

# No Fish Fights Quite Like Yellowfin Tuna

BY JAMIE MILLIKEN

It's here! We have finally made it to April, that special month that all offshore fishermen look forward to with great anticipation.

Captain Fred Walker summed it up about as well as I have heard it as we sat around Hughes Marine this past Sunday. His theory is that no other month of the year has the radical temperature breaks as we find in April. I mean, we can find variations of seven degrees or more within 100 yards.

You know what this means? Bait fish! All stacked up along the temperature break, and usually that attracts the schools of yellowfin tuna, dolphin and wahoo. Which brings me to the point of this article.

I've always wanted to write about yellowfin tuna fishing. Man, I absolutely love it. There is no other fish that pulls like a tuna. There are fish that leap and jump and run like Rusty Wallace, but the tuna fights like a heavyweight boxer, with steady pressure like nothing else you've ever seen or felt in your life.

Yellowfin tuna get their full brute strength from their body design—a massive head, extremely long pectoral fins and a cycle tail. When their heads are down and pectorals extended, you will think that you are hooked on a wreck.

How do you catch them? You look for signs—birds, temperature breaks and radical bottom structure. The birds serve as a great locator. When you see a flock of tuna birds working an area 70 miles from land, you can believe that they are not there for just a social gathering but for the free meal the tuna provide when they are in an eating frenzy.

The tuna follow the schools of bait, and when they decide to eat, they will attack the bait school like General Schwartzkopf crossing Iraq. And believe me, that's where you want to be.

As a rule, every line will go off within a matter of 15 seconds. The boat captain should never slow the boat's trolling speed until everyone of the anglers are in place. For example, if the boat slows at the first strike, that will more than likely be your only strike.

Remember, these fish are attacking the whole school or, in your case, your bait spread. Give them a chance to get there. I once heard Tred Barta, a famous sport fisherman, say that at the first strike, he turns the boat hard left, then right—back and forth until all the baits have been picked up by the tuna.

Now it's time to take the rods from the rod holders. Once everyone has removed the rods from their holders—and believe me, that's easier said than done—it is then and only then that the captain reduces his speed. The secret now is for the angler to keep constant pressure on the fish. He must never allow any slack to come in his line. Don't be afraid to tighten up on the drag. It's now a matter of brute strength that will bring these babies to the boat.

Your equipment should consist of a back brace harness, rod belt, a sturdy rod (short in length, six foot maximum) and a reel in the 6/0 range loaded with 50-pound test line.

There is a large range of lures that tuna will absolutely devour. Feathers and flashy tinsel work great. These are pulled rigged with medium to large ballyhoo—not the horse ballyhoo used to target marlin.

I've always found that if the fishing is real slow, it helps to run a "bird" 15 to 20 feet in front of your shotgun rigger or center line. These birds—I use a Merrit Sparrow—create a commotion on top of the water that will successfully raise fish. I only use this set-up down the middle and long. Whenever you think that it is out long enough, put out some more.

This is not the only thing that works well. Cedar plugs have been a mainstay for tuna fishermen for years. The best colors are natural, blue and white and red and black. Believe me, folks, they love 'em.

I would like to thank my faithful fishing buddy Rube for the fresh yellowfin steaks this past Saturday. He knew I had to work that day, and he gladly placed five one-inch thick tuna steaks in a bag for me. Man, friends are better than money.

Kyle, Scott, Robert and I marinated them in a little teriyaki sauce and threw those bad boys on the grill for a total of about 4 minutes and, I tell you, it was as good as sex. Well, almost. You get the picture, right?

Well, that's my tuna story and I'm sticking to it. Good fishin' and good luck, "Jolly Mon."

## McBride Leads Scorpion Win

North Brunswick's Casey McBride pitched a two-hit shutout and drove in both runs in a 2-0 high school baseball win over the visiting Fairmont Golden Tornadoes last Tuesday.

Jeremy Child scored from first base on both RBI doubles by McBride. The junior right-hander struck out 10 Fairmont batters and

issued just one walk as he improved his season pitching record to 2-1.

North Brunswick improved to 1-0 in the Three Rivers Conference and 3-4 overall. The Scorpions resume conference play Tuesday, April 12, with a home game against Tar Heel.

**Game Summary**  
Fairmont 0 0 0 0 0 0—0 20  
N. Bruns. 1 0 1 0 0 0 X—2 3 0



## Citation Grouper

Dr. Richard Martin of Youngstown, Ohio, caught this citation 21-pound grouper aboard the Intimidator out of Holden Beach Marina over the Easter holiday weekend.

## County Softball Teams Enter Hoggard Tourney

Brunswick County's three high school softball teams will participate in the 12-team Southern Shore Invitational Tournament this week at Hoggard High School in Wilmington.

