

Tackling Cabo's famed

Kites, Yummy Flyers, balloons, teasers on the troll and chunking just some of the methods and they all work depending on bait, conditions and locations you encounter

BY CAPT. RENEGADE MIKE TUMBIERO

Special to Western Outdoor News

Mike Tumbiero is captain and owner of Renegade Mike, a charterboat based for several years in Cabo. Tumbiero has accounted for two of the top 10 fish ever caught in the Cabo Tuna Jackpot and will be across the board in jackpots with his charter team on Nov. 2-5, 2016. Here he shares with WON readers some of his techniques and tackle for the Cabo's big yellowfin tuna. He is sponsored by Okuma.

Here are a few other techniques I've been playing around with the last couple years chasing the bigger tuna in the Cabo area. There is a few other things I will go over about preparing for the Los Cabos Tuna Jackpot Tournament in November, and chasing large tuna here in Cabo.

RUBBER SQUIDS: I've been using artificial rubber squids for bait, both when trolling lures and on the kite to target bigger tuna. I get a lot of East Coast anglers that fish with me on my charters and I just love picking their brain on some of the techniques they use back home.

One thing you hear a lot from the guys on the East Coast that fish the bigeye tuna and the bluefin is the use of rubber squid, both as teasers and lures. I've been playing around with these techniques quite a bit the last couple years with some very good success on most occasions.

When trolling lures I have been running a four- to five-squid teaser set up with a soft head lure behind that. It's been deadly on the bigger tuna. I run them on the short corners and the outriggers with just about equal success.

My favorite squids to use are the Mold Craft, as they make a large variety of colors and sizes. I mostly run the medium-size squid but when specifically targeting bigger tuna, I have been running the bigger squid. Same

with the lures.

I have been running the medium-size Mold Craft soft head lures with hooks in them attached to the squid teasers and going to the large-size soft-headed lures when specifically targeting bigger tuna. The squid spreader bars with the hook on the last trailer seems to work really good also.

Mold Craft soft heads have been around since 1971, so they've stood the test of time. They just seem to work the best in my opinion.

KITES: Another technique I've been playing around with lately is running medium to large squid on the kite when trolling through the porpoise schools. It has been effective, especially when targeting bigger tuna. Sometimes the smaller 30-pound to 50-pound tuna are consistently whacking the artificial flying fish on the kite (which can be a good problem to have) when you are after the bigger 100-pound-plus tuna.

I have found that running the bigger-sized squid on the kite can keep those smaller tuna from attacking it as much. It's good to have a wide variety of colors to figure out which color is working best. On the kite, I have been running both large Mustad single hooks or large Mustad 5X strong treble hooks right among the tentacles of the squid.

POPPERS: Another technique that I've been playing around with more and more the last year or so is throwing large surface poppers when the large tuna are up feeding on the surface with spinning reels. In years past, you would be crazy to do that as you would be in for an extremely long and tough battle. But with the advances in spinning reel technology the last several years it's doable to get a fish in a timely manner. Right now I am product testing a Okuma Makaria spinning reel that will hold 60 pounds plus of drag and has an incredible amount of cranking power.

This reel is going to turn some heads once it gets out on the market. There has already been some 300-pound-plus bluefin tuna caught using this reel on the East Coast. I remember back many years ago, we hard-core big-game saltwater anglers used to make fun of guys using coffee grinders (spinning reels), but not anymore. Big high-performance spinning reels have definitely found their niche in the big game fishing community. For poppers, I've been using both the Savage gear large poppers and



MIKE TUMBIERO works the entire water column, chunking, flying the kite or balloons with live bait or the Yummy Flyer, throwing poppers and pulling hard. During last year's big-tuna period of summer through fall, he scored some big fish, including this 294 pounder.

Yo-Zuri Bull Poppers. They both seem to work extremely well in attracting bites from large tuna.

