



# Tips & Techniques

Team GFA's client briefing, points to help you land more GTs with a focus on the Beginner and a refresher for the Pro. Caution it includes our trademark fun, humor and a bit of sarcasm.



As fishing charter operators and pro fishing guides one of the main requirements we have apart from putting paying customers onto fish is to get them to actually land one. Raising a fish to the lure and inciting an explosion like top-water strike from a monster GT is the easy part, connecting, staying connected and actually putting the fish onto deck is where a number of variables come into play. These variables are mistakes which almost any angler can make from novice to pro and mean the difference between the trip of a lifetime and a mediocre one. I have said this before and will say it again "A big GT will give you once chance only" and it has not reached that size by being stupid, PERIOD.

As we go over the pre fishing briefing with our clients we normally emphasize the most common errors but it is not until we get people out onto the water that we can actually work to correct them. We are really lucky with the Andaman Islands as a fishing destination. Based on the huge numbers of GT's available, anglers

fishing with us can have multiple shots to iron out the most visible mistakes, hopefully before your lure is inhaled by that fish of a lifetime.

We have compiled below a list of the most common reasons, logically explained so that you have fewer reasons to tell your friends about the one that got away.

## **Cardinal Error #1 – Slack Line**

The root cause for most fish lost, ever looked at the structure of the GT's Jaw bones and teeth and you will very quickly see that you need to be really lucky for your hooks to get into a fleshy part every time. Everyone who has ever caught a GT will know the characteristic head shake, coupled with the fact we use braided line and barbless hooks (both for your safety and the that of the fish) the smallest amount of slack line tension on a hooked fish is enough for the hook to literally drop out. This can happen at any stage of the



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fight so when fishing for GT's there is no slack line allowed and we will certainly tell you if you lost a fish because of it.

## **Error #2 – Being Off Balance**

The boat is a dynamic environment and you invariably fish the chop that the strong currents generate, GT's love this and here is where we fish more often than not. Being able to position yourself, comfortably balanced either at the front or back of the and have a stable fishing position from which you can work the lures and also set the hooks on the fish. If you are off balance you are going to get stuck over the side of the boat or allow slack line either way, the fish is in command if this happens and more often than not you will lose the fish. We recommend that anglers position themselves at an angle of 30-45 degrees off the perpendicular drawn from the lure to the angler i.e. a side on position to the lure, that way on a rocking boat it becomes easier to transfer weight to the rear leg and use your bodyweight to full advantage to absorb the power generated by the GT.

## **Error #3 – The Curse of the Rod Bucket**

Just how many times have we seen this happen the angler works the lure perfectly, raises the fish and has a strike, but before the hook is set, a lot of fumbling and searching for the rod bucket to put the rod butt into. The result Cardinal error #1 – Slack Line, what happens next Mr GT says "this ain't food" and opens his mouth for your barbless hooks to just fall out. Guys, come on!! just forget about the rod bucket for a moment, you're the macho dude fishing for GT's just set the hook and when the fish is running and pulling line off your reel that's the time you search, fiddle and look down to place the rod into the bucket. For this you want a rod with a rounded butt end, get rid of or change any popping/ jigging rod with a slotted gimbal for GT fishing as that can cut you up and bruise you pretty bad if you do end up striking and setting the hook when the rod is not in the rod bucket.

## **Error #4 - Striking and setting the hook**

With a head like a battering ram and a mouth the size of small bucket, add vise like jaws with teeth to the

equation and you have the business end of a big GT, there probably is not a single fish on the reef that does not duck for cover when these beasts are on the prowl. Getting that hook stuck into the fleshy part in that bony mouth is another challenge so merely holding on and giving your rod a gentle pull is not going to work. With the greater use of barbless hooks, there is more chance of them coming out, so how do you strike and set the hook properly? This is not a finesse job, when you fish GT you have drag settings upwards of 10 kilos on your reel and when you set the hook you want to hear that drag go out (like that GT owes you money and cursed your mother on top of it!!), otherwise you really are not doing much. It's also best to strike more than once (at least three times) to make sure your hook has gone home. Make sure you don't let any slack line in the system when you strike and keep tension on the line by reeling between strikes. That vise like grip can make you think a GT is hooked as it will pull of drag only for the lure to drop because it opened its mouth and let go. So if you wonder why we yell **HIIT IT, STRIKE,.... HIIT IT AGAIIN...**, you now know.

## **Error #5- Not Watching your lure**

Yes, watch YOUR lure and not someone else's, a strike can happen at the most unexpected moment and you need to be ready, your fishing mates get hit, DO Not get distracted, keep your eyes glued to your lure. GT's can and will take your lure from the time it lands in the water to just before you take the lure out of the water to cast again. Developing your peripheral vision is good and with your eyes on your lure at all times survey the surroundings (normal humans have typically 135 Degrees Horizontal field of view) so you know where the action is for your next cast.

