

Angling for Swordfish Off Catalina

By H. C. TINSLEY

"OF COURSE this sea is full of swordfish, but you don't calculate to land one in the next few weeks, do you?" said the veteran fisherman and boatman with whom I was negotiating for his services. "Well," he continued, "if you have strong arms, if you can keep your nerve and attention dead set for half a dozen hours, with never a let-up; if, added to that, you have no end of patience, and a powerful back, and a well-lined pocketbook, and can stand the hardest tussle you ever had with any kind of game, you may land a swordfish in a week or two. But I won't warrant it."

That was early in July. At the end of the month I hadn't landed one. I was as fagged as if I had sawed wood a month, and my patience was exhausted. The angling was abandoned until the next year. For twenty-two days there was the morning baiting for swordfish, followed by a day of steady gazing, as far as the weary eyes could reach for evidences of the fish we sought. Talk about persistence and nerve-wearing labor! Our eyes were never resting while in the boat. San Clemente Island, off the California coast, is twenty-five miles around and every day we skirted the island and went over the channel toward Catalina.

We must have traveled 1,200 miles on the search that season. I hooked five fish and saw twenty—including those I hooked—as they leaped out of the water and fell back again. Four creatures we got within 100 feet of our boat, when they either leaped, and threw the hook, or got away with a broken line. Fully 1,000 feet of our line was carried away, and several rods and reels were smashed in the endeavors.

It was not until the fourth day of the angling, next season, that I felt a strike. That fish was landed after a struggle beginning at 11:20 in the morning and ending at 4:15 o'clock in the afternoon. For days my arms were too strained to move them and my hands were so lacerated they bled. The fish weighed 308 pounds.

Local annals and the fishing log at Santa Catalina Island are full of stories of experiences from one to eleven hours, from the actual hooking of the fish, until it was dead at the side of the angler. Many an expert angler has tried for days to catch a swordfish and has abandoned the quest disheartened at ill success and weariness. Many a person has spent several thousand dollars in rods and reels, lines and veteran guides before landing the first ocean trophy.

Anglers come from all over the world purposely to catch swordfish at Santa Catalina Island. The island is one of the Channel Archipelago, which with its brother, San Clemente, is famous for the great fish to be caught there. Experts at the rod and reel have been known to try all one season, never to have their efforts successful. Swordfish may be hooked all right, but the skill is to land the creature. It is the very hardest and most skillful trick in angling. That's the incentive to fishermen.

Swordfish vary from 90 to 430 pounds. The majority are 250 pounders. There are two varieties—the marlin and the broadbill. About fifty marlins are brought into Santa Catalina every year and about seven broadbills. Every one who has landed a marlin has created an ambition to land a broadbill. The latter run from 60 to 150 pounds heavier than a marlin.

Men who have fished by rod and reel in waters all over the world say that there is no gamer angling than that for swordfish. Tuna and muscullonge used to be considered as rating high among game fish, but that was before swordfish had ever been caught by rod and reel, and before angling clubs adopted rules and regulations by which swordfishing may be accomplished by employing sportsman-like methods only. The broadbill is the ugliest and most pugnacious fighter in the sea. The marlin comes a full second. Old fishermen call them the gladiators of the water, and their fighting quality was so well known that only in the past twenty years has any fishermen dared risk trying to capture a swordfish. It has been less than ten years that anything has been done by rod and reel. The catch was thought an impossibility, not so many years ago, and angling by hand line was considered too dangerous. Imagine what a rumpus a swordfish can make by ramming straight at an angler, with that long, bony sword-like nasal appendage. Many a hand has been cut by an angler grasping hold of the sword of a dying fish.

No fish shows such athletic muscularity as the swordfish. Its leaps into the air are wonders of strength and agility. A swordfish has been known to leap fifty times in the course of a few hours and a dozen leaps in an endeavor to cast aside a hook in the gills or mouth are commonly done after the creature feels the angler's hook.

When one goes out for swordfish, he seeks only that fish. The bait is simply for swordfish, and it is set for no other variety. The bait is a flying fish or a ten-pound baracuda. The hook is shoved through the entrails of the bait and the mouths of the bait fish are sewed shut. The search starts in the waters where swordfish have been recently seen. The angler sits in the end of a small boat and scans the horizon while the boat travels slowly. A dorsal fin appears above the water and the boat is carefully guided to the fish's locality. Swordfish are wary and suspicious. They will not grab at bait under doubtful circumstances. The sight or hearing of a boat will prevent a bite. By the adroit circlings and detours, the bait is dragged in the water where the swordfish will be apt to see it. Often this is vainly continued for hours. Nary a strike from a fish.

A tug at the line tells at the reel that the game has struck at the bait as if to kill it with its enormous snout. Lots of times the strike is the end, for the



A 220-pound swordfish more than nine feet long, caught off Catalina. It leaped 32 times from the water after it was hooked and one hour and thirty minutes was required to land it.

fish is suspicious and gives no more heed. But if the bait is right, the fish instantly jumps at the bait and at one gulp swallows it and makes away with a terrible pull on the line. Often the fish will sound fully 100 feet from the scene of the bait swallowing.

The fish knows that it is caught in some kind of a line and held by a pricking hook. Then begins evidence of the skill of the angler. Every trick known to swimming creatures is used in the creature's struggle to free itself. Leaps from the water are common, often a half dozen times while the fish tries to throw the hook out by shaking the gills. The swordfish has a wonderful way of emptying the stomach and that is tried again and again until the angler grows weary letting out and drawing in the line several hundred feet in a strenuous effort to keep the line taut—or a fish will snap the fine cord and escape.

