

World class fishing at hand off our shores

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Editor's Note

“Fish Tales” is a new summer column by noted diver and “Brigantine Shipwrecks” columnist John P. Moscony. Catch a big one? Contact Moscony at jpmsoldinoneday@aol.com for inclusion in future columns. Be sure the email includes your name and phone number.

Most of my fishing experience has taken place off the Atlantic City coast, and I always felt kind of bored because the waters were relatively shallow and it took a long time to motor out to the deep, canyon waters. I usually settled for shark fishing in 200- to 250-foot-deep water between Atlantic City and Cape May.

On one morning in the early '80s, a few days before the Harrah's fishing tournament, I found myself standing on the bridge of Tony Malandro's charter boat, which was moored at the Atlantic City Marina in front of what was known as the Trump Castle. The boat is still there. It is commonly referred to as the “Predator.”

I remember the morning vividly. ...The Predator slowly motored out to sea. ...It was going to be a few hours before we could start fishing, so we popped a few beers and quickly put together a poker game. Kevin Dooley and John Johnston were winning heavy when the mate said “let's go fishing.”

Within five minutes, I brought in a nice-sized tuna. Johnston hooked and boated a 12-foot-long shark that had a huge tail.

Cap't Malandro quickly informed us that the shark was a thresher and it had been one of the largest he had ever seen.

A few hours later, we were about to start up another poker game when we heard Dooley scream that a fish had snagged his line with the strength of a great white. Then we saw his catch flying at least 10 feet out of the water in a magnificent show of desperation. Because of its size we thought that Dooley had hooked a blue marlin.

Cap't Malandro backed his engines to assist Dooley in the catch of his life. After a fantastic battle between angler and fish, and with a strong arm on the bill, the marlin was hauled aboard the boat. Dooley caught a 121-pound white marlin. We were all ecstatic.

The huge game fish is among the largest white marlin caught in the United States during the past 40 years. ...The state record, set in 1980, is 137.8 pounds.

Just three days later an angler caught a 65-pound white marlin to snag first prize and more than \$100,000 in prize money in the Harrah's tourney.

Dooley and Johnston had their prize fish mounted. Today, their trophies are located in a place of prominence in their homes.