HEAVY TACKLE: Another thing I'd like to discuss especially when targeting bigger tuna during a tournament is the proper use of heavy tackle. I see way too many people using lighter tackle when the bigger tuna are around, and it just makes for some very frustrating times. Yes, you will land a fish here and there after a very long tough battle, but you are giving these big tuna a huge advantage by using light tackle on them. I can't tell you how many times I hear on the marine radio of large tuna being lost after 4- to 5-hour battles due to line breakage or tackle failure.

I don't know about you but one hour to 90 minutes is more than long enough on a large fish in my opinion. After that, too many things can go wrong and many times, they do.

I pretty much troll year-round with 100-pound line. I can do that because I run 90-percent braided (Spectra) line on my reels and just have a short top shot of mono. I live by the creed "You can fish heavy line light but you can't fish light line heavy." I can fish that 100-pound line as 50-pound line if I choose to but I cannot fish 50-pound line like 100-pound line if I have to.

If you have confidence in your tackle, you'd be surprised on the extreme amount of pressure you can put on fish when you set your mind to it. Once that fish settles down into his circles, think about exerting an extreme amount of pressure to get him up in a timely manner.

HOW HARD TO PULL? One of my favorite lines a famous long-range captain used to tell us in his seminars when I used to fish the long range boats out of San Diego: "Have you ever been bottom fishing and hooked a rock? You then tried to break the line off and it just won't break, no matter how hard you pull? Well, that's how hard you can pull on a fish if you just put your mind to it."

I like to be prepared for the biggest fish out there.

Just about every time you put a line in the water here in Cabo you have a shot at catching a monster fish of a lifetime. So be



prepared at all times.

BE IN SHAPE, YOU AND YOUR TACKLE: When targeting big tuna it is very important to have your tackle in the best possible shape. Super-smooth drags are critical to being able to apply extreme amounts of pressure to your fishing line and not having it break. It is extremely important that your drags stay super smooth throughout the entire battle. Some reel drags begin to fail somewhat after a large 200-plus-pound tuna takes his first long hard run. As the drag plates get extremely hot just as your car brakes get extremely hot after heavy braking.

THE RIGHT STUFF: I have been using Okuma fishing tackle for the last several years, and in my opinion, they are one of the best-made fishing reels for targeting big-game on the market today. Not only do their Makaria reels hold an extreme amount of smooth drag pressure but they are the most durable reels I have ever fished. I fish over 250 days a year so I need a real that keeps catching fish after fish and not wearing down. Okuma developed a somewhat negative reputation on their saltwater big-game reels many years ago. These newer Makaria reels are nothing like the old stuff. I just love making believers out of guys that tell me about their past troubles with Okuma saltwater reels.

It's also very important to make sure your terminal tackle is in the best possible shape. Make sure all your knots and crimps are in excellent shape. I like to test all my knots and crimps on the boat by pulling on them very hard to see if they will break. I would much rather have the line break on my hand than on a big fish.

CHUNKING: Chunk fishing is another method that can be very effective. You have to have the right current to chunk fish effectively. If the current is too fast it will not work, as your chunk bait will not get down where it needs to be. Chunking requires you



spend some time making chunk bait. Skipjack is the most common chunk bait but yellowfin tuna will also make great chunk.

Just about any species of fish that is somewhat red in color will work for chunk bait. I like to just cut mine up in cubes from ice cube tray sizes on up. The size I like to cut my chunk bait depends on how much chunk bait I have available. Some people cut it up in strips and that seems to work also. I save all the skipjack we get throughout the year and vacuum pack it to have plenty of it available for my charters. Making chunk bait can be time consuming and when fishing a tournament it helps to make it when out pre-fishing. The fresher it is, the better.

It's very important when chunk fishing that you keep a constant flow of chunks out. The biggest mistake I see people make is when they will throw out four or five pieces all at once and then not throw out for several minutes. You have to have a nice trail of chunks out there so that the tuna will follow it all the way up towards your boat where you have the few chunks with a hook on it. You need to have one person as the dedicated chunk guy at all times. It sounds like the thankless job but it's a very important one if you want to catch the bigger fish. What I do is put out one or two pieces and once I cannot see it anymore I put out another one or two. I cannot stress that fact enough that you have to keep that chunk trail going in order for the fish to follow it up to your hooked chunk bait.

