

Tips & Techniques



Handling GT's for maximum survival after release



Gamefishing Asia is committed to conserving our fisheries to the maximum extent possible and *Caranx Ignoblis* is top on our priority list. As a top sport-fish, bad-boy-of-the-reef and fear-nothing fish, the Giant Trevally has it all. It is also the fish we, at Gamefishing Asia, are lucky enough to catch the most!!!

Over the years we have honed our techniques to handle and release the fish and are happy to share some methods which we hope will reach as many people as possible, as a guide to letting tough guy (i.e. Mr. GT) swim away and come back later - bigger, heavier and tougher.



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Use The Largest Barbless Treble Hooks Appropriate To The Lure

Given the GT's vice-like jaw structure and how hard they hit a lure, in our opinion, it does not matter if the hook has barbs or not for a good hook up. However, big trebles are better in that, if a fish is hooked in a fleshy area or on the body, they will not rip the fish apart like smaller, thinner-gauge trebles. They are also easier to take out of the fish's mouth even if the GT has swallowed that huge lure whole (yes they do!!). Barbless hooks do not get snagged in the landing net and, if you are using the lure as a grab tool to get the fish on board, are not as big a danger to the deckies' hands as hooks with barbs.



Most of all, using barbless hooks means you are not as big a danger to others around you, especially when you let off that quick cast in sight of a bait ball of fusilier and have forgotten to open the bail arm.



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Scale Your Tackle To The Terrain You Are Fishing

Speak to your guide and charter operator before you go on that trip-of-a-lifetime or get information from other people who have fished the area before. Go with what your guides tell you! Yes, it is possible to land big GT's on lighter equipment but there is also the chance of you being cut-off in shallow terrain and leaving that big GT to die an agonizing death with lure stuck in the throat. Sure, not all the Trevally make it to fight another day, but let us make sure we have at least tried our best. Also, it is our opinion that the quicker you can land a fish, the easier it is to revive and set free.



Landing And Bringing The Fish On Board

This is a slightly larger topic so we will break it up a bit into a few sections:



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1. Tools: Here you would need good-quality, thick gloves to grab the leader, lure and if necessary the GT's tail which has sharp flukes that can rip unprotected hands. A large landing net is a valuable tool to have on board, as is a good quality disgorger or long nosed plier to remove the hook. Do remember to have everything ready before hand.

2. Using the Landing Net: When using a landing net, just guide the GT into the landing net. Do not ever try to scoop the GT into the net; this is a recipe for disaster. We like this method because once the GT is in the net it is not going anywhere. By bumping the boat into gear and facing the fish towards the bow you are also reviving it and making the release of the fish easier. The angler also has time to grab a sip of water, get the cameras ready and set up, so that your trophy spends the least time out of the water.



3. When Not Using A Landing Net: If you are using your hands, grab the lure with one hand and the wrist of the tail with the other and then bring the fish into the boat. Never lift a big GT in by the head alone as you can damage it. Also, never use the leader to lift the fish in; a break-off will leave you red-faced and the angler upset over the loss of an expensive lure. If you have 2 people available it is easier to lift a big Geet onboard.



On Deck Handling

GT's expend so much energy on the fight that by the time they come on the deck they do not



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have too much energy left to flap around. However, good practice requires that the landing area be clear of any obstructions or obstacles.

The boat deck is a hot space so, if you are going to put a GT down on the deck, make sure you first throw a bucket of water on the deck or use a wet towel as a landing mat for the fish.

If your GT has to be photographed then you need to have everything ready before-hand; the less time out of the water, the better for the fish. Your first priority is to get the hook out and get some water through the GT's gills.

Use of hook disgorger to push the hooks out is a fast and effective way to unhook a fish; you can also get to the difficult-to-access places if the lure is taken in deep.

We have found that the 'T-bar Unhooker' from [Leadertec](#) works very well.





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Remember, you need to have the fish out of water for the least time. If your charter boat is fitted with a raw water wash-down hose it doubles as a way to pass oxygenated water through the GT's gills.

If you do not have a raw water wash-down hose on the boat, make sure there is a bucket. Do remember to turn the fish every now and again so that the gills on both sides have water passing through.

Also, if struggling with a badly hooked fish - where the hooks are difficult to get out - stop focussing on getting the hooks out and remember to aerate the gills regularly to enhance the chance of survival.

Release



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This is the most important part. After the euphoria of taking pictures of your prize GT, it's just terrible if, when you drop it back into the water, it just comes back to the surface water and can't right itself to swim away on its own.

It is important to try to get the fish back in the water soonest. So, with GT's, if you have been giving them lots of water while taking your photographs, a simple head-first release into the water suffices in most cases. Being like a dive, the rush of water through the gills revives the fish almost instantly so it can quickly swim again. GT's caught on jig and big GT's may need more time to be revived. Do not be in a hurry to bring them to the surface, so that it can equalize by venting. Again, holding them vertical in the landing net and motoring ahead in gear - with the fish facing forwards - revives them quickly in most cases. This is safer than going for a swim in shark-infested waters or where there is a strong current.





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Sometimes, you may need to sacrifice on the pictures for the sake of getting the GT back into the water quickly. One of the things to note is the colour of the fish. If it starts to lose colour, take time to revive it in the water and it will tell you it's ready for release when you start to see signs of movement and the colour come back to the fish.

A final request: As an angler, follow the simple advice above and try to release as many of these apex predators as you can. Always.

Tight lines and good luck,
Darran Davis