in this issue... Chatterbaitin' Bass StreakZ on the FlatZ ShrimpZ on Top TT Spinnerbaits The 3/8oz Switchy

Angler: Jade Williams
Species: Australian Bass
Lure: Z-Man ChatterBait

4" ShrimpZ - Upsize Me!

Tonga Party!





www.z-man.com.au info@z-man.com.au



Merry Christmas from the Team at TT Lures and ZMan Lures Australia!

We hope you have an awesome Christmas with your friends and family, have a few rum balls and Santa looks after you. If you are spending time on the water through the Christmas period, stay safe and we hope that your rods are bent, drags screaming and that all your snags are on the barbie!

Seasons Greetings Team TT / ZMan

Welcome to E-Mag #5

Here we are at E-Mag #5, thanks to all that have contributed to the E-Mag so far and for the positive feedback we have received. If you have anything that you would like to see in the E-mag, drop us a line and we'll see what we can do.

We added a few extra pages to this issue as everyone seems to be having a bumper Christmas / Summer issue and we didn't want to be left out;). With the craziness of the season we are a bit short on video for this issue, but stay tuned to our FB pages and we'll bring you plenty of stories and videos over the break and keep an eye out for the January E-Mag which will have plenty of video action.

Thanks again for checking out the Tackle Tactics Fishing E-Mag, fingers crossed you enjoy the read and please pass the link onto your fisho friends.

Cheers Team TT / ZMan

THE RIGGING BENCH

What's New

Pearl 3" MinnowZ

The ZMan 3" MinnowZ are one of the most popular soft plastics in the ZMan range. It's a 3" paddle tail with a lively action, in a profile that has proven irresistible to a wide range of species, from flathead to bass and barramundi to mulloway.

After requests from gun local anglers Tackle Tactics have now added Pearl 3" MinnowZ to the range. Pearl is one of the most popular colours across the ZMan range and an excellent baitfish imitation.

Whether you're chasing flathead, bass feeding on bony bream, barra and jack in the northern mangroves or trevally, school mulloway and snook down south, Pearl 3" MinnowZ will be a deadly lure option.

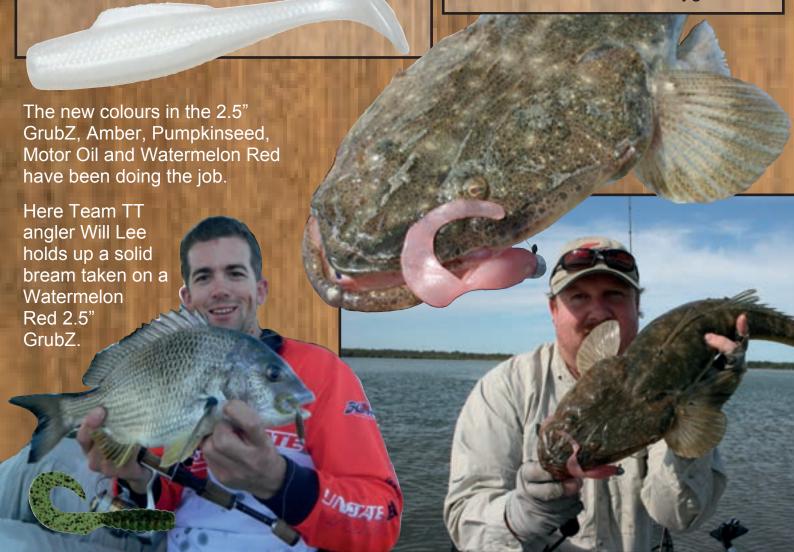
Natural 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ

While we're talking new colours, with the success of the 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ the Tackle Tactics team have added another colour to the range, Natural.

Natural has already become a favourite in the 3" and 4" Scented ShrimpZ and it's prawny, skin pink colouration, combined with that lively curl tail action is sure to be a winner.

This versatile curly tail plastic has also proven to be dynamite on a massive range of species and a go-to plastic for flathead, bass and snapper.

The curl tail is set at 90 degrees to resist fouling and it features a belly slot for easy weedless rigging with a TT Lures SWS or Snake Head jig head.





The finger was on the go button and we were about to release the E-Mag when a big truck pulled up loaded with our ZMan Christmas order. After unloading the truck the race was on to see who could track down the new colours first. Now the race is on to see who can catch the first fish on each of these new colours. Game on!

So what arrived?

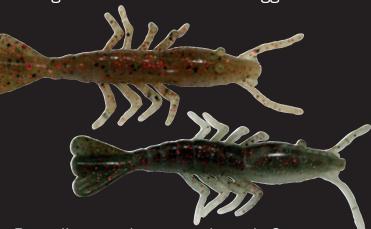
The pinkest minnow in the world! How awesome, we now have a Glow Pink 3" MinnowZ in the range... look out flathead, snapper and pink has also been a secret squirrel colour for a wide range of other species for years.





The 4" ShrimpZ are now also available in 2 new colours - Houdini and Redbone. The Houdini colour in 3" was part of Daniel Brown's winning recipe in the Daiwa-Hobie Kayak Grand Final and it's sure to be just as deadly in the 4" for species such as snapper, mulloway, cod and northern estuary species.

The 4" Redbone is sure to follow on from the success of the 3" in the salt and freshwater. The silver/white belly of the Redbone colour also glows to attract fish and trigger strikes.



