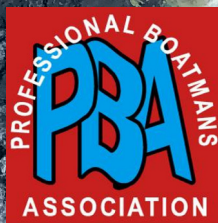


# BLUEFIN TUNA TRAINING MODULE ANGLER SAFETY



PRODUCED BY THE UKBFTA  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ANGLING TRUST AND THE PBA



# ANGLER SAFETY

## SAFETY

Fighting large bluefin tuna can be a physically challenging process.

Significant pressure on little used muscles can result in muscle damage, torn ligaments and sprained joints. Skippers should assess the physical and experience levels of their anglers and choose the fishing and fighting technique that are appropriate for that angler. E.g. choosing to fish spreader bars, fight from a chair/rodholder, both of which may reduce the pressure on the angler's body.

## THE DANGERS.

Broken line can send rods/reels flying back into the angler's chest and face, or an angler tumbling backwards into sharp obstructions in the cockpit.

Unexpected turns of speed from a fish can catch anglers unawares and drag them crashing into gunwhales. Heavy lines caught around fingers can strip them to the bone as a fish takes line or strip the skin from palms or fingers trying to slow the spool.

The leadering and restraint process can be a dangerous time. Each year, somewhere in the world a leaderman goes overboard attached to a huge tuna/billfish/shark, often not to survive. Busted elbows, cracked ribs, dislocated shoulders are all very possible with poor training and practices.

Trip hazards and worse. A busy cockpit will be home to large hooks, lots of heavy duty mono, 'cheese-wire like' braided line, lip hooks, and lots of obstructions to hit your head on should you fall.

***The first priority on any bluefin trip must be the safety of the crew and anglers. There are a number of things that can contribute to that.***

- Use the best equipment you can afford, and take great care in your construction of connections, bars etc.
- Use fighting/leadering gloves as appropriate
- Use strong, easily relocated safety straps attached from the reel to the vessel.
- A 'coach' standing behind the angler, stabilising them if required can be of great help, especially in rough seas.
- In vessels with low gunwhales a quality buoyancy aid should be worn when fighting fish and/or leadering.

- Leadermen on both charter and private vessels can be attached to the vessel with a safety harness, wear buoyancy aids and should always have a line-cutter attached to them within easy reach.
- Do not let anglers (unless very experienced) adjust the drag levels during a fight, (or at all in fact).
- Keep the cockpit clear and tidy. Stow bars, bags, leaders, liphooks etc out of the way.

## FATIGUE

The risk of injury to the angler, (and the fish), increase with fatigue. Whilst that pressure from a large, powerful fish is part of the experience of tackling such quarry, few would claim to enjoy hours of constant pain followed by days or weeks of recovery.



There is a way to mitigate that, simply:

- Choose adequate tackle able to deliver pressure and control to the fish.
- If you 'overgun' then the gear will exhaust you faster than the fish.
- Set your harness/pad or chair up correctly.
- Use good technique.
- Communicate with the helm to use the vessel to aid in the fight.
- Be honest and swap out with a replacement if the anglers is unable to continue to pressure the fish, or feels unwell.

The risk of injury associated with fighting fish that may weight 500lb+, in a rolling sea, possibly 20 miles offshore, should not be taken lightly.

If you follow the above guidance, you can reduce those risks, but at the end of the day the responsibility to avoid bad outcomes rests with EVERYONE on the vessel. Stay safe, have fun, but come home with only a few sore muscles and war stories.