

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO ANGLING SUCCESS

AUSTRALIAN

SALT WATER Fishing

ISSUE 67

**TRAILERBOAT
TOWING TIPS**

**CRUISING FOR
COBIA**

**Amazing
Sight Casting
Techniques!**

+

**LURING
LAKE BREAM**

**GOLD COAST
INSHORE**

**TACKLE
REVIEWS**

ANSA BRAG MAT

**INNOVATOR NITRO
VOODOO SPIN ROD**

TECHNIQUE:

**Finding Fish in the Wash Zone
Unweighted Plastics for Pelagics
Timber Lure Advantages
And Much, Much More...**



05

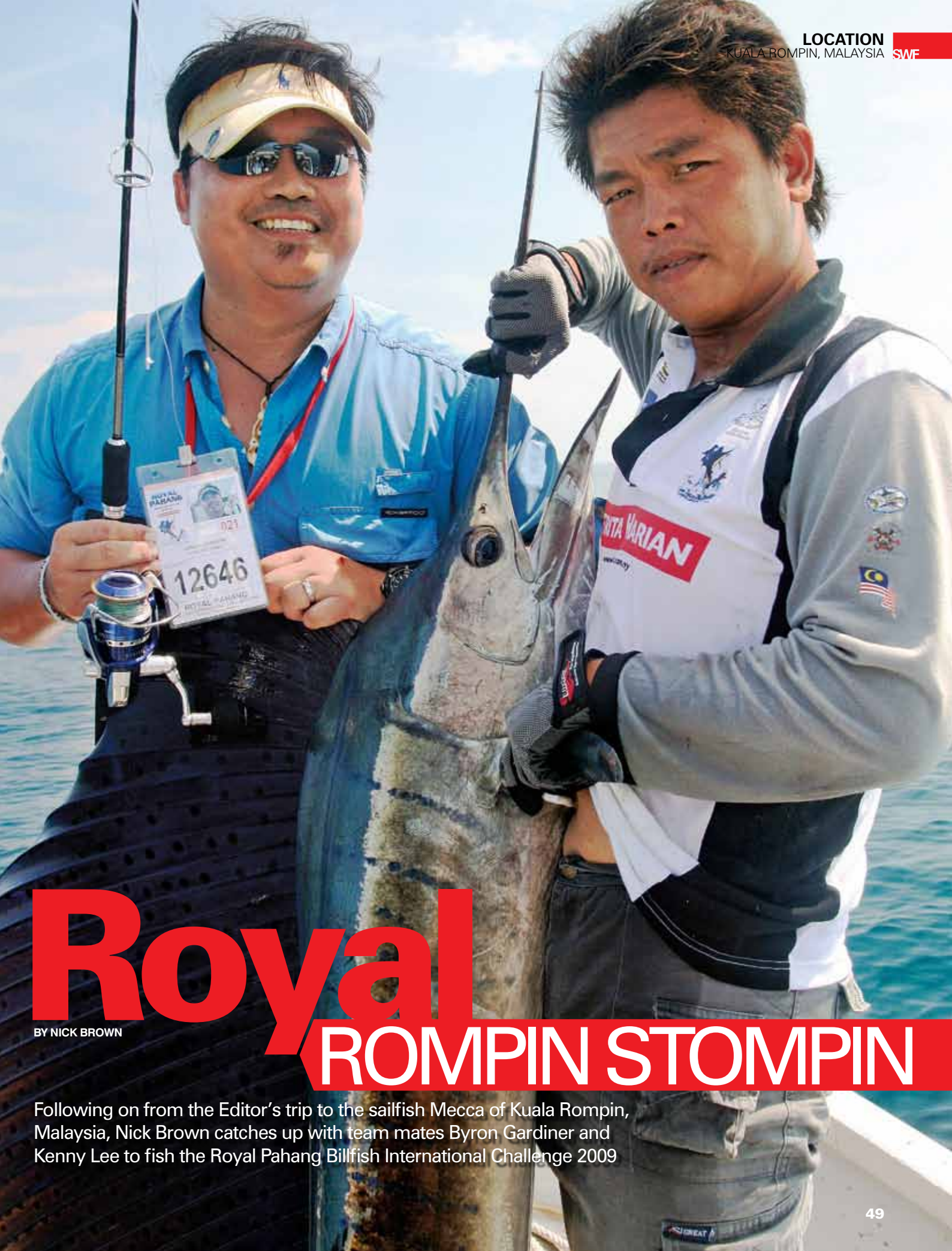
No. 67

A\$7.95 (inc. GST)

NZ \$7.95 (inc. GST)

EMC
FISHING MEDIA GROUP

7 82330 01209 9



Royal

BY NICK BROWN

ROMPIN STOMPIN

Following on from the Editor's trip to the sailfish Mecca of Kuala Rompin, Malaysia, Nick Brown catches up with team mates Byron Gardiner and Kenny Lee to fish the Royal Pahang Billfish International Challenge 2009

After hearing too many stories from mate Byron Gardiner for a few years now, I finally decided it was time to pay him a visit and experience first-hand the sensational sailfish action off Kuala Rompin, Malaysia.

Along with team mate Kenny Lee, the guys had kindly organised for me to fish with them as Team 2 from Hook on C Adventures in the Royal Pahang Billfish International Challenge 2009. Hook on C Adventures has a fleet of local Rompin boats and skippers, and are co-owned and run by Charles Lee and Daryl Ch'ng.

First Impressions

Following a quick stop for some money changing at the border town of Johor Bahru, we were off towards Rompin at a lively pace in Byron's flash, new black Audi wagon. Palm tree oil plantations dotted the landscape, and entire families putted along the sides of the road on a single motorcycle. Wajas (a Malaysian model of car) dominated the roads in between the array of bikes and the odd truck.

Approximately three and a half hours later we arrived at our destination, the quaint little town of Kuala Rompin. We stopped for some local tea and sweets just on the outskirts before hitting the town proper for some extra supplies. After stocking up we headed to the Rompin Chalets, our comfortable accommodation right on the water that was to be home for the next few days.