Rounding out the new colours is 3 new colours in the 4 & 6" SwimmerZ. The 4" have been dynamite on mangrove jack, mulloway and flathead. The 6" have become a go-to for barramundi, mulloway and other larger predators.



Black Back Shad 'The ultimate mullet imitation.'



Yellow Back 'Watch that yellow back light up in the water'



Hitch

The photo doesn't do it justice - 'silver/white belly, blue/grey flanks and a black back with gold scale pattern. Awesome!'

Upsize Me!

ZMan 4" Scented ShrimpZ, A Bigger Prawn

I have been hooked on the ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ for the last year and have caught some great fish, including a variety of species. Barra, jack, cod, trevally, queenfish, blue salmon, threadfin salmon, bream, jew, grunter, flathead, fingermark... well, we all know that everything eats a prawn.

When live baiting, the bigger the prawn the better, so I was happy to see some ZMan 4" Scented ShrimpZ kick into my local tackle shop recently and the tackle box soon had an addition to the range of 3" ShrimpZ it held.



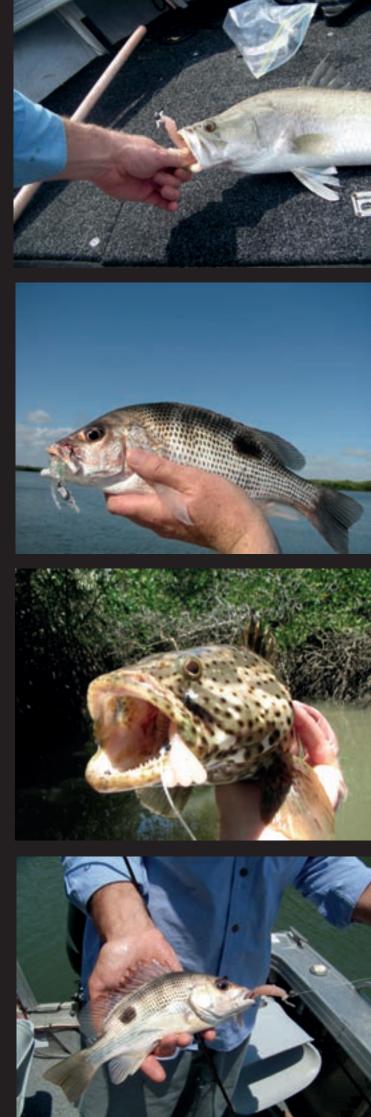
During September and October, in the creeks south of Townsville, the larger ShrimpZ have performed well. They have accounted for some good barra and mangrove jack, as well as some thumping black bream. I have caught fish on the entire colour range however "Natural" and "Holographic" regularly appear when I review the day's photos.

When fishing over shallow flats or when the run in the creeks is slow, I prefer to fish them on a TT Lures SWS (snagless weight system). This gives the ShrimpZ a natural horizontal sink and allows fish to take the bait in their own time. The 4" ShrimpZ sit nicely on the 4/0 SWS, producing a good tail action on a solid hook. This also allows me to rig the 3" ShrimpZ on the 2/0 SWS, also producing free tail action. Just remember that a micro-dot of superglue on the hook, near the eye, helps keep the plastic in place.

When in a bit more run or fishing deeper water I fish the 4" ShrimpZ on the new TT Lures Area 51 Snake Head jig head in a 4/0. This gets them down into the strike zone at the point where you land the cast. I like fishing light and have been known to shave down the 1/6 oz bullet head of the Snake Head down to something more like 1/8 oz.

Fish of all sizes have proven willing to take the larger ShrimpZ, particularly the more aggressive species such as barra, fingermark and jack. Larger bream attack the plastic like it was a real prawn. If fish have been timid on the larger bait and have just followed it without a strike, a quick change back to the 3" ShrimpZ often sees their mood change.

I will admit to also tampering with both the 3 and 4" ShrimpZ at times. I often trim off the legs and find it gives them a very real banana prawn action – try a quick flick up off the bottom or out of a snag then let them slowly "flutter" back down.



As always when using a Zman plastic, after a day fishing I am amazed at how few I have used. A full day's fishing recently saw ShrimpZ account for a dozen barra of all sizes, three fingermark, ten large bream, two flathead and an assortment of smaller trevally and grunter. For the day I lost two 4" ShrimpZ one buried deep in a snag by a large jack and another treated similarly by a small barra. I replaced one other 4" and one 3".

It is great to have a realistic prawn that keeps on giving...



Chatterbaitin' Bass

A recent addition to the Tackle Tactics range has been ZMan Original 3/8 oz Chatterbait, a popular lure in the US designed for targeting largemouth bass. When we popped the first one out of the packet and looked it over our initial thoughts were 'why would a fish eat this'... but then people ask the same question about spinnerbaits and the fish love them!