Often a swordfish in its evolutions will enmesh itself in thousands of feet of line and in its mad efforts at extrication will keep the angler at hardest kind of work and constant watchfulness, holding an absolute and necessary tautness. Hundreds of such fights have occurred for hours. Many have lasted four and five hours, and a few of them have continued all day. It all depends upon the vitality of the game.

Many an angler has reeled in six hundred feet of line twenty times as he held the struggling swordfish tight. Other anglers have followed the fish four and five miles across the sea as it went swimming madly with the hook firmly caught in the mouth of the fish. Almost every angler expects to be towed a mile or two by a swordfish, and it is the hardest kind of work holding big fish hours and at the same time watching intently the ever going out line and reeling with a firm grip of the reel hundreds of feet of line. No wonder the hands of the fisher are lame for days after, and the arms and back are sore enough to be serious.

If all goes well, and the fish, by a thousand dexterous movements fails to get free from the captor, which it generally does, it is slowly brought to the boat side, seven or eight feet long from tip of tail to the tip of snout sword, weighing from 200 to 300 pounds. The boatman is ready with a gaff on a long oaken pole and he lands the great fish by use of a block and tackle.

The thrill that comes to a sportsman-like angler, as he sees the monster fish with that long bony snout reeling into the gaff, a helpless and conquered victim of man's skill at the end of a silken cord, is not understood by every one. It gloriously repays all the hard labor and grim determination that any man puts into the capture. Only one who has red corpuscles in his blood really knows that.

The Origin of Sports

By FRANK DORRANCE HOPLEY

TENNIS

LIKE other ball games, the origin of tennis may be traced back to the earliest times. The name of its inventor, however, and the date of its birth, are wrapped in obscurity. Pany attributes the invention of tennis to Pythus or Pictus. Herodotus gives the honor to the Lydians during the reign of Athys. Homer speaks of a dance combined with ball playing, which seems to approach somewhat to the game of hand-tennis.

An early French writer in chronicling certain surprising events tells of a young lady named Margot who resided in Paris, and who played at hand-tennis with the palm, and also with the back of her hand. It is most surprising, says the author, that she should have played with a naked hand, as generally the game is played with a double glove.

That the racket is also of great antiquity is proved by a passage from Chaucer in Troylus and Cryseyde, where he alludes to the batting to and from of a tennis ball with a racket.

In his "Annals of Tennis" Mr. Julian Marshall states:

"According to tradition, in Western Europe, the Italians first began to protect and fortify the hand with a glove for playing tennis. This was soon followed by the use of a double glove of stouter and stiffer material. Finding that this, in addition to the protection it gave to the palm offered also a greater power of striking the ball, ingenious persons conceived the brilliant idea of stretching across the glove an elastic network of strings, such as those used in a violin. To these gloves, with and without knotted strings, handles were soon added.

"From the plain but stiff glove with a handle to it, came the battoir. It was sometimes made of thin wood, on the elasticity of which depended its driving power, and was of various shapes, rounded, oval, very narrow oval and even square. Very commonly it consisted of a mere frame of wood over which parchment was stretched. It is not surprising that the racket should have supplanted the battoir, not only because the catgut could be more readily procured than parchment, but on account of the greater effect on the ball which could be produced by its employment."

During the reign of Charles the Fifth, palm-play, which may be properly denominated hand-tennis, was very fashionable in France, being played by the nobility for large sums of money. So fascinated were some of the players, that when they had lost all they had with them, they oftentimes would pledge part of their wearing apparel, rather than give up the game.

James the First was not, from all reports, a tennis player, but he always spoke favorably of the pastime, and recommended it to his son as a kind of exercise much becoming a prince. Charles the Second frequently diverted himself by playing at tennis, and had a particular kind of dress made for the purpose.

H. A. Clark in writing upon the subject says:

"At the time when tennis play was taken up seriously by the nobility of England, new requirements were made in the game, and covered courts erected that it might be practiced without any interruption from the weather. In the sixteenth century tennis courts were common in England, and the establishment of such places countenanced by the example of the monarchs. In the vocabulary of Comenius we see a rude representation of a tennis court divided by a line stretched in the middle, and the players standing on either side with their rackets, ready to receive and return the ball, which the rules of the game require to be stricken over the line."

During the reign of Henry the Sixth, tennis did not flourish to any extent and with the war of the Red and White Roses it languished. Toward the latter end of this reign, however, it began to be more popular. At that time, the historians tell us that the balls used in tennis were, undoubtedly, small, round ones made of iron. This seems strange, but is authenticated from the fact that numerous entries were found in Iron-monger's books, which mentioned tennis balls.

The great French artist, Jacques Callot, etched and engraved a print which bears the date of 1616. The subject is called "Le Miracle de Saint Mansuy." The scene is by the side of a river and in the distance can be seen Mont St. Michael. The saint is bringing back to life the prince's son who has been killed by a blow from a tennis ball. The ball lies by the boy's side and at his feet is a racket. It would seem, therefore, that as early as 1616 tennis was played with an extremely hard ball.

In a letter written by John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, dated London, February 12, 1611, a strange case of suicide is recorded.

"The eldest son of the Bishop of Bristol killed himself with a knife to avoid the disgrace of breaching by his mother (or his mother-in-law, I know not whether) would need have put him to, for losing his money at tennis."

An early writer, speaking of the laws and practice of tennis, says that they have not been always what they are now, either in England or elsewhere. No code of a game ever sprang perfect and complete, like Athens, from the brain of the inventor. If a game is good for anything its laws grow and are developed by degrees, and many years elapse before they reach a point where they can be crystallized or cast in a permanent form.

Just when tennis was introduced into America has been, and still is, a debatable question. Yet if we are to believe the historians, it was at an early date, perhaps at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Whatever the date may be, however, the game of tennis has flourished in this country and is today one of the most popular of outdoor sports.