



This article is provided courtesy of BlueWater Boats & Game Fishing magazine. It originally appeared in Issue 138, 2019.

BlueWater
Boats & Game Fishing
www.bluewatermag.com.au



Left: Tuna Champions Ambassador, Jonah Yick with a large southern bluefin.

Below: To reduce the fight time with a big fish, change the line angle and/or the direction of pull whenever necessary to keep the fish rising to the surface or moving fast to burn energy.



REDUCING FIGHT TIME

WITH BIG BLUEFIN

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Learning techniques to reduce fight times will benefit the fish as they can be released in stronger condition for a greater chance of survival. And with less lactic acid build-up, the fish you keep will taste far better too. Dr Sean Tracey gets some tips on tackling large bluefin from Tuna Champions Ambassador Jonah Yick.



TUNA CHAMPIONS
Kiafiti Kevver

Southern bluefin tuna put up a serious fight, which is exactly what keeps us coming back for more. However, long battles cause lactic acid and stress hormones to accumulate in the fish's blood and muscle tissue.

Tuna Champions Ambassador, fisheries scientist and passionate angler Jonah Yick said boat driving and angler experience is the key to reducing fight time, the benefits of which include higher survival rates for released tuna, plus a noticeable improvement in the eating quality of the fish you harvest.

Jonah will chase a big fish as soon as it stops running. "I'll turn in the direction the fish is heading and make sure the angler is collecting line as quickly as possible while I chase it down. If the fish goes deep, it's important to change angles. If you drive away from the fish until the line is at a flatter angle,

you can often get the tuna to come back up to the surface where you have a much better chance to turn its head towards you," he said.

As experienced anglers know, when the angler is resting, the fish is catching its breath too, so it's important to keep the pressure on and the fish moving fast. "If it's a stalemate, with the fish barely moving and no line coming off the reel, you're getting nowhere. In this situation, I'll drive away and sacrifice up to 100 metres of line while changing the direction of pull as well as the angle. This can make a big difference by stimulating the fish into a run, while also turning its head and coaxing it back up to the surface," he said. "On the other hand, if you remain stationary and wait for something to happen, the fish will recover, extending the fight time. You need to change things up, move the boat around, keep the pressure on. Keep the momentum going and you'll soon have your fish."

If you keep the pressure on and keep repeating the strategies, you'll increase the chance of landing that big bluefin in a shorter time. Reducing the fight time with your tuna is a win-win. It means better tasting meat from the fish you keep, or a faster recovery for the fish you release. 🐟

TUNA CHAMPIONS

Get more great tips from the Tuna Champions Ambassadors and take the Tuna Champions pledge to receive seasonal e-newsletters at www.tunachampions.com.au

Tuna Champions is an initiative of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation in collaboration with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania, funded by the Australian Government through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