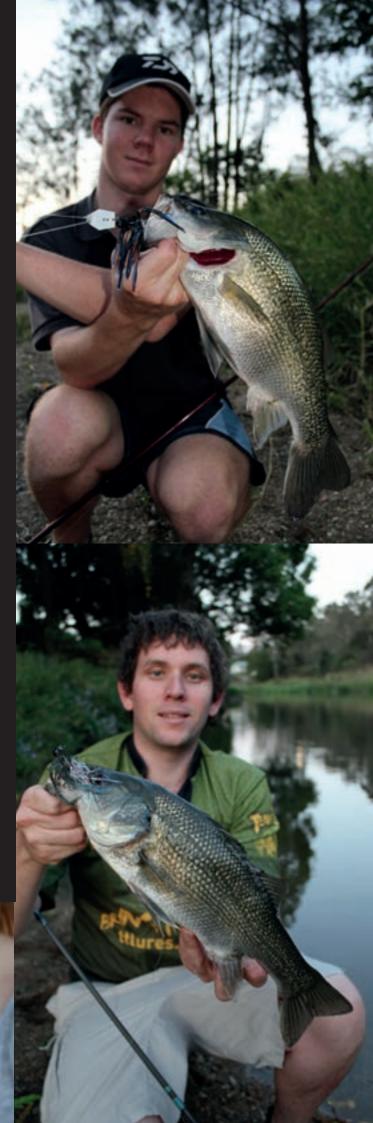
We had selected 12 awesome colours from the US range that would suit bass, cod, yellowbelly and saratoga in the impoundments throughout Australia. The time came to test our initial samples and the team passed them around, double thumbs up on the colours, ElaZtech trailers and Chatterblade, but would the hook be too big?

When the anglers returned to TT HQ the next morning the question was answered by the big cheesy grins on their faces. 'These things have an amazing action!', 'Man, it was crazy!', 'The bass absolutely smashed them!', were just some of the comments that flew from their mouths as they bounced around, waving their arms and simulating retrieves, hook-ups and fish sizes with their hands.

The decision was made to press the go button and they are now part of the range and still a favourite among the team at TT. Why are they so effective? They combine the profile of a jig, with the erratic action and the flash and vibration of a spinnerbait, they can be fished fast, slow and even paused to rest on the bottom, with the ElaZtech trailer floating up seductively off the bottom to attract fish and trigger strikes.

Bass slam them! Effective retrieves have included a burn and kill, slow roll and a slow roll with an occasional pause to allow the Chatterbait to rest on the bottom. Bass will even hit the Chatterbait as it rests on the bottom. If you are targeting finicky feeders and shutdown schools you can add a spinnerbait trailer hook to the Chatterbait hook to convert those short hits into hook-ups, but we have found that the blade on the Chatterbait protects the hook from snagging during the retrieve and prefer to run them without a stinger where possible.





We took a handful of Chatterbaits to a few local areas where the bass are heavily pressured. We cast hard bodied lures for a while with no result, switched to Chatterbaits and within a couple of casts it was fish on! This may be because the fish haven't seen anything like the Chatterbait before, as something new can often switch fish on... it may just be that bass find the action of the Chatterbait irresistible. This experience was mirrored recently by a keen angler that fishes TT / ZMan products. Stuart had been out chasing a few bass and sent TT an email, pumped with the success he had, stating 'I threw spinnerbaits and hard bodies with nothing for about 2 hours and changed to the Chatterbait and got 5 in ten minutes'... bring it on!

At around the \$10 mark the ZMan Chatterbait is a deadly lure option and a great addition to your kit when targeting fish in the freshwater. It will also be interesting to see what else eats them, with Jamie Douglas landing a 73cm flathead in this year's Flathead Classic on a Chatterbait, they may become a secret saltwater weapon as well. The 3/8oz Original Chatterbait is available in 12 colours, including 3 newly released colours Chartreuse /Sexy Shad, Candy Craw and California Craw. Check out the full range of colours at www.z-man.com.au.





The 3/8th Switchy



TT Switchblades have been producing a huge range of species for fishos all around Australia for years now. I've been giving the flatties a decent workout with them during the last couple of years, mainly jigging the ½ oz models in deeper water with good success, but found it just a bit too heavy in water under 15 feet deep. I also fished the 1/8th switchblade a fair bit, but found it was being eaten by a lot of smaller fish like bream, moses perch and really small flatties. Thankfully the crew at TT were onto this and designed an 'in between' model weighing in at 3/8 oz.

The profile is a perfect imitation of a small herring and the weight is well suited for jigging depths between 5 and 30 feet. We managed a heap of nice flatties up to 95cm on the 3/8 oz switchblade around the Jumpinpin area leading up to the Flathead Classic this year, along with a bit of interesting by-catch including jewies, tuskfish, small snapper, trevally, big bream, tailor and greedy estuary cod.

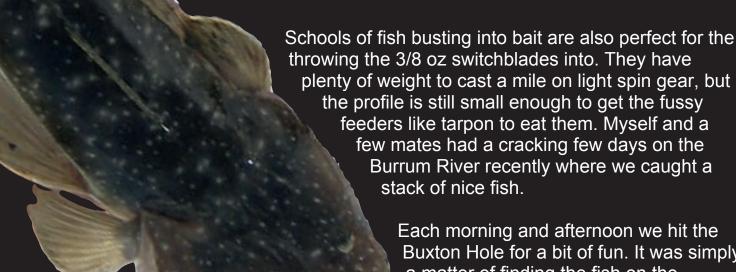
Jigging the deeper ledges close into the steep mud banks was the most successful technique, with a simple lift and drop retrieve. If bait showed up on the sounder we caught fish, but you never really know what's going to eat them next. Casting them up onto the top of the ledges at high tide and letting them fall down the face also worked well, with some good fish sitting right up on the mud.

