

NSWGFA Junior Team 2024 at the Port Hacking 100.

I'm Isaac Moussa, and last weekend, I was thrilled to represent the NSWGFA Junior team alongside my teammates Taj, Hunter, and Hugh. We were on board Tantrum, a vessel from Sydney Game Fishing Club.

My journey began on Friday afternoon when I met Grahame Williams at a local motel—the gathering point before the excitement unfolded. After a heartfelt goodbye to my dad, I settled in, met my roommate Taj, and got acquainted with the rest of the team. We received our NSWGFA 2024 junior team t-shirts, which had our names proudly displayed on the front, cementing our roles as team members.

Eager to get a lay of the land, or rather the sea, we headed early to the Royal Motor Yacht Club for the tournament briefing scheduled for 6 pm. On our way there, we couldn't resist checking out the marina, scoping out the competition, and eagerly awaiting the arrival of our boat, Tantrum. When she docked, we quickly jumped into action, assisting with tying her up and introducing ourselves to the crew—Glenn the skipper and President of Sydney GFC, Karen his wife and Giles the deckhand.

The briefing was quite quick and ended just as we finished dinner, after which we returned back to Tantrum to discuss the following day's strategy. The crew shared videos of their previous spectacular catches, which heightened our anticipation for what was to come. By the time we wrapped up and headed back to the motel, it was 9 pm. The excitement made it impossible to sleep, despite being exhausted from the day's events. Nevertheless, I was up and ready by 5 am, raring to go.

Saturday morning began with a quick breakfast on board Tantrum, generously provided by Karen, who made sure we had an ample supply of food to fuel our day. We made our way to the continental shelf by 7:40 am and poised ourselves for an 8 am start, as per the tournament rules. Our first significant encounter of the day was at 9:30 am—a small, lively Mahi Mahi that gave us a brief but exciting chase before Giles released it back into the water.

The real action began at 11 am when a marlin appeared, instantly energizing the atmosphere. Hunter first spotted the fish, and his excitement was contagious. The marlin teased us initially, missing the shotgun lure a couple of times before finally taking it and setting off on a formidable run. What followed was a gruelling seven-hour battle with the marlin, filled with strategic boat manoeuvring by Glenn, tireless efforts from the crew, and relentless mocking from Glenn and Hugh aimed at Hunter, who was at the rod's helm.

The climax of this ordeal was nothing short of dramatic. With collective breaths held, we witnessed the incredible strength and will of the marlin. The teamwork was crucial—Karen, Hugh, Taj, and I armed with flying gaffs, managed a perfect strike, securing the marlin. This catch wasn't just a physical battle; it was a test of our spirit and camaraderie.

After a victorious but exhausting day, Glenn radioed in our catch, which weighed a staggering 174.5kg, almost setting a new record for the NSW Juniors. The celebration was muted by our fatigue, but after a good night's sleep, we were ready for the second day, which, while quieter, still held the thrill of competition and the joy of the sea.

The tournament concluded with Tantrum receiving accolades for Champion Boat Capture, Champion Junior Capture, and for catching the Heaviest Blue Marlin over 150kg on a Tantrum lure. The weekend was an intense learning experience, filled with challenges, teamwork, and unforgettable moments. It solidified my love for fishing and my respect for the ocean and its creatures. I look forward to many more adventures and hope to relive this incredible experience with new friends and old.

Thank you once again Grahame, Glenn, Karen and Giles for the opportunity and experience to fish as part of the NSWGFA Junior Team.

Isaac Moussa
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