After getting settled and unpacked we decided wander down to the wharf. There were a couple of groups of anglers returning

from their trip when we arrived, and one of these fishos informed me that they had a good day with three sailfish caught, and six the day before. He showed me a picture on his digital camera, and I'm sure he noticed that I was suddenly getting very agitated and excited!

Let the Preparations Begin

After some cold refreshments and a scrumptious meal at the Chalet restaurant, we bunkered down for the evening to tie traces, doubles, check reel drags, and discuss tournament strategies.

The plan was to fish two outfits loaded with monofilament rather than braid, as we felt the cushioning effect of the line would mean a greater hook-up and conversion rate. Byron and Kenny both had identical outfits specifically for this purpose – a Nitro Coffin 10-15kg rod, Shimano Tyros 16, and 15kg fluoro yellow Momoi line. I also had an 8kg mono overhead outfit.

Additionally we would fish a braid overhead outfit, as well as Saltiga threadlines to cast baits at any sails on the surface. 60lb trace with 5/0 light gauge Mustard or Owner Mutu circle hooks made up the business end of the set-ups.

I clearly remember the ring of Kenny's voice in my ear as multiple sailfish appeared in the clear water as we drifted past. "Customer in the shop, customer in the shop!" he called. It was magic fishing



Byron with another nice sail that proved to be a very stubborn fish



A good sail jumps right next to the boat. Note the bright yellow mono – a major factor in the boys' success

LOCATION
KUALA ROMPIN, MALAYSIA SWF

When third place in the team category was announced, we knew we had won it as the Ripple Fisher boys had definitely only caught 16 fish and would place second. Shortly afterwards we were then formerly announced the 2009 winners!

