

STRAIGHT SHOOTING

WITH TOM RAYNER

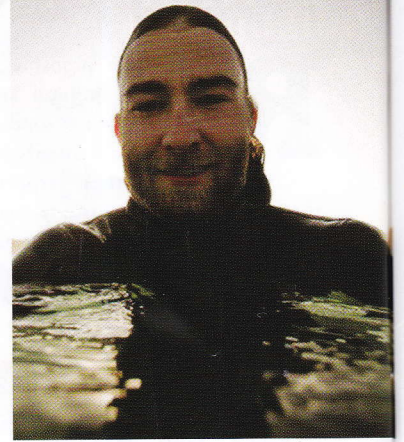
THE REEL DEAL

The endless hunt for the perfect gun setup is one of the great joys of spearfishing. Timber, aluminium or carbon? Rear or mid handle? Single, twin or more rubbers? One wrap or two? Open or closed muzzle? Pranger, sliptip or flopper? And so on... For new spearos, the daunting range of options typically results in a forum post like, 'help! wot gun shd i get'. After 10 pages of dribble, the advice is to adopt the national standard: a 1.1m, single-rubber, aluminium rail gun with a 20m line attached to a Ronstan float.

While this is a respectable and reliable setup, perfect for the beginner and capable of landing most Australian

species, it's not suitable for all conditions. For example, I recently moved to Darwin where the diving is mostly straight-up-and-down from boats anchored on wrecks in 12-15m of water with 'great' 3-4m visibility. Here, a floatline is a pain – it gets tangled around everyone and everything – so reels are the order of the day.

However, with at least 20 models on the market, putting a reel setup together isn't exactly straightforward. It also raises the issue of diver safety by removing a vital link to the surface. Having never used a reel, I spoke with **Barry Paxman** from Aussie Reels in Western Australia to get the lowdown.



CAN YOU GIVE US A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF A REEL AND HOW THEY WORK?

Describing a speargun reel is simple, 'A speargun reel is a storage device for a spearfisher's spear line'. To describe how to use a reel on a speargun it depends on what the diver is doing, but in simple terms, when a spearfisher shoots a fish and line is pulled from the reel on the gun, the diver must take control of the line in front of the gun as soon as possible – all the while swimming forward, leaving the gun and all of the slack line trailing behind to avoid getting tangled in the gun line! The drag setting on a speargun reel should not be too tight; it should allow line to be pulled from the spool in a controlled manner. Should the diver wish to slow the rate the fish is taking line, this should be done by putting a hand on the spool so the rate of line removal is restricted.

REELS SEEM TO BE THE LATEST CRAZE. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN USING REELS? HOW DID YOU END UP GETTING INTO MAKING REELS?

Reels might be the latest craze in spearfishing, but I have been using reel guns since starting spearfishing in 1957. Back then, guns weren't anywhere near as efficient as the

weapons available today. I'm not sure why I used a reelgun back then, but I think it was common practice for WA divers at that time. In the 1950s, reels suitable for spearguns were hard to find and, when you did find one, they were quite expensive. Some people had wooden reels turned from solid wood and were easily damaged. By the time I started making my own guns, I used modified plastic "Academy" reels mounted horizontally under a timber barrel. Like all things, the "Academy" reels became unobtainable and so it became necessary to make a suitable replacement. This entailed a metal base plate with spindle and a nylon spool.

At the time, I was also introduced to rail guns and it became immediately apparent that I had no way of attaching a reel to these new barrels. This meant that I had to make a reel to do the job! Being a 3D product designer, I got on the computer and came up with a clamp on reel made of Nylon. This reel was very successful right from the start and spearos began wanting these reels for their spearguns too! However, it was a very costly exercise producing these reels as they were fully machined from solid nylon. It became obvious that we could not cope with the demand for these reels and had to find a way of making larger quantities. This

meant molding the parts which in turn meant that design changes had to take place to accommodate the molding process. I have found that reels for spearguns will always be changing and updating, as the need arises due to individual requirements and changes in speargun manufacture.

A NUMBER OF AUSSIES WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY WHILE SPEARING WERE USING REELS. ARE REELS SAFE?

I think spearfishing with reels is not without risk, but I think that any type of spearfishing has risks especially when deep water and large fish are involved. When a spearfisher chooses to use a reel gun, it is usually because of the freedom it gives in the water! A float is good back-up for a reelgun, but can be a bit restricting cave diving and in currents. Sometimes floatlines scare fish or at least make them keep their distance! So it would seem the best back-up to a reelgun would be the belt reel that attaches



to the handle of the gun, as this still gives little hindrance – even when cave diving.

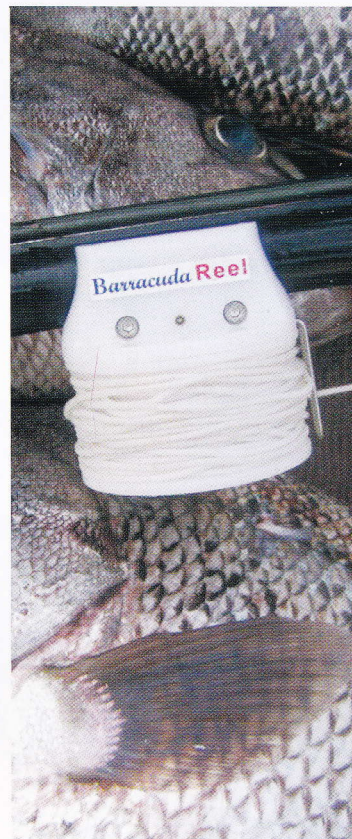
Muzzle wrap, where line tangles on discharging the spear, is a problem with some types of muzzle designs. This may occur when tracking a fish on firing. If you do not feel that you have time to or ability to untangle the problem, then you must let your gun be taken by the fish. Another option is to still use the reel on the gun, by loosening the drag and pulling line from the spool while swimming to the surface, leaving the gun and fish on the bottom.

A FINAL NOTE ON SAFETY

As Barry mentions, there is always a degree of risk associated with spearfishing – sharks, big tides, currents, stingers, inexperience and even crocs. Most of these risks can be minimised by; always diving with a buddy, one-up one-down; using the most appropriate equipment for the job; and, most importantly, diving within your limits. The last one is the easiest – just take it easy – at the end of the day the fish is only \$5 a kilo. 🐟

BARRY PAXMAN MASTER-CLASS TIPS FOR USING A REEL

- Always set the drag on your reel to a minimum setting, so that line can be pulled from the spool in a controlled manner without overrunning and tangling.
- The line on your reel must be rewound onto the spool very firmly. This, in combination with a light drag tension, will stop the reel line from biting into the coils on the spool and jamming!
- After capturing a fish, place the spear into the trigger mechanism before winding the reel line firmly onto the spool! Don't try to rewind the line with the spear hanging down in the water.
- Add a dyneema or mono shooting line between the spear and the reel line to give the spear less drag on firing.
- When adding a reel to a speargun, it is useful to add a line guide at the muzzle end of the gun. This can be a simple stainless steel 'u' shaped guide for timber barrels or a small stainless steel shackle for railguns. This keeps control of the direction of the line coming off the spool!



Aimrite spearguns have taken the Australian spearfishing market by storm. Built to withstand the toughest spearfishing conditions on the planet and the hardcorest spearos in the world. Yeah that's right Hardcorest! Supporting Clubs, competitions and encouraging junior spearos Aimrite is here to stay so get onboard with the one gun that will last a lifetime!

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