Now that the flatty season is nearing its end I've been giving them a run around my local creeks and also further north around Bundaberg for all sorts of critters. Although they aren't great for casting at snags, it's always worth having a spare rod rigged with a 3/8 switchblade for jigging the deep holes on the bends. I always keep an eye on the sounder while I'm casting at snags and as soon as a bit of bait shows up I simply drop it over the back of the boat and give it a few jigs.









Each morning and afternoon we hit the Buxton Hole for a bit of fun. It was simply a matter of finding the fish on the sounder and dropping a switchblade into them. Most times they didn't make it to the bottom and there were two 50-60cm tarpon jumping around the boat.

Occasionally a nice tailor would beat the tarpon to it, or a cod, or moses perch would eat it if they made it to the bottom. About the only thing I haven't caught on a 3/8 oz switchblade now is a jack, but I know just the right rock bar to jig one over to fix that problem!





Flickin' the Flats with ZMan 5" StreakZ

By Lee Brake

That's why I've always loved packing the light outfits when I push out to the reef or the islands offshore from Mackay, Queensland. Usually the old 4-6kg spin stick (and sometimes lighter) is stowed away in the rod locker and when the tide heads towards full I'll turn my attention to the rocky flats and headlands of the nearby islands or reefs.

This is an exciting way to fish and can yield every species imaginable, from fingermark and trout to trevally, queenfish and parrot. However, as you can imagine, finding a plastic that is the right size to tempt a wide range of species and yet can also survive the teeth and terror inflicted by said species is a big ask. That's why I find myself more and more turning to the ol' ZMan StreakZ in the 5" size. I love the pearl and bubble gum colours and so do the fish; better yet, you get a whole session out of one plastic without rips or tears.

I remember one recent session over at Brampton Island in the Cumberland Group where we started by working our way around the deeper headlands. My old man, Graham Brake, was using the trusty pearl StreakZ, while I was using a hard body. His plastic was getting all the attention though and accounted for a few cod and a breathtaking little blue trevally one of the first I've ever seen – while I was batting for a big fat duck. Sure enough things got worse. We came around the corner in a crystal clear bay and suddenly I could see shapes in the water swimming towards us. At first I was thinking massive mullet, but then, as they drew closer, they were identifiable as trevally swimming in a dense school.





That old Steakz was in their midst faster than Lindsay Lohan can pocket a necklace and was streaking through the water in a lit-up pelagic's gob just as fast. I panicked and had my lure cut off in quick time. I looked around and the first thing I saw was a 3" ShrimpZ in the natural colour, so I threaded it on a little jig head and flung it out. Two twitches later and we had a double hookup on our hands! The old man's was a nice golden while mine was a solid little GT and I guess you really can't complain about that.

From that day on folks the StreakZ have always been a go-to lure for me on the offshore flats. We just got back from Hinchinbrook where the 5" StreakZ once again proved itself on the headlands with a nice plate size trout and a solid trevally in as many casts. I'd, of course, put it on a mate's rod, not my own. So, to cut a long story rather short, go get yourself some StreakZ in the bubble gum or the pearl. They go alright hey! The flathead love them too on the flats, but that's a whole other story.







When the surface bite shuts down, I start chasing the bass by casting a spinnerbait into any visible submerged snag. The weight of the spinnerbait makes the hook ride upward making it extremely snag resistant and even if it does get snagged I can paddle the kayak above the snag and bounce the lure loose.

My usual technique is to start retrieving almost immediately after the lure hits the surface so that I start fishing the top of the water column above the snag. With each subsequent cast I allow the lure to sink deeper into the snag. By counting as the lure sinks I know I am getting deeper on each cast. As the lure gets deeper you can feel it moving over the snag and it is amazing how often a strike occurs after making contact with the snag.

The beauty of the spinnerbait is that it is not just limited to fishing snags. I also use it as a prospecting lure. I cast it towards the shore and then retrieve it back. I use the same countdown system so that I fish the entire water column back to the kayak. You can use the same technique from the shore. I also mix up the speed of the spinnerbait; sometimes retrieving really slowly so that the blades are only slowly turning at other times a fast retrieve seems to draw the bass to the lure.

Another retrieve I regularly use is a stop start retrieve. Each time the lure stops it helicopters down and then heads back towards the surface when the retrieve is restarted. Be ready for a strike as the lure is falling. You can also helicopter the lure down the side of a steep bank or adjacent to vertical timber. As the lure falls you need to keep an eye on your line and watch for the line speeding up, slowing down or moving in a strange way. If any of these things happen close the bail arm and strike.





