

Makahiki Day 1 on the Big Island

Written by Paul Belmudes

Monday, 08 February 2010 05:01

Nice Start to the Aquahunters Kayak Angler Tournament

Day one began for me Saturday in the 2010 Aquahunters Makahiki tournament. During the next 8 months with the tournament ending September 30th, I will be testing my skills in kayak fishing by carefully selecting the best 25 days and reporting my catches to Aquahunters forum. There is a maximum of four fish that can be reported per day. All fish caught must be photographed to keep us honest including catch and release (CNR).

My goal always when I kayak fish is to go after the pelagic (tuna, ono and mahi). My second choice would be to hunt down a snapper (uku). These are my favorite eating fish. But the tournament is based on points for specific Hawaii species.

Saturdays weather was forecasted to light variable winds due to a northern high pressure system combating a southern moving system. One day to get out there and have winds around 5 to 15 m.p.h. with west swells moving in.

I arrived at my destination a little after 6 a.m. and was planning on fishing solo that morning. To my surprise, there were several other Aquahunters Forum members there who were part of the Makahiki tournament. I recognized one member and said hello but they pretty much kept to themselves. I know it's a competition, but they did not have the consideration to even ask if I wanted to fish with them as they decided the swells were to big to deal with at that launch site. Well it shows you that they mean business when it comes to competition, but I don't blame them one bit and I did not follow them to where they launched from. Most would rather be left alone in their secret spots so no others will know about them, but there are only so many places based on conditions where you can launch from on the Big Island.

I probably should have followed as the swell was easy to launch from but became nasty later when I decided to bring in my catch to keep it cold. Oh yea... about one and one-half hours into the start, I hooked up into the 18.5 pound mahi that was worth 25 points plus 2 additional points for its weight scoring me 27 points for the first day.

Usually I am able to make a video of my catches but low and behold, I accidentally deleted the file from my camera... so the end result for YakHawaii, no video today.

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It was a standard battle landing the mahi. It's always spectacular to fight a mahi as they jump out of the water trying to spit out the hook. Ever since I started using Reggie Pare's way of rigging my hooks to get pelagic, my catches have been increasing over time.

But back to my story on landing the mahi I caught. It took 13 minutes to bring it in. One of the things I do now is not waste any time in gaffing or should I say... using my kage (spear). There has been one too many times that the fish wants to run and breaks free of my line... so I choose now to hurry this part of the process and get them on board.

I tried staying out on the water as long as I could to catch more after catching the mahi, but after an hour in my fish bag with the tail hanging out, I decided to head back in to store and ice the fish down and relaunch to go after number two. But as I was coming in, the surf was big and this was not going to be a fun ride in. I prepared for my landing as best as I could but got caught on a wave that brought me in fast. I had no time to remove my mirage drive pedal system out of my Hobie Revo and pushed down on the pedals as I was about to hit the shoreline. I grabbed my paddles in both hands applying drag to the water to use as a steering mechanism, lifted my rudder and guided the bow in to the open beach area. I was lucky enough to make it in smoothly without tipping over. I hurriedly jumped off my Revo and yanked her up and she was heavier then hell. With spectators watching me, they assisted and complimented me in making it in safely with the waves being so huge. During my time coming in, I was saying to myself that I should have followed the other kayak anglers as they made the better decision to launch from another location up the road.

Now the fun part was pulling out my mahi out of my fish bag and having the tourist and local beach gatherers yak about my fish. They were amazed that us kayak fisherman can catch fish of this size on our plastic floating kayaks. Their cameras were out and I was trying to catch my breath from the adrenaline rush of getting in safely and the 10 miles I pedaled. To tired to relaunch and deal with the surf, I decided to call it a day and settle for the one mahi. I did have the opportunity to watch from the shoreline the several kayak anglers I saw earlier drift fish the bottom on the south current and gaze as the whales breached in and out of the water.

Score me 27 points for day one on the 2010 Aquahunters Makahiki tournament. I look forward to my next day of participation and will try to land more fish the next time out. Aloha!

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