



NEWSLETTER

◆ FREEDIVING SPEARFISHING COMPETITION



MARCH 1999

Fathomiers Competition-Sunday March 14

The March meet will be at the ever popular Palos Verdes peninsula. Weighin is at the Malaga Cove school parking lot at 1:30. Three (3) fish meet.

Fathomiers Competition-Sunday April 11

The April meet will be held at La Jolla' "Hospital point". The entry will be at children's pool and will provide an easy entry for kayaks.

Club Meeting-April 12

The April Fathomiers Club meeting will be at the Round Table Pizza on the South-east corner of Hawthorne Blvd. and Redondo Beach Blvd.

MAJOR 1999 EVENTS

JUNE 5 BLUE WATER MEET

JULY 10 OMAR NEILSON MEET

JULY 30 U.S. NATIONALS

AUG 7 SCRAMBLE MEET

OCT 2 CHARLIE STURGILL MEET

NOV 14 LARRY STAAT MEET

1998 Awards Banquet

The annual awards banquet was a resounding success. Thanks to all who provided the excellent food and desserts. In addition to the food, the party would not have been so successful without the help of those behind the scenes bringing out the food, setting up and cleaning up. Also, special thanks to life member Ed Gulley for donating the wonderful door prizes. It was nice to meet the families behind the divers and it is always nice to hear stories of

THE FATHOMIERS NEWSLETTER IS THE
OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
LOS ANGELES FATHOMIERS

The Fathomiers is a Southern California club dedicated to
Freediving and Competitive Spearfishing.

Membership is open to the public. To become an Active member, you
must fulfill obligations and conditions. You can also become an Associ-
ate Member for \$20. Contact the Fathomiers for further information.

CONTACT NUMBERS

PRESIDENT	PAUL ROMANOWSKI	714.847.1930
VICE PRESIDENT	JOSE SHAUR	310.798.2097
SECRETARY	MITCH WALKER	909.305.0020
TREASURER	Bob Sellers	310.320.7153
RECORDER	RICHARD BALTA	562.402.4461
CONSERVATION	Gary Thompson	310.670.1571
FISH REPORTS	Mike McDermott	714.525.7309
NEWSLETTER	SCOTT DE FIRMIAN	310.320.0132
	e-mail spearo1@aol.com	
	JIM LOSEY	310.375.0103
	LOUIS ROSALES	310.644.5624
	e-mail lrosales@mediacone.net	

Editor's address: Scott de Firmian
2014 Gramercy Av.
Torrance, Ca. 90501

The editor reserves the right to make spelling and grammatical corrections to submissions, and may rewrite sections for purposes of clarity and/or space considerations. The intent and meaning of submissions shall be maintained as closely as possible. Anyone who has submitted an article may request a preview of their article as it will appear in the publication. At that time the submitter may request changes or withdrawal of the article. The editor and the club officers will determine which submissions to include and which to exclude. While reasonable effort is expended to ensure accuracy of the information in this newsletter, we do not guarantee it. The editor, and the Fathomiers and it's officers, shall not be held liable for errors in this newsletter. The Fathomiers do not accept paid advertisements.

Submissions are needed. Articles or information may be mailed, emailed, or communicated over the phone. Articles and photos may be dropped off at Team Sports for the newsletter. Photographs submitted will be returned to the owner after publication. Please take the initiative to contact me or to send me materials. If you have information for the newsletter, do not depend on "word of mouth" to get it to me.

Thankyou

The editors would like to thank those of you that have contributed thus far and to remind you that we are still in great need of diving stories tips etc. so we can make your newsletter as good as is possible. Contributions are easiest to use if they are in computer form (e-mail, word processer etc.) but any contribution is more than welcome.

Gear Tip:

The Constrictor Knot
By: Bill Kitto

An alternative knot to the clove hitch for tying around powerbands to hold wishbone knots is the constrictor knot. It is also useful for making shock cords and quick-release plugs. This knot should be pulled very tight by grasping each tag end with a pair of vice-grips then pulling as hard as you can. Tag ends may be trimmed and burned with a match or torch to prevent unraveling.

