

Ending the Unlucky Streak

Written by Paul Belmudes

Sunday, 26 September 2010 08:13

The Old Man and the Sea... Well Not that Old!

It's been a long summer for me as a kayak fisherman with a lot of time on the water with zero pelagic catches under my fishing belt these last 3 months. But Thursday, it changed for me! I'll share that story in a moment...

Today, I was able to watch the movie, "The Old Man and the Sea" based on the book written by Ernest Hemingway. It was Hemingway's last work of fiction to be published in 1951 that turned into a movie starring Spencer Tracy. What a revelation did that story have as I felt the pain Santiago went through.

"The Old Man and the Sea" opens by explaining that the fisherman, named Santiago, has gone 84 days without catching any fish at all. He is apparently so unlucky that his young apprentice, Manolin, has been forbidden by his parents to sail with the old man and been ordered to fish with more successful fishermen.

Santiago tells Manolin that on the next day, he will venture far out into the Gulf to fish, confident that his unlucky streak is near its end. And like a good story, Santiago had a change of luck with a courageous 3 day battle hooking up a huge 18 foot marlin only to have it eaten by sharks as he brings it back to his fishing village. After watching this movie, I have decided to make time and read, "The Old Man and the Sea."

Now back to my fishing story. On Thursday, I ventured out driving 70 miles to Hilo hoping to have a change in my luck. The reason I chose to fish the east side of the Big Island was simple, kayak anglers have been reporting pelagic fish action and catches there. Especially, I wanted to be surrounded by other Big Island kayak anglers who have been catching. I have always been told growing up by my father, "If you want to be like the ones producing results, surround yourself with people who are on the top." Taking that advice, I started out early in the morning

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leaving at 5:00am arriving at 6:30am by Richardson's in Hilo. I met up with JQ, a.k.a. as Cliffs2Yak on the Aquahunters and the YakHawaii website. Already out on the water was Brian "Pueo" and Shawn, "DrifingSon" would soon follow at 9am. What a gorgeous day to fish with 3 talented kayak anglers. My only concern was the full moon and not believing in the solunar fishing calendar. When ever the solunar calendar says it is going to be a great fishing day, for me, it is the opposite. Now don't get me wrong, a great fishing day is anytime you fish, even if you don't land a fish. But it's always better when you have a fishing story that we can talk about with a positive result by landing a solid fish.

After setting up my kayak, I realized that I forgot one of my cameras. Not a good start because I knew Thursday was going to be my day just like Santago felt. After JQ got his kayak setup, we headed out. JQ stopped and fished the surface action of oio. I studied the way he was casting and whipping his rod trying to catch the oio for bait fish. And he did it! Earlier, before we launched, JQ shared with me that his father thought that it would be ridiculous to purchase bait fish (opelu) at a store when the ocean has it to offer for free. But for me, it is the only way I know how to get bait by purchasing it at stores. His family preference was bottom fishing for the dinner table, but nonetheless, I admired his fishing knowledge and hope to fish with him again so I could avoid purchasing bait fish someday. One of the talents a good fisherman has that I am lacking.

Well I preceded to do as I always do (because I don't know how to catch bait), I troll! And I troll for the pelagic, the way that I was taught by Reggie Pare'. Hitting the 50 fathom mark, I trolled for 2 hours noticing that Shawn was on the water west of JQ trolling his kayak. So I headed out in his direction acknowledging him on the VHF radio. Moments later, my reel starts to sound off with a nice running fish. I turn on my video camera and turn off the reel clicker. I give it a count of three and set the hook to see a mahi jumping the surface to break free of my line. I tighten the tension by reeling it in only to see it make the second jump out of the water. I radioed my fishing partners that I have hooked a mahi. I was so careful to make sure the tension was always there to keep the mahi from spitting out the hook... one of the most discouraging sites a fisherman hates to see. But this time like Santiago, I was able to control the fish.

The battle lasted 10 minutes as I brought it closer to my Hobie kayak. The mahi was taking me in circles as Shawn made a joke about it on the radio. I was worried that it would try and make a run and come under my kayak and get the line caught on my mirage drive or rudder and break the line. So I raised them both up to keep them out of play and kept the rod pointed to the front and right side of my kayak. Reaching for my kage (spear), I reeled the mahi closer to take aim. After missing the mahi four times, I finally was able to spear the mahi and landed her on my kayak. I held the mahi down to keep it from fluttering on my yak deck.

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I quickly secured the tail and stored the mahi in my front fish bag. I felt the joy and relief to finally end my unluckiness. Just like Santiago, bad streaks end and triumph arises. Luck does change every time you get your next catch. The best was yet to come when I came to shore. It was the panoramic view that Hilo offered me from the shoreline... the great views of the volcanoes, palm trees swaying, the locals and tourists enjoying the beauty that the ocean offered, and the time spent learning Hilo fishing with great new kayak fishing friends. Tight Lines and Aloha!{mos_fb_discuss:5}