Competition Starts and Lucky Bird Finds Us

So it was with great anticipation and little sleep, in part due to nervous energy but also the fact that despite earplugs Kenny was the best freight train snorer I have ever heard, that we awoke bright and early ready to get amongst them.

It was tournament day and Team 2 skipper, Ah Ping had a glint in his eye that signalled he knew more than he was letting on. Head for the wide grounds was the call. He was also aware that, being one of the leading skippers in the fleet, there was a good chance he would be followed, so working in combination with the other two Hook on C Teams, a game of cat and mouse followed the kick-off horns for day one.

We did have a short delay saving a small whistling bird from drowning after it had fallen out its nest from the shelter above the tournament wharf when the sirens blasted, but we eventually shot out the heads. We decided to call this fortunate little bird 'Rompa Stompa' and we all had a feeling that he was soon to become our lucky mascot.

Kenny warmed and dried Rompa Stompa, and we perched him behind Ah Ping's chair for the 28 odd nautical mile north-east run out to the sail grounds. He happily sat there and waited patiently for the action to begin.

Right from the outset the morning was a blur of growling reels and leaping sailfish. Through the chaos Byron landed four sails and Kenny and I one each. We lost a few more fish through a couple of pulled hooks, which is unusual with circles, and one fish wore through the 60lb leader.

Each boat in the tournament had a marshal on-board to record details of fish caught. Ed was our marshal, and also a very keen young fisho in his own right who had caught sails at Rompin, including successfully landing one on a popper. He was kept busy for the morning photographing and filling in capture cards, and always had a smile on his face.

During a quiet spell, after we attempted to feed Rompa Stompa some corn, he decided to go for a fly. Suddenly we were all leaning over one side of the boat yelling "Come back, come back Rompa!" We were feeling devastated as our good karma charm flew off into the distance. But as if Rompa finally heard us, he took a U turn just before disappearing out of sight. Then, as if in slow motion, he headed straight back for the boat...and landed.

We were cheering like a bunch of school kids as we put Rompa back in his possie and got ready for the next bite. We felt that the rest of the day was going to be just as good as the spell of action we experienced in the morning.

The late afternoon bite did in fact start to fire up as predicted, just as we decided it was time for a bite to eat. Dropping sandwiches and drinks, Byron managed to catch another two sails, including one that was previously tagged, and Kenny and I another one each.