Tie the Constrictor Knot over each end using pliers pull the knot - be sure it is very tight - so tight that the rubber seems like it is going to burst tie it twice using square knots after the constrictor. Also be sure you tied it as close to the taper as you can but still over the wishbone line. Cut and sear the tag ends of the knot line. I use the waxed whipping line sailors (Available at West Marine or better Marine supply stores). Cut about a 12-inch segment when tripled tie figure eight's in the waxed line. installation on the gun is easy - thread thru the guns band slot . Then tie a figure 8 in the wishbone cord.

For illustrated instructions on making your own powerbands with ease of assembly , adjustable wishbone length, and easy changeability, see : <http://members.xoom.com/spearguns/powerbands.html>

Hunting WHITE SEABASS

By Orlando Delgado

As a Freediver and Spearfisherman, I regard the White Seabass as the ultimate quarry in Southern California waters. The following text is compiled from over 22 years of hunting, and the valuable information shared by great White Seabass hunters past and present, in person, or in their writings.

The White Seabass is actually a Croaker, not a Bass. They grow to great size and commercial fishermen have caught White Seabass weighing over 100 lbs. The current world record taken by spear is 80 lbs., taken by Skip Hellen, off Palos Verdes in March of 1994. Just recently, Todd Bergenbring landed a WSB, which tipped the scales at 76.6 lbs. (also taken in Palos Verdes)

Most of the hunting of White Seabass in Southern California is done in the kelp beds and points along the mainland, or at the islands. The best hunting is from early spring to the fall. They are usually deep in the winter. In the spring, the large females, loaded with eggs, come into the kelp beds to spawn. This is the best time

to get that record fish. The weight of the roe adds 10 to 15 lbs. to a large fish. At this time of the year, they are very vocal and can be heard croaking for a mate from long distances underwater.

White Seabass can be found in depths ranging from four feet to blue water well over 100 feet deep but, according to Ron Merker, "they will most commonly be found around the outer edges of the kelp bed towards the open ocean and out 75-100 yards into blue water." The size and thickness of the kelp doesn't seem to matter much, but they seem to like sandy edges along the kelp beds and the alleyways through the forest. In areas of where dirty water and clear water form an edge over open sand, Dr. Ed Glass says to hunt the edge because the Whites will be in and out of the dirty edge. World record holder Skip Hellen prefers to hunt mid-water on the outside edge of the kelp. In general, points of land with kelp are better than just a kelp bed on a beach, but John Ernst says that, early in the morning, Whites like to school up in sandy coves. He also adds that Whites like to hang right on the thermocline.

The equipment used to hunt White Seabass depends where you are hunting. In the thick kelp, in shallow water, I use a medium size gun (42"-48" with 3 9/16" bands) with a reel. In sparse kelp areas with shallow water, I use a large game gun (65" with 3 5/8" bands) and a 50-ft. trail line attached to the spear shaft on one end and to 3 small floats on the other. In bluewater, or in kelp over deep water, I use the same large gun attached to a 100-ft. trail line and a lifeguard float, plus an inflatable float (deflated) in case I need extra floatation.

The best time of the day to hunt is usually at dawn or dusk. Heavy current sends them deep. A good technique is to drop down about 10-15 ft. and slowly cruise the kelp lanes and look for fish hiding in the clumps of kelp and look for "Sleepers" under the kelp near the surface. Everything must be done extremely quietly because Whites are extremely wary fish. Even a small bubble will spook them and a rapid movement will send them fleeing. You must see the White before it sees you! When on the surface, cruise slowly, always looking carefully below and make your dives smooth and quiet. I usually dive about 20 ft. and hang in the water while I search all around and below with just the movement of my head. When you are hunting on the surface and a fish appears right below, let the speargun swing down on its own over the fish and shoot behind the head on the shoulder. If you see one off to the side, dive parallel to the fish and try to intercept it. If a fish comes across while you are underwater, aim right behind the gill plate in the middle and try to hit the backbone and "Stone it". If you are unable to stone it, it will put on a short, but powerful, fight. You should subdue the fish and, using your knife or stringer, kill it with a puncture to the brain as soon as possible.