## **Error #6 - Don't fiddle with your drag/ Spool during the first run**

All our Captains and Guides know the area like the back of their hands, they also know exactly where you are most likely to get a hit and what that fish is going to do, this experience is invaluable when it comes to helping you to put that trophy fish on deck. So you have set your drag at 10 kilos, it more than you have ever set on your Carp or Catfish rod but Mr. GT rips line off the reel



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like the drag did not exist, leaving you holding on for dear life. No there is nothing wrong with your reel and you are not the weakling you think you are, what you are experiencing is the power of an apex saltwater predator. At this time it's important not to panic and try to stop the fish by fiddling with your drag setting or trying to palm your spool unless you really know what you are doing. So when we have checked your reel Drag setting before you cast, please leave it alone especially on the first run of the fish. If we see you need the help by moving the boat and or backing off your drag, we will assist you with a smile.



A happy angler with a double header on a single lure

## **Error #7- Not pumping the fish correctly**

So far you have done everything correctly from watching your lure to setting the hook and stopping the first run, what next? The fish has stopped and you are not gaining an inch of line, its stalemate. A big Geet is not going to make life easy for you, once you have done the hard work of stopping a fish and turning its head. It can only swim one way and that is towards you, which is the good news the bad news is that the beast is not going to make it easy..... with adrenaline at near danger high levels, your arms and back killing you, your breath short, you want to see that fish on deck so bad that you start pulling instead of focusing on constant pressure, short pumps of half handle turn cranks (your Stella or Saltiga pull in a meter or three feet plus of line per handle turn so half a turn is gaining 1.5 feet in a tug of war which is really not too bad at all) and here the mistakes happen with either allowing slack line or high sticking and even worse ending up with a bust rod, either way Cardinal error #1 will come into play. Don't worry guys we will help, by needing, goading and pointing out your trembling knees, you bet!!! Just think of that smile of pain and pleasure you will have when you have your Geet in the bag that makes it all worthwhile. Really, we are there to guide you and give you gentle reminders when you are yanking and getting your rod tip dangerously high, we even hold on to rod belts or offer to cut the line in dire circumstances.

## **Error #8 Being unprepared for the fight, not physically fit**

So you have booked the trip of a lifetime, a week's fishing for GT and other reef brawlers, you have also armed yourself with the best possible gear. A good question to ask yourself at this point is "Am I prepared for the rigors of fishing all day in the Tropics?" As far as we are concerned a lure in the water is the one that is going to catch fish, so the more you need to rest or stop fishing the less chances you will have to land a trophy fish, so keep going with the casting. For GT fishing you work muscles rarely used in your normal daily routine like balancing on a moving boat, casting and fighting



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big, hard pulling Geets, all this in the humidity of the tropics, for a good 8 hours a day for a whole week. This is going to leave you sore, dehydrated and can in some cases give you sun-stroke so staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water is of paramount importance. Once you have made up your mind to take up GT fishing see a good physio to start you on a suitable workout plan according to your age and fitness, this will get your body gradually used to physical exertion. We from our side will tell you before-hand here you need to put in the hard work and keep going with your casting during the fishing day. On some days the fish will take anything you throw at them, then there are days that fish will just not feed and it is on these difficult days that your earlier preparation and fitness is what will almost always make the difference. An angler who keeps going will get those opportunities that sometimes seem to come out of nowhere.

## **Error #9 Not reading the water before you cast**

That likely looking corner with the ripping current going past it, the bait school where you see nervous fusiliers bundled up just below the surface or the or fleeing garfish are some of the obvious visible signs to look out for, then there are the not so apparent ones like what the skipper sees on the fish finder. We talked about the importance of watching your lure earlier and peripheral vision, but how often have you seen when you have multiple anglers on the boat all lures landing within a few feet of each other, (sure if you have multiple GT's chasing one lure in one area, please cast the same spot again) you have got 360 degrees of casting space on a boat so try to maximize your casts both to cover fresh new water as well as the most likely looking spots, our skippers and deck hands have years of experience reading the water and will be able to point out the most likely casting spots, or tell you about a monster following the lure you are blissfully unaware of. If you have two mates and you on the boat casting on one side and have just gone over a likely spot, try casting the other way just in case....

## **And finally as important as Cardinal Error #1**

### **Cardinal Error #2- Skippers advice – bahh!!**

The man who is responsible for putting you onto the fish, getting you into the right zone at the right time, planning your fishing day for best results, the go to person for advice on lure selection and someone who will help get you re-rigged in case of a tackle malfunction. While you may have fished in different places, caught fish using different lures and methods each destination has its own idiosyncrasies and will work a bit differently. Discussing tactics, lure selection and choice of terminal tackle with your skipper/ guide is very important as well as being friendly and letting him know about what you want to do during your trip. This way we can make a plan together to try and put you on the maximum number of fish using the techniques you want. Follow the skipper's advice when you are connected to a big fish as to where to position yourself to be able to fight the fish as well as maneuver the boat to give you the best chance to land the fish. Give us your point of view and tips too, after all fishing is something we keep learning more about, you never catch all the fish you hook and that's why we keep chasing the ones that got away.

Tight lines and Good Luck,  
**Darran Davis.**