major battle ensued.

The fish consistently raced 50 to 60 meters away from the vessel and then turned and ran back at the boat. In between these bursts of speed were powerful dives. At times the massive fish surfaced and smashed its head and flanks across the Northland swells, sending spray and saltwater flying. After 55 minutes the powerful Pacific Blue Marlin finally succumbed to the skilled team on the Reel Passion. The Ellerslie Oaks fishing group radioed in the capture of a big marlin, but they did not realize how big until attempting to drag the fish onboard.

All eight men aboard were required to drag the fish into the boat's cockpit. After viewing the fish up close Bob Ash knew they had a record catch. He immediately measured the beast and headed back to the Houhora scales to discover if the crew had landed a Grandeur - a thousand-pound fish. Only 1 or 2 are caught worldwide each year. Nobody onboard wanted the marlin to lose too much weight in the mid-day heat, so they moved quickly.

When the crew arrived people of all ages showed up to view the proceedings. The buzz in the crowd was intense. How big was this fish?

1,005 pounds! The heaviest fish caught in New Zealand in thirty years, and indeed a grandeur. The marlin even left a permanent impression on the admirers at Houhora after it

was announced the fish had broken the weigh station. The scale was not the only concern for those who have to care for this record catch. Smoke shops could not guarantee that they could furnish proper services for the big fish so the owners spent \$6,000.00 to have it mounted.

Presumably, so it could grace the walls of the popular Ellerslie Oak's Pub.

Since the landing of this magnificent marlin, news has spread across New Zealand and an intense interest in sport fishing sonar has resulted in numerous captains and fishermen across the region contacting Advance Trident Ltd. to inquire about WESMAR's computerized sonar system.

"I was in a local pub when the local news showed a story about the 1,005 pound Marlin, and within ten minutes, four separate avid fishermen came up to me and requested information about the WESMAR sonar (the HD800-110) the group on the Reel Passion were using," says Duncan MacMillian of Advance Trident. "Fishermen in this part of the world take their sport very seriously and they all want to use the equipment that led to the catch of the magnificent Grandeur."

This game fishing success in New Zealand has sparked new debate among sport fishermen around the world. How much did advanced computer technology contribute to the record catch?

Many believe the sonar device built by U.S. company WESMAR may create new standards of greatness for game fishermen everywhere. The powerful HD800 sonar system (the unit that Bob Ash and his crew used while fishing in the 1998 Houhora One Base Tournament) appears to have revolutionized a competitive



The Reel Passion, an 18-ton, 14-meter alloy New Zealand catamaran has a WESMAR HD800-110 sonar on board with a heavy duty WESMAR M-18 hull package.