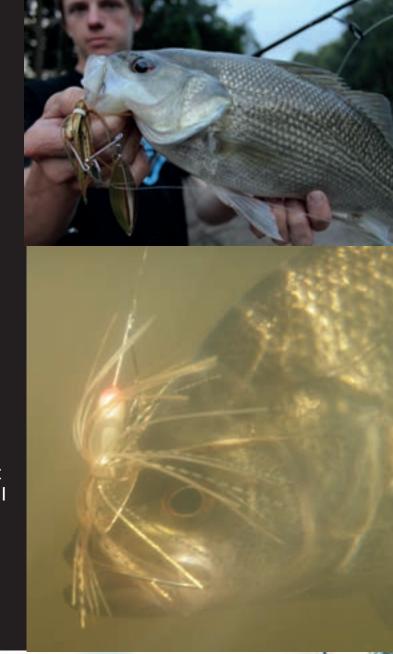




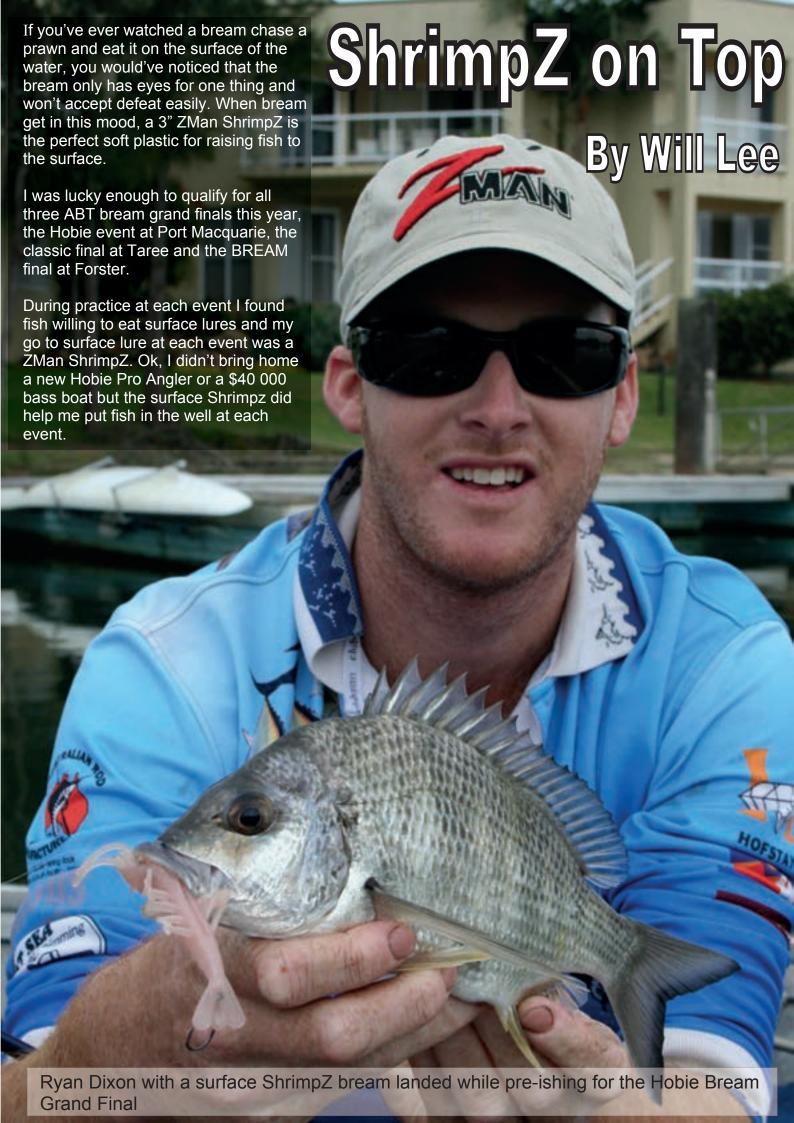
One problem with spinnerbaits is that when the bite is finicky they do receive a lot of strikes that do not hook up. This is because the bass hits the skirt and not the hooks. These short strikes can be rectified by adding a stinger hook. The stinger hook does reduce the snag resistance of the lure, so I usually only use one when prospecting open water.

It is possible to modify spinnerbaits by adding a soft plastic. This adds bulk to the lure and changes the profile. Adding a ZMan MinnowZ to the lure will slow the decent of the lure as the ElaZtech material floats. A dab of superglue will keep the MinnowZ attached to the spinnerbait hook.

I have been reading about spinnerbaits being used as a surface lure. It involves retrieving so that you can see a bulge of water coming back towards you along the surface or so that you can see the blades breaking the surface. I have not tried this yet but as the weather warms and the cicadas start to call I will be giving it a go. Who knows, maybe I will have to retire all my surface lures and stock up on more skirted coat hangers.

