

2006 Australian



Bluewater Freediving Classic

Powell Finally Cracks the Classic

After consistently placing in the top five in the Australian Bluewater Freediving Classic over the past few years, Tweed Heads diver Ray Powell finally cracked it for his first win in this prestigious event, held at Woolgoolga on the north coast of NSW on 20th and 21st May 2006. Powell, one of Australia's deepest divers, worked hard in depths exceeding 30 metres for most of the two day competition to pull off what is a long overdue and highly deserved win.



2006 Australian Bluewater Freediving Classic Champion - Ray Powell

The concept

The Classic is a unique event in Australia, and has in the past attracted world class competitors from all parts of the globe. The pelagic only concept ensures this is a very difficult event in which to catch fish, and with only one fish per specie per day and a highly restricted specie list all fish are at a premium. Local spearfishing club the Coffs Harbour Bluewater Freedivers hosts the event each year under a permit issued by the Marine Parks Authority.

The divers

The divers came from far and wide, with several backing up from the first (postponed) event in March to again travel down from Mackay. Several past Classic winners were competing including Tony Heugh, last year's winner and local Brett Vercoe, and three time winner and local Glenn George. Add to that a competitive local juniors field, a host of very experienced divers from the Sydney, Newcastle and Tweed Heads regions, not to mention the hoards of other locals, and the stage was set for a great weekend. In total 54 divers signed on and all were fired up - now all that was needed was for the weather and the fish to co-operate.....

The weather

It really was a case of second time lucky after the first attempt to hold the event for 2006 resulted in a postponement due to the effects of a tropical cyclone that tracked down the coast from far north Queensland in late March. However this time around there was to be no such problem with the weather.



A magnificent Day 1 morning

Day one dawned absolutely magnificently, with hardly a cloud in the sky and not a breath of wind. Rarely in the event's history had another day been seen like this one, and every single diver was very excited and keen to test some of the great diving the waters of the Solitary Islands Marine Park have to offer. And this was to remain the order of the day, with a mirror like sea that allowed absolute freedom for divers to travel as far a-field as they felt necessary (and their boats would allow).

Day two was a very different story and was more like the Classic weather to which everyone has become accustomed. A southerly change overnight created an amazing contrast from the day before, with a solid 15-20 knots of wind testing the willpower and endurance of every diver.

The fish

In the previous 11 year history of the event not one wahoo had ever been weighed in, but all that was about to change. With a smooth sea and crystal clear water on the outer islands, wahoo were the order of the day. Nine wahoo, including three exceeding 20 kilograms were weighed in on day 1. Allan Forbes took the largest fish of the day (and eventually the whole tournament) with a very nice wahoo of 24.8kg.

Add to that a range of species that included spanish mackerel, samson fish, cobia, yellowtail kingfish, trevally, tuna, amberjack, bonito, tailor, dolphinfish, queenfish, barracuda and mulloway, and you had a recipe for possibly the best day's fishing ever seen at the Classic.



Luke Buccholz - Day 1 Spanish



Allan Forbes 24.8kg Wahoo



Twins? Mick Davison and Paul Keys with some nice Kingfish



Kell Keilly - Largest Jewfish of the 06 Classic - 10.9kg

Ray Powell - 10.9kg Samsonfish



To top it all off a magnificent 6.85kg snapper was weighed in by last minute rockhopper entrant and Kiwi Scott Perkins. This fish was certainly the catch of the day, and was a great effort considering Scott could not find a boat ride and had decided to enter anyway and just jump in off the front of the headland and see what he could find.

At the end of day 1 it was very crowded at the pointy end of the field, with Ray Powell (5 species) taking a very narrow lead over Alistair Cooke (six species) and Glenn George (5 species). These guys were very closely followed by a whole host of divers who captured 3-4 fish on day 1, and it really was a case of still being anyone's event for day 2.

Unfortunately the weather took an all too familiar turn for the worse on Sunday, and in turn the wahoo returned to their extended holiday and only one small one was taken. However not to be deterred, the divers were still enthusiastic and some great fish were landed.

Local kingfish legend Mick Davison lived up to his reputation, taking the biggest kingy for the weekend at 16.9kg. The George's again retained their stranglehold on the largest mackerel, with David finally nailing a great spanish of 13.9kg, just pipping Luke Bucholz's fish of 13.8kg from day 1, and adding to his impressive 9.6kg dolphinfish taken earlier in the day.



Dave George - 9.6kg Dolphinfish

The range of fish, although slightly smaller in quantity, was just as impressive as the day before.

Ray Powell again led the day with six fish, closely followed by Tweed Heads diver Greg Smith who also managed six for the day, then local John Featherstone who took four fish to back up his four from day 1 and maintain some consistency, which is crucial in this style of competition. Mick Glen, also from Tweed, finally got his act together and landed five species after an ordinary day 1 Ray appeared to be a likely winner at this stage, however the minor placings were anyone's guess and would remain secret until the presentations were made that night.

The fish auctions conducted on Saturday and Sunday afternoons held by Rotary at the Woolgoolga Beach Reserve attracted large crowds both days, and some bargains were to be had, with fish up to 20kg selling for as little as \$35.