Games are scheduled Friday night and all day Saturday on two fields at Hoggard. The 12 teams have been divided into three pools, and each team will play three games. Each pool will crown its own champion.

West Brunswick's Lady Trojans will compete in Pool 3 with tourney host Hoggard and Waccamaw Conference foes East Columbus and Pender.

North Brunswick has been placed in Pool 1 with Whiteville, Dixon and Topsail. South Brunswick is in Pool 2 with South Columbus, Wilmington Laney and Wilmington New Hanover.

Below is the tournament schedule:

**FRIDAY, APRIL 8**  
5 p.m.:  
■ Field 1—Dixon vs. Whiteville  
■ Field 2—Pender vs. E. Columbus

6:15 p.m.:  
■ Field 1—Laney vs. S. Columbus  
■ Field 2—N. Hanover vs. S. Brunswick

7:30 p.m.:  
■ Field 1—Hoggard vs. W. Brunswick  
■ Field 2—Topsail vs. N. Brunswick

**SATURDAY, APRIL 9**  
10 a.m.:  
■ Field 1—E. Columbus vs. W. Brunswick  
■ Field 2—Hoggard vs. Pender

11:15 a.m.:  
■ Field 1—Whiteville vs. N. Brunswick  
■ Field 2—Topsail vs. Dixon

12:30 p.m.:  
■ Field 1—N. Hanover vs. S. Columbus  
■ Field 2—Laney vs. S. Brunswick

2 p.m.: Topsail vs. Whiteville  
3 p.m.: Dixon vs. N. Brunswick

■ Pool 1 Trophy Presentations  
4:30 p.m.: S. Brunswick vs. S. Columbus

5:30 p.m.: Laney vs. N. Hanover  
■ Pool 2 Trophy Presentations

7 p.m.: W. Brunswick vs. Pender  
8 p.m.: Hoggard vs. E. Columbus

■ Pool 3 Trophy Presentations

# UNCW To Host Oyster Summit

Legislators, scientists, fishermen and others interested in the state's dwindling oyster harvest will meet in Wilmington this month to consider the fishery's declining health and how it can be improved.

State Rep. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach will be among the lawmakers taking part in the North Carolina Oyster Summit on Friday, April 29, at UNCW's University Center Ballroom.

The summit will run from 8 a.m. and until 3:30 p.m. with a break for lunch and will include introductory remarks by Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. and UNCW Chancellor James Leutze.

Objectives of the summit, sponsored by the N.C. Sea Grant College Program and the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, include a review of the status and restoration efforts of the East Coast and North Carolina oyster fishery.

Other goals are to discuss the application of innovative techniques to improve oyster production and marketing and to develop recommendations for research, management, training and legislation that will improve oyster production and marketing.

Redwine, co-chairman of the N.C. Joint Legislative Study Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture, will moderate the discussion regarding the status of oysters and restoration efforts.

Other topics covered during the morning session will include the status of oyster disease research, future oyster supplies, harvesting methods and growth enhancement.

Luncheon speakers will include William Hogarth, director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, and Corky Perrett, administrator of the Marine Fisheries Division with

the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

The summit will wrap up with a roundtable discussion on new directions for the North Carolina oyster industry. Redwine will be among the participants.

Dr. Maurice Heral with the Institute of French Research for the Exploitation of the Sea will address the Joint Legislative Study Commission when it meets Thursday, April 28, at UNCW.

The oyster summit is open to the public. The registration fee is \$25 before April 19 and \$30 thereafter.

Checks payable to N.C. Sea Grant should be mailed to The North Carolina Oyster Summit, N.C. Sea Grant College Program, Box 8605, N.C. State University, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-8605.

For more information, call 919-515-2454.

## This Week's Tide Table

Day	Date	HIGH		LOW	
		A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Thursday	7	6:28	6:47	12:07	12:28
Friday	8	7:13	7:29	12:55	1:11
Saturday	9	7:53	8:08	1:38	1:50
Sunday	10	8:32	8:45	2:19	2:28
Monday	11	9:07	9:20	2:58	3:05
Tuesday	12	9:42	9:54	3:36	3:41
Wednesday	13	10:14	10:27	4:13	4:17

**ADJUSTMENTS**  
SHALLOTTE INLET—add 17 min. high tide, add 32 min. low tide.  
LOCKWOOD FOLLY—subtract 22 min. high tide, subtract 8 min. low tide.  
BALD HEAD ISLAND—subtract 10 min. high tide, subtract 7 min. low tide.  
SOUTHPORT—add 7 min. high tide, add 15 min. low tide.  
LITTLE RIVER—subtract 11 min. high tide, add 18 min. low tide.

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