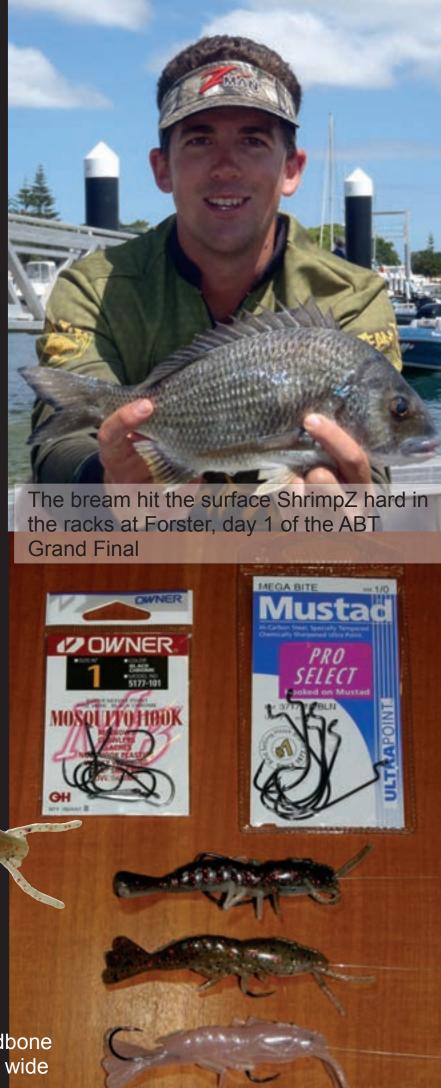






There is a couple of ways to rig the ShrimpZ for surface action but my favourite way is super simple. I use a single size 1, Owner Mosquito Hook. The only modification I make to the hook is removing the bend in the shank with a pair of pliers. Once the hook is straight I thread it into the nose of the ShrimpZ and bring it out on the underside and hide the eye of the hook in the nose of the ShrimpZ. A drop of superglue on the eye of the hook will also help prevent the hook from slipping out of position. With this rig you might miss some of the smaller fish but I've found the bigger fish will go in for a kill shot and generally hit the head first. If the majority of fish are small, I will make things a little more complex and use a snood rig with twin hooks. This is also deadly when the fish aren't fully committing to the take.

Another way I rig the ShrimpZ is with an offset worm hook. These are handy when you're throwing into tight cover because the rig is virtually weedless and if you do happen to go over a branch on a snag or a rope on a pontoon you can easily wind the ShrimpZ over it without fouling up. Once again a drop of superglue near the eye of the hook will prevent the ShrimpZ from slipping.



New colours Houdini (Top) and Redbone are proving deadly on bream and a wide range of other species.

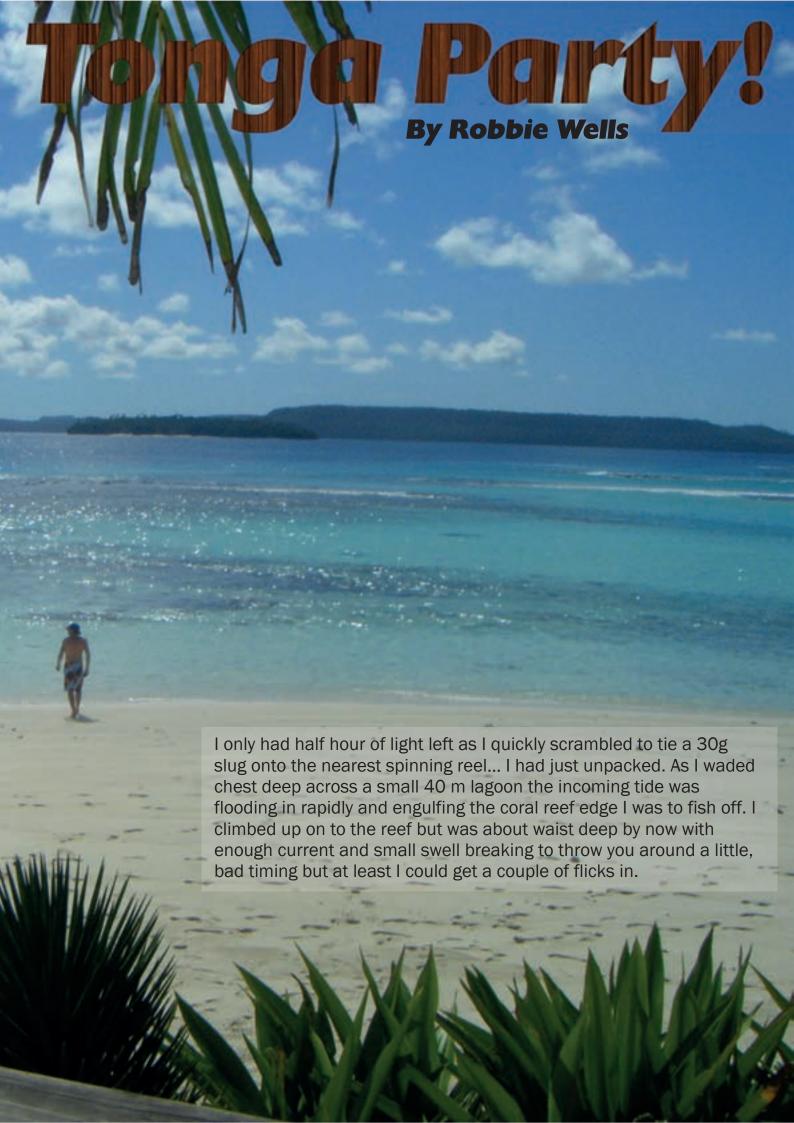
There's a number of retrieves I use when fishing the ShrimpZ but the most effective I have found is to make a nice long cast and with a high rod tip use a medium to fast retrieve with a flick of the rod tip every 4 to 6 turns of the reel handle. If you see a fish charge out at it, keep winding! I generally don't stop the lure unless I'm running out of water between the fish and the boat.

When the fish are a little shut down, I slow it down and twitch the lure by flicking the rod tip quite vigorously and pausing it on the surface every metre or two. Unlike other soft plastics, the ZMan range float and this is a huge benefit when fishing the ShrimpZ on top.

Being buoyant also allows a similar approach to a hard bodied popper, using a pop and pause retrieve. I found the fact that the ShrimpZ float particularly handy while fishing the oyster racks at Forster as I could fish the lure above the racks when there was only an inch or two of water covering the rack and not have to worry about getting caught up. The same approach could be applied on shallow weed beds.