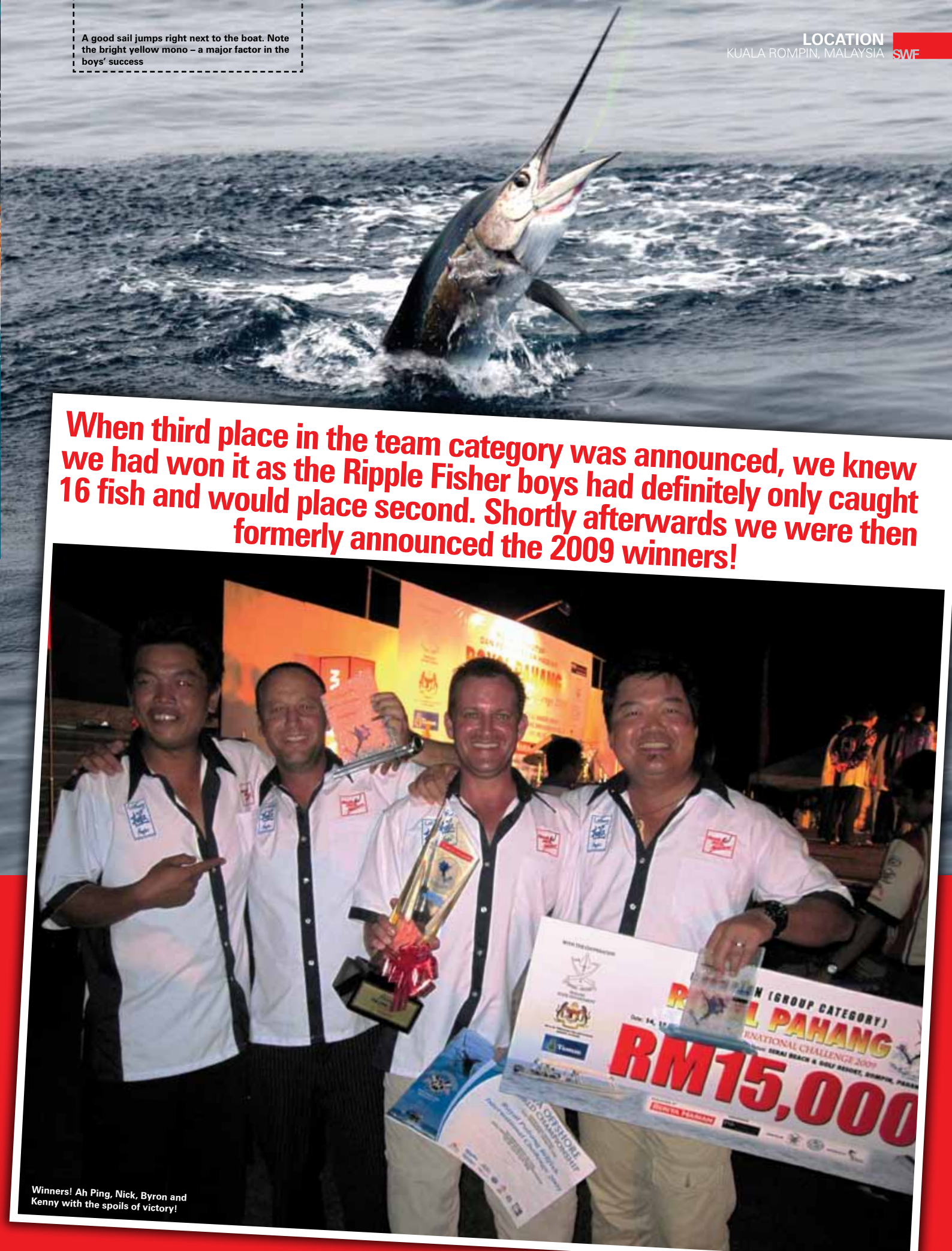
We needed to be back at the tournament station by 5pm, so Ah Ping made the call that it was time to stop fishing. The 175hp four-stroke Suzuki purred as we headed back in on a lovely flat sea. Rompa Stompa sat proudly in his seat and admired the view. After dropping Ed back at the competition site, we headed up the estuary to tie off the wharf at Rompin central.

Talking with the other two Hook on C teams, it became apparent they had a mixed day. Brothers David and Tim Freer from Team 3 had caught seven sails, while Charles, Kai Chi and Daryl on Team 1 had landed three fish.

It was at this point that our mate Rompa decided that all was sweet and his work was done. He promptly flew off the boat into the trees behind the Chalets and was not seen again. And it was all good, as the rumour around the camp was that we were leading day one with ten sailfish tagged.

Day Two Starts

Kenny, Byron and I awoke the next morning knowing that we were certainly in with an excellent chance of winning the Royal Pahang



Winners! Ah Ping, Nick, Byron and Kenny with the spoils of victory!

AD



LOCATION
KUALA ROMPIN, MALAYSIA **SWE**

Billfish Challenge. I was really looking forward to taking some more photographs and just being out on the water experiencing Rompin sailfishing again in all its glory for my final day. Even if the fishing was half as good as the previous day, then everything was going to be 'sweet as' (the Kiwi half coming out of me).

The weather felt even hotter and stickier than the day before. There was no breeze to speak of, and the South China Sea was still and super-glassy. Kenny opened a cold water bottle and poured the icy contents into our croc shoes as a sort of champagne cracking toast to start the last day. This eased the heat, if only for a very brief moment.