When chunk fishing, it is best to use fluorocarbon leader but there are times when the bite is going good enough that just reg-



CABO TUNA are often personal bests, and Capt. Mike Tumbiero makes it possible with the right tackle and tactics.



YUMMY FLYERS used with a kite and skipped are killer baits to cover ground, attract fish and hook them on heavier line.

yellowfin tuna



THAT'S A HELLUVA day on the water off Cabo for big yellowfin aboard *Renegade Mike*.

ular mono will work. You want to also use a swivel to keep your line from twisting, as the hooked chunk bait will spin when in the current and when bringing it back to the boat. I will run about a 4-foot piece of fluorocarbon in 80-, 100- and or 130-pound attached to your main line with the swivel. I like to crimp everything I can. The hook I use is a circle hook, and size depends on the size of your chunk bait. You want to completely bury the hook in the chunk bait. I like to run at least two chunk baits and one or two medium squid if you have it. I guess it depends on the size of your boat on how many you can run. I like to stagger them at different depths, so depending on the current I use torpedo sinkers. I may use a 3-ounce on one and a 5-ounce on the other. I just attach the sinker with a #64 rubber band about 15 to 20 feet up from your bait. That way you just pull the sinker off when your fish gets close to the boat.

MIX IT UP: While chunk fishing we also deploy the kite with live bait or medium whole squid or just use a balloon with live bait or squid. When using the balloon, I like to attach the balloon about 30 feet up from the bait with a rubber band. When the tuna takes your bait you will lose your balloon as it breaks off the main line when it hits the water.

GOOD INTEL: Getting some good info on where and how the fish are biting is important but almost impossible when fishing a tournament. Don't even waste your time trying to ask people you are not well acquainted with



MIKE TUMBIERO WITH A happy customer.



MIKE TUMBIERO with *WON* Editor and Cabo Tuna Jackpot Director Pat McDonell and crewman Roberto Marguez (at right) after catching a 223-pound yellowfin under the porpoise on a trolled marlin lure while skipping a Yummy Flyer when McDonell was down in June to fish and plan the tourney. Heavy line, and a Makaira 50 reel were used.

for info. If they do give you some it will be bad info, I promise you that. The best way to get info if you are not fishing often in Cabo is to really keep track of how the fishing is well before the tournament and on up to it. Reading your weekly *Western Outdoor News* is helpful and also reading posts from the local fishing message boards. Keeping an eye on the sea temp charts well ahead of the tournament could also be useful, as you can see any developing trends well ahead of when you will be fishing. I use Terrafin satellite imaging. Its only about \$99 a year and its probably the best money I spend every year on getting intel.

Another subject I would like to go over is one that I see happen far too often here in the Cabo area when chartering a boat especially for a tournament. It's guys trying to tell their captains where and how to fish. Nothing can put a captain in a negative mindset worse than having someone that only fishes the Cabo area a few times a year trying to tell him what to do. Unless you have an extremely good relationship with your Capt. (meaning you have known him for years and fish with him often), try to understand that he wants to catch the biggest fish in a tournament just as much as you do. Feel free to tell him your ideas but let him know that he is

in charge and you will accept his decision as final. I cannot stress upon you how important that is to the psyche of a captain here in Cabo, or anywhere for that matter. You may own your own boat and fish a lot where you are from but unless you fish just as many or more days as your captain does in the area he fishes in, it's probably best to let him decide what is best.

In my opinion, fishing is 90 percent confidence and the last thing you want to do is bring down your Capt.'s confidence. You make your own luck by being confident and preparing your tackle to the best possible situation.

Being in a tournament, many people stress when there's a lot of money on the line. I am usually one of those and have to really focus on relaxing. At the end of the day it's just fishing, so go out there and have fun and don't make things so complicated or stressful.

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