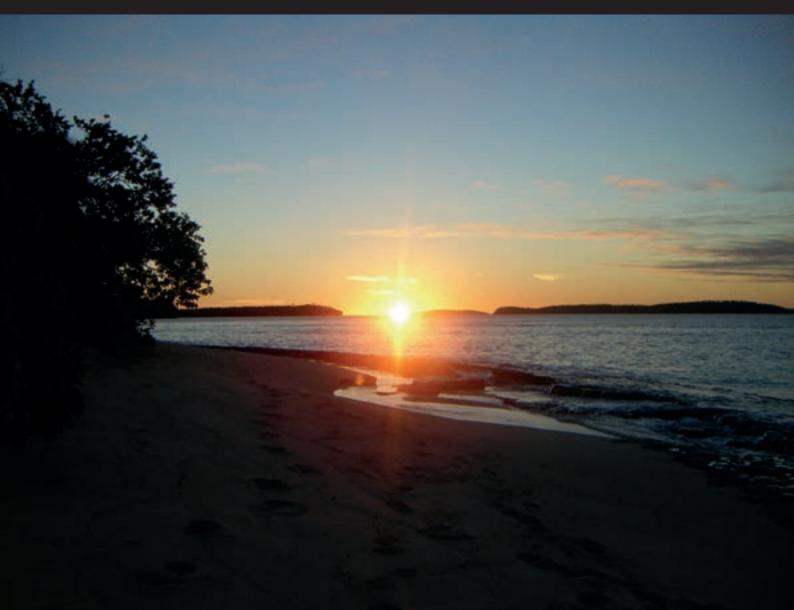
Now the bream tournament season is over I look forward to throwing some surface ShrimpZ at Mangrove Jack after dark. I can't wait to throw the 4" version into some tight nooks and crannies... only to watch an angry red fish come out and terrorise it. Watch this space!







Our Home for the next 7 days was the picturesque Outer Island of Mounu {baitfish in Tongan}, a short 50 minute boat trip from the VaVau Island Group which is about a 1 hour flight from the capital Tongatapu {Tonga} the main island. Two years in the planning, a combined Wedding anniversary, 40th birthday and a bit of R & R... some extensive research on the net had brought us here.

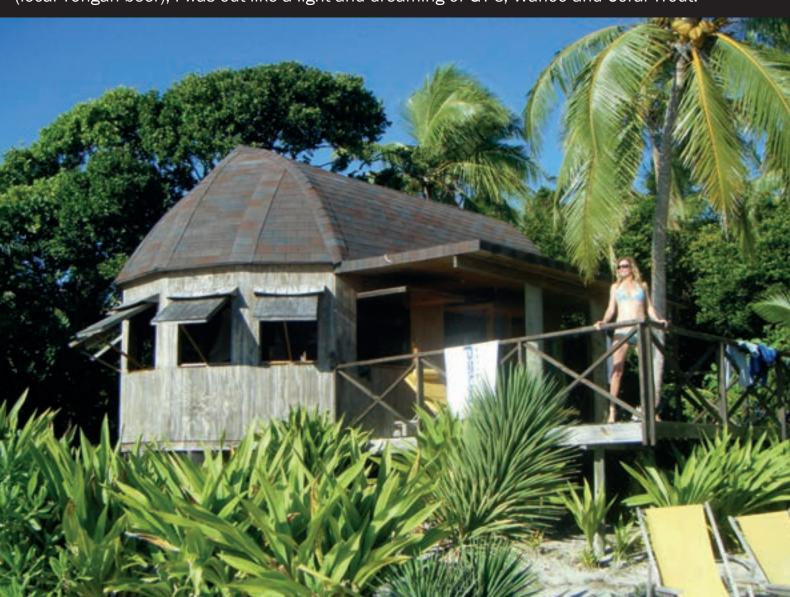


Mounu Island is the only place in the world where you can dive with Humpback Whales and their young, on their migratory mission back south. Add to this some outstanding fishing and diving and I'm in heaven. Our island home was set up by ex-pat Kiwi Alan Bowe and his family over 18 years ago with a vision to see what would happen if you could swim with the Humpback Whales. Alan is a seadog from way back and never short of intriguing, real-life stories from rescues to sinking's, from his time at sea around the northern tip of NZ and his time in Tonga. His tales were always a treat each evening over dinner.

Mounu Island is an eco resort with a difference. It's only small, at 6 acres, and caters for couples, with a maximum of 8 people on the island at one time. Accommodation consists of 4 traditional Tongan Bures, with verandahs overlooking the beach edge and the water literally lapping at your feet. The Bures are open plan and built using traditional Tongan timbers. The other major difference to other eco resorts is you can walk around the island, kayak or walk out to the reef and flick lures all day.

The sun had set and the full moon had just started to illuminate the ocean and sand as I walked up the beach to our Bure, my wife Sue standing on the deck, in full view of the reef I had fished. Before I could even wash my feet, Sue being a super keen angler was telling me what lures she wanted on what rods and enthusiastically firing questions at me. What time's low tide? What do you think it was? How big was it? What lure did you use? What technique? By this stage it was 6.30pm and we were due for dinner.

