

BLUE WATER RECORDS

I'll bet you'll read the title and think, "I'll never have a chance at a record." Think again. Take the case of beginning Hawaiian diver Russell Caires who more than doubled Australian Rob Torelli's long-standing Albacore record.

Russell had been freediving just 4 months, twice a week, when he invested in a 110 cm. Euro gun. He went to IBSRC (International Blue Water Spearfishing Records Committee) member Brian Yoshikawa who helped Russell outfit the small gun with bands and a reel. On the fateful day, Russell and his buddies decided to dive from shore. After climbing down a cliff, Russell swam through a shallow tidal pool on the way out to open ocean. Just as he exited the pool into 20 feet of water, a tuna of some sort swam into view. Russell fired. Missed.

The big fish followed his spear all the way upward as the frantic diver attempted to reload. Russ was so jazzed on adrenaline that he could not cock his gun. He swam back to shore and climbed onto the lava rocks.

Finally reloaded, Russ reentered the water and searched the exact area of his sighting. After a while, the Albacore reappeared. Russ dipped down and made a 15-foot shot probably closing his eyes at impact. He wasn't sure where either his shaft or the fish went but he knew he had the fish because of the way line peeled off his reel. Four times he almost had his hands on the record fish but each time it swam away in a burst. Russell was so excited he decided to use an old judo trick. He dragged the fish into shallow water, grabbed its tail, flipped in onto surf-washed rocks then leaped out of the water landing on his prize. Russ says, "I just threw my body on top of him. He was kicking me like crazy, but I was so tired that I didn't even care." Russ ended his battle by leapfrogging over the surf rocks with his catch until he finally got to shore where he subdued this amazing fish by stuffing it down a lava tube hole.



Beginning freediver Russell Caires never thought his day would end with a world record

Few of us will ever be as lucky as Russell Caires. However, few of our recent record applicants set out with the express purpose of spearing a blue water world record. Successful applicants followed our rules while others failed to observe one or more critical points. Because following world-record rules can add an additional level of danger to an already extreme sport, the IBSRC offers a special *Meritorious Award* for those applicants whose catch is world-record material but for one infraction, which denies them world-record status. A good example is a prudent diver who, in shark infested waters, elects to pull in his prize from the relative safety aboard a skiff rather than subdue his catch in the water as called for in our rules.

While we are on the subject of safety, we should also mention the philosophy of world-record pursuits. Some may argue that for whatever reason such, quests don't suit their interests. We respect these thoughts and offer the balance of this article to those who have an interest in someday spearing a record. Certainly, no one should jeopardize his or her safety by making world-record attempts. We strongly advocate safety over a record pursuit and recommend that divers consider proceeding with the potential record catch only after reviewing each succeeding step in the process with caution.

The basic philosophy behind our rules is simple. Submerged freedivers should single-handedly take a wild blue water species allowed under local laws, with a muscle-powered spear. We have had to reject record applicants who did not follow these guidelines.



Kevin Daly

Ryan Springall

Barry Paxman

The record for the Narrow Barred Spanish Mackerel has changed hands and continents 3 times in as many years.

We rejected a large tuna record application because the fish was taken just outside of a net containing bait. Another possible tuna record had to be denied because did not get a local permit to spear fish. Fish shot in a chum line (other than one made by the diver burlying a fish in the water that he shot) are ineligible. Since many of us hitch a ride with fishermen who may throw bait from the boat, we must be aware that these practices could jeopardize our applications.

Recording the weight of a potential record is problematic, especially in remote locales. Weighing on a certified scale is the best practice and incurs no penalties. We have accepted records when the fish was cut into 3 pieces and weighed on an un-certified scale. The scale was later certified but a percentage was deducted from the weight. Greg Pickering's yellowfin tuna record was weighed on a boat where swell action constantly changes the weight. At one point during the 2-minute video taped weighing, the scale read 315 pounds. However, according to our rules, the lowest reading of 305 pounds was certified as the official weight.