As far as what they eat, Squid is, by far, their favorite food. When they come into the kelp beds or the shallow water where the squid don't live, they eat Mackerel, Sardines, Anchovies, Blacksmith, Perch and many other small fishes. Observations made of the stomach contents of White Seabass by Dr. Ed Glass revealed that the most common foods eaten were Squid, followed by Green Mackerel, Spanish Mackerel and Smelt.

Quite often, White Seabass hang out under, or within schools of Barracuda. In addition, they seem to be attracted to Sargo.

This information is only the "Tip of the Iceberg", and you should continue to read as much information as you can about the fish and its habits and listen to the old pros. Take notes when they

speak and take mental notes of your own observations when hunting. Write them down for future reference. The most important thing is to be a silent hunter. Remember that only a "Ghost can see a Ghost." The White Seabass is truly a magnificent ghost.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

By Mitch Walker

Minutes 2/99

Meeting called to order 7:30

two new guests were introduced to the club
Tim Gilroy Mike Aranda.

Old business:

1. Banquet sat Feb. 27 1999
2. Boat dive to Catalina is set for Fri. 6/18/99 on great escape. Diver cost \$30. Non diver \$10. Ten fish comp. Which will not count for yearly points. Registration at April meeting.
3. Pay dues now.

New business:

1. March club dive at PV. 3/14/99
Meet at Malaga for weighin fish must be at circle by weighin time (1:30?). Start at 8:00 on honor system.
2. Scale is at Richard Balta's house. Phone (562) 402-4461 wk (562) 983-1231 pgr. (562) 705-6483
3. Fish stories: Richard found a big goat at the Jan. club dive Paul got an eel while shooting a goat. Doug learned a lesson about measuring halibut the hard way.

Classified Section!!

Remember to send in your advertisements for any old dive gear which you can no longer use. We need ads.

The Big One That Didn't Get Away

By Todd Bergenbring

Sunday, February 28th started out like any other Sunday for me. I knew I was going diving, but first I was going to church. In a sport where every dive could be your last, it's a good thing to know God. I have been abundantly blessed in my life, and I'm very thankful for all that has been given me. After church, I met my friends for breakfast and powered up for a long day of diving. Upon arriving at the spot around noon, I noticed Skip Hellen's truck was the only one there. Good deal, only one other diver. Wrong. I get to the edge of the cliff to see about 6 or 7 boats parked up and down the kelp bed in every place but one...I look around and know where I'm going already. The empty spot. When I get to the bottom of the hill, Skip is just leaving and I ask him what it was like. He tells me he saw some small fish, but nothing worth shooting. He bids me good luck and heads on his way back up the long cliff trail. I get suited up and hop in, so happy to be enveloped by the cool water, knowing what could be lying in wait around any corner. For anyone out there that has never experienced the exhilaration of hunting a kelp bed when you know the big fish are around, you've got to try it. Every dive reeks with the possibility of seeing that one, giant fish. Well, you never know.... So, I start working my way through the kelp bed towards the outside edge, and it's pretty clear. Nice for the sheer beauty of it, but I'm looking for dirty water. It's proven itself to me so many times I don't even think about it. Just find that dirty water. I kick off in another direction until I start to see that milky haze, and when I get into it, my fish sense starts telling me that there are fish here. I often wonder when I get that feeling if it's just my anticipation, but almost every single time I feel that way, I start seeing fish. So, now I'm right where I want to be, and I'm ready. About my third dive down, I'm cruising through the kelp, and I see a big tail pumping through the haze. I start after it, and it turns, showing that it is about a 40-pound sea bass. I'm almost at the end of my breathhold when I start after him, and it ends up being a feeble chase as he easily slides off into the distance, leaving me to surface for another breath. It is about 1:00, and the sun is right overhead making sight difficult in the haze. There isn't really any specific direction to go to silhouette the fish because the light it dispersing equally in all directions, so that by the time I see another 30 pounder, he's right in front of me. I spook him, he spooks me. You know, the "full body flinch"? Ha, ha, ha! It just makes me laugh to think of it. Have you ever seen someone do the "flinch" when you know they are going to (I.E.: sea lion sneaking up on your friend who is lying on the bottom, while you watch from the surface.) Oh man, that just kills me. O.K., back to the story. After about 5 more dives I spook a bunch, but I don't get to see them. I was on my way down when I heard the booming of a bunch of tails. Sizeable sounding tails. I continue to circle about a 50-yard radius, working it in and out, not seeing anything for the next hour or so. Then I took the fateful dive that would change my life forever. I roll over, and slide under the surface, thinking not much of anything in particular. Just diving and enjoying myself. I level off and