Today we had a couple of boats close on our tail as we headed outside the estuary. They knew we had caught fish the previous day, and were looking to chase us to the fish holding water we'd found on day one. Ah Ping was keeping a close eye on them and all of a sudden decided it was time to throw a dummy. He took a 180 degree turn so that he was heading back towards them, and they reacted by stopping. With a 'show and go' and a quick jinx that confused them further, he was

able to put some more ground on them, at which point they decided that it wasn't worth following and gave up the chase.

With the other boats now off our tail, we quickly caught a variety of live baits from one of the local Unjangs (bamboo FADs) and were swiftly ready for action. Unfortunately I had a Barry Crocker and blew the first bite of the morning – sorry about that one lads! However, a short time later Byron and I had a double hook-up, and we were in all sorts of trouble. Our lines had crossed, and as I had the braid outfit we were expecting Byron's mono to be cut off at any moment.

Most of the local boats at Rompin are longboat style with modern four-stroke outboards. Narrow beams, low gunwales and long cabin tops (for welcome shelter from the heat) can make them a tad tricky to fish from, but it all adds to the rustic Rompin charm. Byron's fish was going crazy jumping in a totally different direction to where his line was being pulled, while my fish was just slugging it out in close.

Ah Ping put the gloves on and I lead my fish in slowly. Expecting a tangle of lines, it suddenly became apparent why we were both still hooked up. The Sampo swivel on my outfit for some unexplained reason had opened up and Byron's mono had become caught in the swivel.

Luckily my fish behaved quietly at the boat and Ah Ping was able to grab its bill while I quickly untangled the swivel. After clearing the lines Byron was still tight on his fish, which had now taken a heap of line. In between the mayhem Kenny had also hooked a sail!

Byron was still going on his fish after Ah Ping had tagged Kenny's fish, and we started to give him some grief about taking too long to fight fish and wasting precious tournament

time. However, it soon became apparent why Byron's fish had stripped so much line from his reel as the fish came up backwards. It was tail wrapped and not only that, the hook was not even in the fish's mouth. It was holding the noose around the sails tail! Luck was ~~on~~ definitely on our side again, and we had three fish on the board early.

As with the previous day the bite seemed to slow down. We had another couple of shots later in the morning, with Byron and I both losing a fish. Byron then landed another nice sail that jumped wildly and scorched along the surface at blistering speed. Nearly all of the sails that we caught during competition seemed to be slightly above the Rompin average of 25-30kg, with a couple of the fish called as approaching 45kg. They were in superb condition, and obviously thriving in the bait-rich waters.

At one stage I looked over towards Hook on C Team 1's boat, who were fishing in close vicinity. There was Kai Chi squatted on the top of the narrow gunwale at perfect balance, rod in hand, slowly feeding a live bait out under a balloon. He looked just like the frigate birds sitting on top of the bamboo unjangs.

For the next three hours or so things really quietened down, and with the exception of a nice little mahi mahi that I caught, we had no further interest from the sails. Ah Ping's hawk eyes were searching the skyline and finally he found what he was looking for.

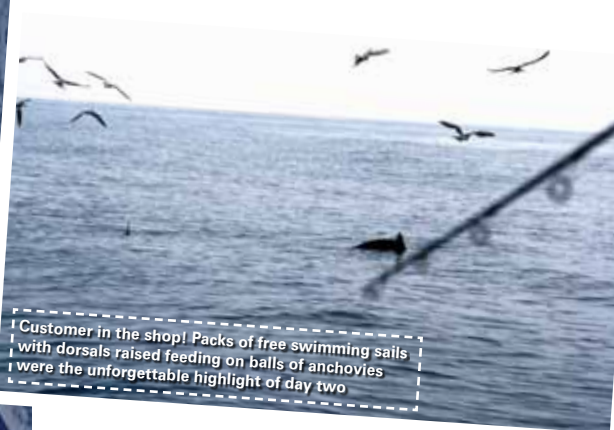
We all know that the real skill and expertise comes from the skippers and boat operators. Both Team 1 skipper Kai Chi and Ah Ping have amazing abilities to spot the right birds and other local indicators for sailfish, as well as that intuition and gut feeling of when things are about to happen that only comes with many hours spent on the water.



