

Pacific Coast Sportfishing Magazine

Jaws Seminar & Thoughts

By
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First let me say thank you to Pacific Coast Sportfishing Magazine for this very informative seminar. I hope you find this summary information from the seminar helpful.

Once again Dr. Chugey Sepulveda, from PIER started the evening off with his very knowledgeable and easy to understand overview. By far the most interesting bit of info from Dr.Sepulveda came about makos and their feeding habits both during the day and evening. As a shark fisherman I understood that nighttime mako fishing was the hot ticket. However this may not be the case. Dr.Sepulveda, from his research with tagging makos concludes that very little feeding takes place at night even though the fish seem to stay on the surface for most part, if not all of the night. His research shows that in most cases the fish are just swimming and not hunting for pray. Make no mistake you can and will catch makos at night, as they are very opportunist feeders. However during daytime hours makos are definitely on the hunt, from sunrise to sundown. Both at night, as well as during the day, makos spend most of there time, in fact 80% of their time, about 35 feet from the surface. But they do dive to about 40 meters; so having bait down deep is a smart move.

The seminar was not just about makos, but also covered Threshers as well. Commercial fisherman Capt. Josh Fisher was very helpful with information on the long tails. His tips and first hand knowledge of threshers was very informative. Starting with your gear, think big game. Stout, minimum 80-pound rated rods, 30wide 2 speed reels with 100-lb. spectra and 100lb., top shot. Don't be afraid of going with 50wides loaded with 130-lb. spectra and 100lb.top shot. Lures should be attached with 250 to 400lb. multi-strand wire. Please note if you're planning to release your fish and I hope you are, use a light drag and J hooks. If you're going to kill the fish, 5/0 treble hooks work best.

Lures for threshers are pretty basic, Ballyhoods, Bait-O-Matics, and Yozuri/Rapala swimming plugs. If you are pulling a lure that needs bait, think small baits, sardines and mini macs. Use your up and downs, looking for bait balls. Get your bait down to the fish using downriggers. These are essential. Threshers obviously bite top water baits, but the hook up ratios on the deeper rigs is high.

It's all about the conditions. Inshore the water must be green. It helps if there are weeds, eelgrass and kelps floating in the area. Offshore you're looking for clean green water with bait and other life, including birds and mammals. Don't worry if the bait thins out as threshers are a little less aggressive when bait is too thick. The water temp should be somewhere between 61 and 66 degrees, with 63 degrees being prime.

Canyons, shelves, and high spots within 15 miles to the coast are best. 40 to 250 fathoms are the zone you're looking for, but don't rule out the near shore waters. Lots of big Threshers have been caught in less than 100 feet of water. When trolling, slower is better, between 2.5 to 4 knots. When you get a knock down and the fish does not stick no worries. Take the boat out of gear and soak your bait for at least 15 minutes. This is also a great time to use a drop back bait and try for a mouth hooked fish. Remember threshers feed by slapping baits with their tails, then circling around back to feed. So be patient after a knock down, wait and them ready for a rebite.

Getting back to makos, Captain Steve Quinlan of Team Strike Zone was the keynote speaker; along with team mate Brad De La Cruz. The most important ingredient they discussed was putting together the best crew you can. Each member of the team should be assigned a specific job they're comfortable with and capable of handling. However every member of the team should be able to handle all responsibilities, including drive, catch, leader and release or gaff.

The gear you use for makos and threshers are the basically the same, 30 to 50 wides with 80 lb. top shots and 80 to 130 spectra backing. For trophy makos a harness, plenty of rope for both heading and tailing the fish and if you're killing the fish, flying gaffs. But please remember, the bigger makos, those over 80 pounds are the breeders. So if you're going to kill a mako, make it a smaller one. If we keep killing the brood stock, it's not going to take long before we wipe them out completely.

Also on a personal note, we've found that by dropping down in line class, to say 20 or 30 pound, when hooked, the fish will jump and put on a much better show than on the heavier string. This is especially fun when you have newbie's on board and are planning on releasing all your fish anyway. There are few things more exciting in angling than seeing a big mako going ballistic in the air.

Finding a good starting area was next on the agenda. Look for clean blue water with temp breaks, up swellings, thermal climes, and/or areas with lots of life and/or structure, including paddies. I really can't say enough about the importance of the watercolor. Mexican blue to aqua is preferable. Best water temps range from a low of 64 to as high as 76 degrees. Now it's time to start chumming.

Just because all the conditions are right you still need to chum the fish to the boat. Start by power chumming, large amounts of chum in to water. Get a good slick going and check out the direction of the currant. Now set out your buckets. My favorite is from the New Fishall Bait Company. (310-532-7340). Their chum is always full of rich oils and is by far the best chum on the market today. Next, be patient. The fish may take some time to come in on you. While you're waiting, chunk, chunk, chunk small 1/4-inch pieces of bait. The secret to a successful chunk line is to never break it. Most people get lazy and only chunk occasionally. Chunking like this, you're wasting your time. If you're going to chunk, don't break the chunk line.

Make sure you have all your gear in order, throw baits ready, lines secure and lines baited. Someone needs to keep an eye out on the slick for any movement, things like a fin, a jumping mako or birds just lifting off the water that previously had been just hanging in your slick.

Remember makos love to jump and you sure don't want one jumping in your boat. So when you get hooked up, especially on a bigger fish, it's a good idea to have the boat fired up and ready to kick into gear if you have too. With the fish on it's important for the driver to keep the fish away from the boat and try never letting him get under the boat. Now the fish is ready to take or release. **KEEP THE BOAT IN GEAR.** At this point the fish is yours. But be very careful. These fish are very dangerous, and very aggressive. I've seen them deliberately attack the leader man, the boat and roll up the leader. So always use extreme caution when dealing with these fish close in.

I hope this little summary helps. I really like to once again, thank Drew Lawler, Bill DePriest, David Kodama and the entire staff at Pacific Coast Sportfishing for putting this seminar on along with the special guest speakers, Dr. Chugey Sepulveda, Capt. Josh Fisher and Team Strike Zones Steve Quinlan and Brad De La Cruz for a very informative evening. For information on future upcoming Pacific Coast Sportfishing seminars, you can log onto www.pcs.com. Please remember to practice CPR, catch, photograph and release. If you do take a fish please remember to limit your kill and don't kill your limit. Until next time tight lines and good luck. Bill.