



Fish Tales skipper Mark Manchip with his world-record 117kg bigeye tuna

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## Raymarine blog: Tales, you win!

*South African charter skipper Justin van der Walt of Fish Tales explains how he and his fellow skippers use Raymarine electronics to notch up successes and a place in the world record books*

Fish Tales Charters operates out of Hout Bay, a seaside suburb of Cape Town, and Struisbaai, a coastal settlement in the Western Cape province. The business is run and staffed entirely by a group of cheerful and capable guys whose experience at the helm is matched with an unquenchable enthusiasm for the sport. Lining up alongside skipper Justin van der Walt (AKA 'One-Armed Bandit') are Johann Kruger (AKA 'Tap Tap Go'), world-record bigeye

tuna skipper Mark Manchip (AKA ‘The Destroyer’) and Nick Marnitz (AKA ‘Vermuis’), the youngest charter skipper in the company.

“It really just started as a hobby,” remarks Justin. “I think most guys in charter operations start out that way. We do it because we love fishing, I don’t think you go out from the onset to say, ‘I’m going to make money from this’; it was just something that turned into a business.”

As will become evident, the ‘hobby’ descriptor casually underplays the all-consuming passion which Justin shares with his fellow skippers and which, with Raymarine’s assistance, saw them helping a customer to claim his place in the record books. Justin explains how the client in question would have missed out altogether on setting a world record had a Raymarine Axiom 9RV multifunction display not alerted those on board the Fish Tales boat on that particular day to a striking presence in the water.

“Mark Manchip, one of our most long-standing skippers, was out on a spear-fishing charter,” Justin begins, “but by 1600 they still had no fish on the boat. As the spearo, Dewald Lategan, was busy packing up his kit, Mark saw a big fish enter the chum line on the Axiom 9RV side-scan, and it then stayed under the boat, eating the chum. Mark told Dewald to quickly kit up and jump into the water, which delivered quite a result: the fish turned out to be a world-record bigeye tuna of 117kg.”

This clear highlight from the company ledger also neatly demonstrates how essential it is for Justin and the team to be armed with the best available gear if they are to ensure fulfilling results for their clients while scratching the itch that keeps them casting lines themselves. As such, Fish Tales Charters runs two robust, all-round vessels, *Fish Tales* and *Fish Tales II*, both purpose-built by Carry Cat Marine, and both fully equipped with Raymarine electronics. “We commissioned them both,” Justin confirms. “The first boat, *Fish Tales*, was a 25-footer which is now a 28-footer, and *Fish Tales II* was the first of the line for their 33-footers. We had a lot of input into the design of the cabin and cockpit.”

As Dewald Lategan’s record-breaking catch memorably proves, Justin and his co-workers routinely join in with the fishing when customers charter the boats. “We specialise in yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna,” he says – his own personal record for a yellowfin tuna catch is an impressive 104kg specimen – “and then the odd southern bluefin comes up, in addition to lots of albacore,

longfin tuna. At this time of the year, we operate in Struisbaai, the southernmost tip of Africa, and we focus on yellowtail, which is also a pelagic species; you get them in New Zealand too. On a typical day, we'll catch 10 to 15 different species of fish."

As was vividly established earlier, the array of Raymarine electronics installed on both boats is key to the success of these outings. *Fish Tales* is equipped with three Axiom MFDs, a Quantum radar system with a range of 24NM, an Evolution autopilot, a transom-mounted TM265lh 1KW CHIRP transducer, an RVX1000 3D clear pulse CHIRP sonar system and an RV-100 RealVision 3D CHIRP transducer.

The RV-100 is consistently indispensable for helping to catch yellowfin tuna, as Justin explains. "Compatible with the Axiom displays, the RV-100 combines 3D, Downvision and SideVision, The SideVision is useful for when we create a chum line in areas where the yellowfin tuna are located. We get a lot of people who want to do side casting, and the RV-100's SideVision allows us to pinpoint the fish. We're able to say, for example, cast your popper on the port side of the vessel at 30m and then you'll be in the area where the fish are. So that has been extremely beneficial to us. It's made a really big difference."

The flagship vessel, *Fish Tales II*, has more high-end Raymarine equipment on board. A FLIR thermal camera is a valuable collision-avoidance asset on charters where nighttime sea hours are involved; while Justin is proud to observe that the large 24in Axiom XL MFD on the vessel (paired with a 12in Axiom Pro) was the only one in Africa at the time of installation. "The core functionality on both boats is exactly the same, however," Justin points out, with Raymarine ship-to-shore communication and VHF radio systems rounding out the specification.

Fish Tales became Raymarine's official Ambassador for South Africa in 2018, an accolade which Justin says "means a lot to us. It's recognition from an international brand that they regard us as a proper, ongoing business." Shrewd and attentive budgeting has enabled the company to withstand the worst effects of the pandemic. Charterers can once more look forward to productive excursions with Fish Tales – as long as they don't bring any bananas or boiled eggs on board. "It's just a bad omen," Justin laughs. "Whether you believe in it or not, we tend to find the fishing is much worse if somebody smuggles bananas or boiled eggs onto the boats. No fish come out

on the day!”

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