look straight ahead, and just slightly to me right, and there it is....I will have this picture burned in my memory as long as I live. The fish is hovering motionless in the middle of a kelp clearing about 25 feet around, and it's about 3 feet off the bottom. The first thought that crosses my mind is, "Oh, a black sea bass, I haven't seen one of those.....here.....in....." The length of the fish is far too long to be a black sea bass, and the face is that of a white sea bass, but GIANT. The fish is facing me, looking slightly towards my left, so that I have a huge head looking almost straight at me, but still a lot of body to aim at too. It is about 18 feet in front of my gun. The head underwater appears to be about a foot and a half high, and about a foot wide. I decide to go for the gill plate, I can't miss it's so gigantic, and I dare to kick two more kicks towards it. I don't want to lose this fish, but I can't make a poor shot. The voice in my head is screaming, "SHOOT!!SHOOT!!!SHOOT!!!!!" I line up carefully, and fire. The fish explodes at the exact moment I pulled the trigger, and turns 90 degrees so fast, I fear I have missed him. When the moment clears, I see the fish is gone, and my shooting line which is now off to my left side, is falling limp in the water. It doesn't occur to me that I shot straight ahead, and now my line is to my left. I figure my float line would be half way past me if I would have hit him by now. With a confused and broken heart, I grab the line with the last ray of hope left in me, thinking, "Please Jesus, don't tell me I've lost him. "As my hand touches the line, it tightens up, and starts moving away from me.....I think, "Did the line just pull through my hand?" I put pressure down, and it tears out of my hand with a force that is unbelievable. I grab the float line as it flies past me, and head for the surface. I'm not giving up anything if I can help it. I almost never fight sea bass in this way, but for some reason today is different. Halfway to the surface, I look over to see a scene of such power and brute strength fly past me, it was unbelievable. The sound of the fight I'll never forget. BAM!!!BAM!!!BAM!!! Big silver body, kelp flying, tail pounding, in a way I've never seen before. Almost frightening. I burst through the surface, and with my first breath I scream "THANK YOU JESUS!!THANK YOU!!! PLEASE DON'T LET ME LOS.....blub, blub, blub (down I go) I let out a little more line, grudgingly, to make the surface. I break through again "HELP ME LORD,PLEASE HELP ME LAND.....blub, blub, blub.....(down I go again) I let out a little more, struggling to make the surface. At this point, The Christian kelp revival is over. I'm fighting for my life, but I also am unwilling to let out anymore line than I already have. Usually, I would let a fish have all he wanted, but there is a little voice in the back of my head telling me to keep the tension on the line. The hard steady pull finally starts to weaken, and I can feel the line starting to relax. My heart is beating so hard that I can hardly breath, I need time to relax. After the longest 5 minutes of my life passes, I tip over, and slide under the surface. I immediately see the end of my floatline about 15 feet away where it connects to my shooting line. "O.K., about 23 more feet of suspense and terror to go." I follow the line around one kelp stalk and the next, I can't see the fish, and my heart is breaking by the foot. I come to the last 6 feet of line, go around the kelp stalk, and there it