No set of record rules will cover all circumstances and "shades of gray." That is why the IBSRC Records Subcommittee evaluates the specifics of each submission. Records subcommittee chair Andreas Agathos of Greece sends the potential claims to his members for comments and finally, a vote. Adam Smith of Australia is chair of the Rules Subcommittee. His committee helps interpret rules and suggest new rules when appropriate.

Some records are broken in small increments. The record for the Narrow Barred Spanish Mackerel has changed hands and continents 3 times in as many years. Furthermore, we have yet another pending application. In 1982, Arnold Picolli of Australia broke the record with an 80.4-pound (36.5 kg) fish. Eighteen years later, Kevin Daly beat Arnold's record with a fish weighing 81.05 pounds (36.8 kg) he speared in South Africa. Next year, Ryan Springall narrowly recaptured the record for Australia with his 81.5-pound (37 kg) fish. The following year, 2001 Barry Paxman claimed the current record with a 81.9-pound (37.2 kg) beauty.



While some records stand for decades, Joe Tobin's magnificent North American Yellowtail stood for just 3 days.

**Joe Tobin (left)
Doug Kuczowski**

Records have been broken within days. Mark Steele's 68-pound (31.01 kg) North American Yellowtail record was secure for 9 years. In 1999, Joe Tobin braved the white shark haunt of Guadalupe Island, Mexico to take the new record of 72.7 pounds (33 kg). With such a large fish and secure in the knowledge that these kinds of records remain for years, you can imagine Joe's chagrin when his deck-hand buddy Doug Kuczkowski smashed his record with a 77-pound (34.95 kg) fish just 3 days later at the same location!

A few spearos take fish, which, make huge leaps in long-held weights. One such case is Bruce Gaudino's 125-pound (56.75 kg) Wahoo taken last summer at La Paz, Mexico. The previous record of 94 pounds (43 kg) taken in South Africa in 1990 was blasted out of the water by Bruce Gaudino's monster taken at La Paz, Mexico 12 years later. Bruce was diving an area well known to blue water hunters. In fact, contestants in two IBRS blue water meets just 2 years before visited the exact location where he speared his.

Here is a short excerpt from the IBRS web site where Bruce describes his hunt: *"A few seconds later I slowly peered out the corner of my eye and saw that it was a huge wahoo. Despite my amazement, I suppressed the urge to analyze the situation and allowed my subconscious to take the lead of my actions. Pulling in a few more deep breaths and hearing the call to dive, I slowly kicked over as smoothly as possible while turning my back on the approaching fish. I paralleled the path of the wahoo on my slow decent and gradually turned my body and eyes toward the passing fish. The wahoo began to drift down and away as I entered his zone. At a depth of twenty-five feet I pumped with a few strong but narrow kicks and closed the distance to the fish to fifteen feet. Extending my Heindrich gun, it recoiled with a subconscious pull of the trigger and I saw nothing but a quick flash of the entry wound and the sight of bungee line accelerating into the blue."*

Bruce's fish was over 25% larger than the previous record. This is truly astounding in an environment from which many consider the largest of most blue water species to be disappearing. However even more incredible, is our recent application for the Greater Amberjack from the Canary Islands. The massive fish taken by 28-year-old diver Antonio Concepcion Soria bested the long held record by Floridian Jim Webb taken in 1971 by over 45%. At 160 pounds (72.64 kg) Antonio's fish was 50 pounds heavier than Jim's 110-pound 32-year-old record.

You never know when that once-in-a-lifetime fish passes in front of your loaded gun. If you have any interest in world records, take just a few minutes and familiarize yourself with the simple rules posted at the IBRS web site www.freedive.net/ibsrc. There you will also find all previous records, pictures and stories of these record hunts.



Bruce Gaudino



Antonio Concepcion Soria

Bruce broke the previous 12-year record by over 25%. Antonio's fish bested the previous 28-year record by over 45%. These are truly astonishing feats from an environment from which some consider the largest of many blue water species are disappearing.