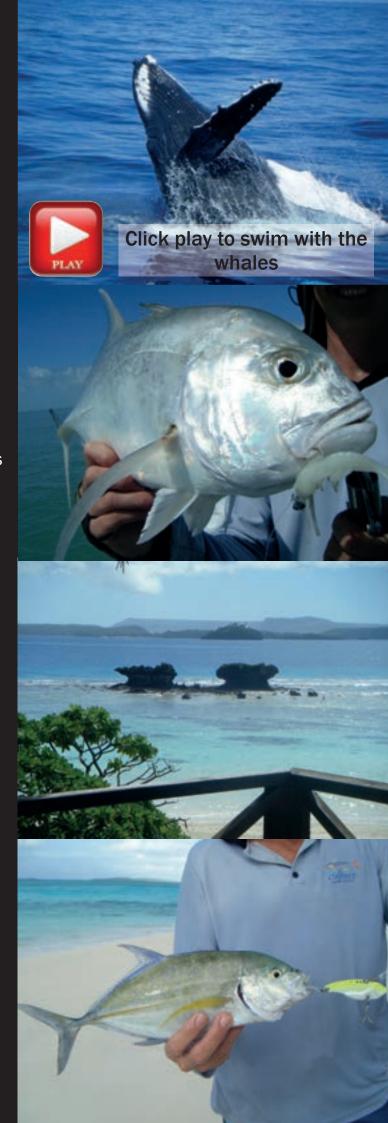
After a succulent 3 course dinner and a few scotches our intentions were to rig up all our gear ready for low tomorrow... but after a huge day of travelling and perhaps a few too many Maka's (local Tongan beer), I was out like a light and dreaming of GT's, Wahoo and Coral Trout.



I was up mega early the next morning well before light sorting all the gear ready for the onslaught. We were armed with 7 setups, ranging from 6-8kg up to a 12-15kg popper smasher, all spooled up with 20lb-50lb braid. My arsenal of lures included chromies from the TT Lures jelly beans to 125gr Lasers, a range of hard bodies... the usual CD18's and 12's, Laser Pros, a range of 80mm to 250mm Poppers, TT Lures 1.5oz Switchblades and a swag of ZMan soft plastics from 4" SwimmerZ to 8" StreakZ XL. After a mishap a few years ago I don't travel with juiced up soft plastic lures anymore... they don't smell nice mixed up in your clothes.

Finally there was enough light to wade through the lagoon, with enough visibility to weave through the myriad of coral and reef. Although the tide was starting to come in, there was heaps of dry reef with no swell to cause any real grief, but only one little platform of rock that you could comfortably stand on, as the coral surrounding us was delicate and razor sharp.

We both shot a cast out, one either side of the bombies. I was armed with an 8" ZMan StreakZ XL in Bubblegum and Sue flicked out a 30g TT Slug. 1, 2, 3, 4, bang! I was using a fast hop through the water column, while Sue was using the usual fast-as-you-can-wind retrieve. Zzzzzzzzzz, Sue hooked up first, her 10kg T-Curve was doubled over and giving those big pulses on the tip that only a big fish gives, while tearing off an easy 100m of 40lb braid. I was watching in amazement as my 8" StreakZ got nailed about 10 metres from the coral edge. I looked down and just saw a flash. It looked more like a Trevally than a Mackerel and my reel screamed in pain as the StreakZ was taken into the abyss, double hook-up, how goods this!



I made sure I had a backpack with all my gear in it this time, as in my haste last time I grabbed my rod and reel and that was it... no pliers, Boga grips or anything! For the next half hour all I did was tie leaders and burn lures to the demon fish from below. I have never lost so much gear in such a small period of time. We changed tactics and started to fish the closer holes and reef just off the drop off and were finally rewarded, almost instantly, with a small Blue Trevally of around 2-3 kg and a Coral Trout.

Sue was picking up Trevally on the 1.5oz Switchblade and I was still using Bubblegum 8" StreakZ hopped through the reef holes. I have never seen 3 Coral trout come out of the reef to compete for my plastics before and at only 4 meters away, it was an awesome sight! In 6 casts I had hooked and landed 2 Coral Trout and 2 Coronation Trout. They weren't big fish, especially for the 8" plastic, but they just engulfed it. I had one cracker Coronation Trout that I stashed in a rock pool... but the incoming tide flooded in and it escaped, doh! I picked up another couple in the next 10 minutes, so dinner that night was going to be good.

The tide was now flooding in with a small swell and current. The 15-20 knot trade winds also started to kick in, signaling the end of the session. Oh well, there's always tomorrow.

Stay tuned for Issue #6 of the Tackle Tactics E-Mag for part 2 of Robbie and Sue's Tongan adventure.



If you spend time out in the sun fishing, camping and exploring the outdoors, make sure you check out the range of Sun2Sea UV Protection gear that Robbie & Sue have designed specifically for those spending time outdoors. The range is made in Australia and includes sun shirts that are loaded with features, sun hoodies, sarongs, gloves, kayak leg covers and more, including corporate shirts. Check out www.sun2seauvprotection.com.au and stick with the local bloke.

Thanks for reading and please forward the E-Mag link you received onto all of your fishing friends and give them something to read over the break.

Have a fantastic Christmas filled with family, friends, love and laughter. Best wishes for an enjoyable and safe New Year and we'll see you in 2012!

Cheers, Team Tackle Tactics



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