Rompa Stompa the whistling bird, our lucky mascot!



Live bait variety. From the top they are kresi (pink sea bream), selar kuning (a type of yakka), kembong (long-jawed mackerel), anchovy and lolong (big-eye scad)



Customer in the shop! Packs of free swimming sails with dorsals raised feeding on balls of anchovies were the unforgettable highlight of day two

Surface Sails

Ah Ping was spot-on again. As we moved in closer I will never forget the sight as free-swimming sails were popping up randomly all over the place. When the birds came together tightly, 2, 3, 4, or more sailfish could all be seen together. Their dorsals were raised above the smooth surface of the water while swimming in circles through the balls of bait, and there were obviously more sails below that we could not see.

While Byron and I manned the live bait rods out the back, Kenny worked his magic at the front of the boat and threw a dead bait at a cruising sail. Hooking up on his little bamboo stick – which despite appearances is in fact a top-shelf PE 1-3 jig rod- it was bent all the way to the grips as he went to work on the sail.

The sails had switched off the live baits under balloons and we only had a couple of half-hearted takes as Kenny quickly caught another one on his threadline. I clearly remember the ring of Kenny's voice in my ear as multiple sailfish appeared in the clear water as we drifted past. "Customer in the shop, customer in the shop!" he called. It was magic fishing.

Kenny was on a roll, and with only minutes to go before stumps he landed his third sail in a row. He 'monstered' it to the boat where Ah Ping expertly traced and tagged the 17th sail for Team 2 of Hook on C. We packed up the gear and after a slightly anxious high speed run in watching the clock, we made it back with approximately seven minutes to go before the 4pm competition cut-off time.

The Countdown Begins

Presentation night began at the nearby Serai di Lanjut Beach and Golf Resort with a band playing followed by the arrival of tourism ministers, council members and Royalty – Pahang Regent Tengku Mahkota Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah to be precise.

A banquet style dinner was served and then the awards started. We had been told conflicting stories around the traps – some were saying we had won while others were stating we had been beaten by a fish.

Finally the moment of truth arrived. When third place in the team category was announced, we knew we had won it as the Ripple Fisher boys had definitely only caught 16 fish and would place second. Shortly afterwards we were then formerly announced the 2009 winners!

Accepting the cheque, trophy, prizes and IGFA invitation to Mexico in 2010 we rubbed shoulders with Royalty and Ministers. Byron was so excited he didn't want to share or let go of the bigger crystal prize that carries first place team names over each year! If the truth were known, Kenny and I were just as ecstatic as he was, and hadn't actually noticed until he told us later. It was a true team effort from all Hook on C Adventure Teams that had worked in unison to get the desired result.

As has been commonly said, it is not all about the fishing but rather the journey. Kuala Rompin sailfish is a unique adventure that is coupled with some of the best billfish angling imaginable. The fishing gets even better later in the season around October and November when from all reports it is easily possible to catch 20-30 plus sailfish a day! As noted by the editor in his report in issue 60 of Saltwater Fishing, these conditions are ideal to catch sails on very light tackle and fly.

A massive thanks to all the Hook on C Adventure crew – Charles, Daryl, Kai Chai, Ken, Ray, and a special thanks to David Freer for a late team change. And of course Byron, Kenny and Ah Ping – roll on world IGFA championships in Cabo San Lucas Mexico, May 2010! **SWF**

If you would like fish Kuala Rompin. Malaysia contact Hook on C Adventures on +65 9660 1500 or +60 12 227 9335 or visit www.hookoncadventures.com