is, in all it's majestic glory, laying on it's side on the bottom. Oh, what a moment. I grab it by the gills and pick it up, and it is enormous. When I get it to the surface, I start looking at the shot. That fish turned so fast, that I hit him past mid body, in the upper gut cavity. Bad, bad shot. My icepick tip has pulled through the one side, has gone half way into the fish, and is lodged inside. I wonder how I'm going to get it out? I stick my finger in the entry wound, and there it is, sideways, between the last.....two..... ribs. If I would have let off the tension for one second, the tip would've spun and fell out in an instant. I take my finger and tap it, it turns sideways, and falls right out. I shake my head in disbelief, and thank God that I landed it. At this point, I'm so emotionally drained, I'm retarded. I can't figure out for the life of me how to get my shaft back through the kelp. Believe it or not, it takes me nearly a half an hour to get it untangled from this giant kelp chunk it's in. I could go on and on about swimming it in, dragging it up the cliff, etc. If you want the rest of the story just ask. You're probably sorry you asked already. Thanks to all the people who have called and left messages, and e-mailed me with congratulations. This all means more to me than you can possibly know.

TODD BERGENBRING-L.A. FATHOMIERS

METEOROLOGICA

Weather -

Los Angeles (213) 544-1212, Santa Barbara (805) 897-1942

Surf Reports -

Ventura (805) 644-8338 and (805) 962-7873, Zuma (310) 457-9701, Malibu (310) 457-9701, Hermosa (310) 379-8471, Cabrillo Beach (310) 832-1130, Orange County (714) 650-5783.

Online NOAA Redondo Beach Bouy -

[http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.phtml?\\$station=46045](http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.phtml?$station=46045)

Online Surf Cams -

<http://www.hbonline.com/bchcams.htm>

Online Surf Forecast -

<http://www.ocregister.com/ads/ocean/surf.html>

Online Tide Tables -

<http://fac.scripps.edu/cgi-bin/tidegen.pl>

Online Southern California Swell Model

<http://cdip.ucsd.edu/models/wave.model.html>

Online Global Wam Forcast (Unclassified)

<http://152.80.56.202/wam.html>

FATHOMIERS 1999 "IN CALIFORNIA" RECORDS

SPECIES	LBS	OZ	DIVER	LOCATION
White Seabass	76	9.6	Todd Bergenbring	Palos Verdes
California Sheephead	25	2	Richard Balta	Laguna Beach

Todd Bergenbring's search for the fish of a lifetime was rewarded with a monster White Sea bass. He was diving off of Palos Verdes and is now a very happy camper!

Turn in those record: If you have a record, in California or outside California, notify Richard Balta.

Fathomiers 1999 Competitive

**CHECK YOUR
SCORES!**

Place	Diver	Jan	Feb	Current
1st	Richard Balta	100.00%	200%	100.00%
2nd	Paul Romanowski	44.57%	0	44.57%
3rd	Mitch Walker	25.91%	0	25.91%
4th	Erez Abayov	18.41%	—	18.41%
5th	Thom Fogerty	18.38%	—	18.38%
6th	Marcos Pinho	10.15%	—	10.15%
7th	Carlos Serret	9.60%	—	9.60%
8th	Fil Labastata	9.46%	—	9.46%
9th	Cisco Serret	7.74%	—	7.74%
10th	Dustin Ellis	6.42%	—	6.42%

Place	Diver	Weight	Feb
1st	Richard Balta	1	1.5
2nd	Paul Romanowski	0	
3rd	Mitch Walker	0	

Competitive Results:

The February meet was held at the Malibu Colony with Terrible visibility. Only three divers braved the mud, Richard Balta, Paul Romanowski and Mitch Walker. Richard got the only fish of the day, a 1.5 lb. Rubber lip perch which was good enough to secure first place and the Al Shuck point.

Al Schuck Memorial Trophy

Diver	Points
Richard Balta	3
Eddie Ota	1