

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

A light southeasterly breeze met us as we exited through the great salt pond in the new harbor on the west side of Block Island, heading southwest into Block Island Sound. We were in search of the elusive trophy striped bass. As we cruised through the inlet, we could see false albacore breaking water and frolicking about. It was tough to pass them up but Mare and I were intent on finding the trophy striped bass that were reported to be stacked up around the Island at this time of year. It was the week of the October new moon.

We were fishing with Capt. Dave Chieffo who operates *Block Island Fishing Charters*, a 28-foot Triton CC with twin 250 Horsepower Mercury Verados. While we watched those false albacore breaking water at the inlet, Hank the mate was busy preparing equipment and checking on the live eels which we were using to entice the bass. Thirty minutes later, we were on the spot and the tide had just begun to flood.

With our eels set in the feeding zone and a drift at approximately one knot, it wasn't long before Mare got a run-off and needed all her patience to keep thumbing the spool, while the bass inhaled the bait. The circle hook set perfectly in the corner of the striper's jaw and after a decent fight, she boated a 15-pound bass - nice, but not what we were looking for.

We reset on another piece of bottom and this time I got the run-off, slowly at first, then the fish took off. I let her run, thumbing the line for what felt like an eternity, then raised the rod tip and locked up. Again, the circle hook worked perfectly but this fish continued to take drag, heading south. All I could do at this point was hang on tight. Gradually I regained some of my lost line and saw a huge swirl off in the distance as I continued to work the fish. In one last burst of energy, the big striper took off on a screaming run. All I could do was hang on. As the fish approached the boat, she swirled again and for the first time, I got a good look at her. This was the trophy I was looking for. I guided her gently into the net and the skipper struggled a bit, lifting the fish over the gunwale. I finally had my 50-pounder - 50 pounds, six ounces to be exact.

If the fishing adventure had ended on that note, both Mare and I would have been very happy. But it didn't. We set up for another drift and another fish quickly picked up my eel. That fish turned out to be a 41-pounder - a trophy by any standard, but not on this day. This truly was the trip of a lifetime.

When it comes to Block Island fishing, Captain Dave Chieffo uses a combination of classic techniques and advanced electronics for continuous success. He really knows his stuff and put us on the fish and Hank did an outstanding job as the mate, as well. We truly did have a trip of a lifetime and we are looking forward to seeing them again next year for what will hopefully be an encore performance. 🐟



The author with his 50-pound, six-ounce trophy striper.