

A MARLIN FOR THE RICKER

By Rick Ireland

Our quest for the elusive marlin started over 20-years ago. Our first trip to Mexico was a well deserved vacation from years of hard work and saving money. At least for one week anyway! The kids were teenagers at the time so we ended up booking a trip to Cancun, where an experienced colleague said we should go with the kids for our first trip to Mexico. We chose an all-inclusive resort on the strip that was close to many attractions and “all of the action,” as the kids would say. We notified the kids that mom and dad wanted to try our luck at deep sea fishing and they were okay with that. And why not? They would have the run of the place while Darlene and I were out fishing.



The trip, to us, was thought to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience so we purposely booked the trip with just the two of us fishing on the boat. I couldn't bear the thought of going out with several strangers and hooking into a big billfish only to find out it was on someone else's line. I mean, let's face it, why not avoid having to punch somebody in the mouth and take their rod if you can, right? I made it known to the Captain that I really wanted to catch a sailfish and he promised that he would try very hard, but he didn't seem too positive in his response.

We weren't out in the deep blue very long before the action started. We caught some nice Wahoo and then my wife hooked into a three to four-foot mahi-mahi, also known as dolphin or dorado.

Wahoo are much like a cross between a muskie and a barracuda, with big teeth and big eyes. They have a very mean disposition and those teeth are not to be taken lightly. A German Shepherd with fins comes to mind!

The mahi-mahi was a real education for both of us, but more so for my wife. I couldn't believe how fast that fish was. You could see a miniature wake come off the 50-pound test line as she fought the fish. More impressive was the fact that my little wife was doing battle with it. She wanted me to take the rod as she began to tire but I insisted she finish on her own - and she made it!

We continued to troll for several more hours and the Captain knew I wanted a sailfish really badly. He didn't seem too confident on us catching one, but I wasn't giving up hope.

Mal de Mer

Despite the beauty of the open ocean, the constant rolling has a way of making some people a little green around the gills, me included. I have tried many methods of helping my ailment but dimenhydrinate tablets seem to work the best for me. The ones I use come in a tiny bottle with a pink label marked "Motion Sickness" and I get them over the counter at my local drug store. Since I discovered these little beauties our big water excursions have been much more enjoyable and a lot easier to handle. I never go out on the big water without them.

Wahoo have a mean disposition and a mean set of teeth to go with it.



It was late in the afternoon and the charter was just about to come to an end when all of a sudden a fish slammed into one of the lures and launched himself airborne, wiggling frantically in mid-air and crashing down into the turquoise waters.

With a proud look on his face the captain extended out his arm and, just like introducing a movie star, he said, "Sailfish."

I, on the other hand, was already in motion and heading for the fighting chair, ready to do battle with that glorious fish. It wasn't very big in sailfish standards, but I didn't care. It was mine, it was on the rod and I was holding it! The fish put up a spectacular fight, jumping fully out of the water several times, head-shaking and tail-walking. It was everything I dreamed of.

Finally the fish began to tire and I was able to get it up nice and close. The first mate grabbed it by the bill and hoisted it aboard. He and the captain laid it out gently across the top of the transom.

As we admired the beautiful fish and took pictures, the Captain looked at me and said, "Choose!" I knew what he meant.

We took one more look at that fish and I said, "Okay, release it. It's too beautiful to keep!"

They carefully lowered it back into the water and held on to the bill, working it back and forth. A few minutes later the striped beauty tore off, heading straight down into the depths. We all applauded! The Captain smiled and nodded with approval, knowing that fish would be just fine. It was only about a five and a half-footer, but we will never forget that first billfish.



This first trip planted a special seed in both of us and laid the groundwork for many deep sea fishing trips to come. Since that first billfish we have gone on several more charters in the Caribbean and Mexico.

In Acapulco, we caught a seven-and-a-half to eight-foot sailfish. On another memorable but frustrating trip we actually saw six sailfish right on the surface. The captain spun the boat around several times, on many instances dragging the lines right over their backs.

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