The Hotly contested "Fish Auction"

Overall results

At the presentation dinner held at the Woolgoolga RSL, a significant portion of the night was taken up with the issue of prizes, with the value of the prize pool totalling in excess of \$18,000 thanks to the huge generosity of the sponsors. In addition to largest fish and age group categories, the open category prizes began issuing at position 38, and by the time the top ten were reached the tension was building in anticipation. Down to the top three and it was Glenn George who just pipped Greg Smith into third place, with a very happy John Featherstone sneaking into second. However nothing could take away from an emphatic win

by Ray Powell, who in the end won by over 400 points from the second place-getter.



'06 Classic Runner Up - John Featherstone

The pairs, fished on the first day, was taken out by Ray Powell and Luke Bucholz for the third year in a row, followed by Glenn and David George.



Pairs Winners - Ray Powell & Luke Buccholz

The committee's choice fish was a no brainer, with Scott Perkins' snapper getting the nod and bagging him a shark shield - not bad for a quick rock hop!!



Scott Perkins - Fish of the Competition a Magnificent 6.85kg Snapper

Following the prizes presentation, a host of lucky draw give aways were drawn that included shirts, hats, gift vouchers and even a full wetsuit, until eventually it was down to the major random prize draw for the night, a full 9 day trip on the Norkat II, a beautiful 70 foot vessel now operating spearfishing charters out of Mackay. The names in the hat included all of those divers who signed on for the postponed event as well as those at this one, but it was a very lucky and surprised Allan Eriksson who took it home.

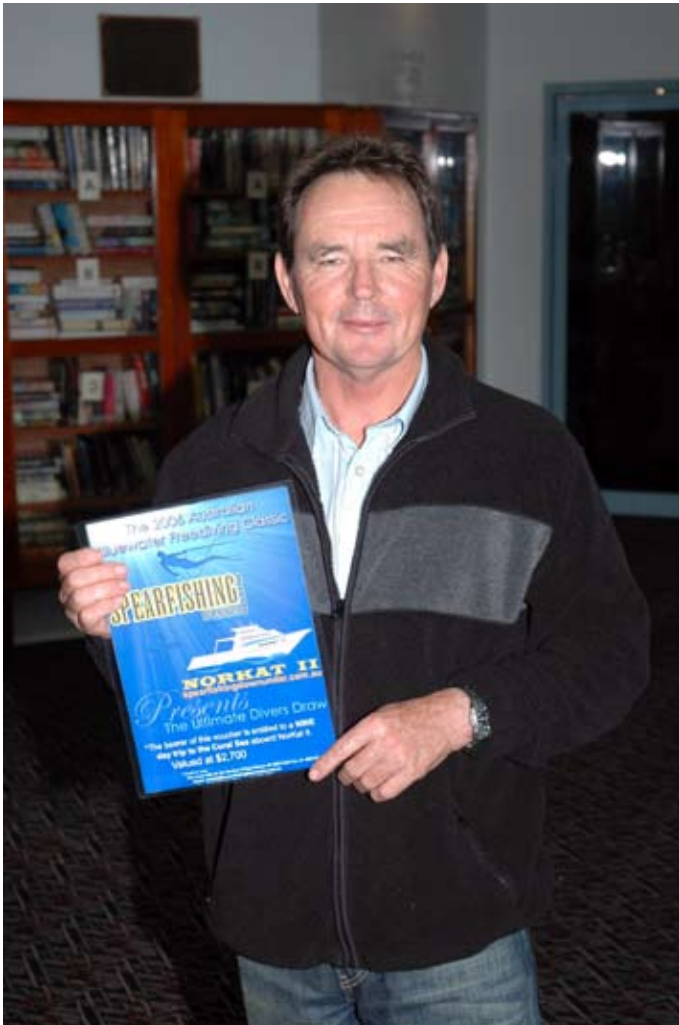
Adina watches, Adrenaline Spearfishing Supplies, Alec Howard trophies, Dive-R fins, Fathom Dive \ Extreme, Harbourside Chandlery, Land & Sea \ Undersea, , Liquid Focus, Lowrance, Neptune wetsuits, Norkat II, North Wall Surf and Souvenir, Omer Australia, Pelaj, Ray Whitton Paintings, Riffe Australia, Rob Allen, Seahornet, Seasuits Australia, Shark Shield, Sonar, Spearfishing Downunder, Stocks and Hogan, Stone Tool Designs, Superfrog (Edge guns), Topsub wetsuits, Triple-X wetsuits, Viking Kayaks (Skee Mullaway), Woolgoolga Jewellers.

A special mention to the NORKAT II and Spearfishing Downunder Magazine for their MASSIVE generosity, in supplying the prize for the Divers draw - a nine day Charter to the Coral Sea. For more information go to;

NORKAT II website:
www.norkat2.com.au

Spearfishing Downunder:
www.spearfishingdownunder.com.au

Next years event has been pencilled in for March 24th and 25th - put it in your diary as one not to miss!!



Winner of the NorKAt II Charter - Allan Errksson

The Sponsors

As always, an event of this size could not occur without the generous donations made by it's sponsors. With the unique nature of the Classic it has always attracted strong sponsorship, with most returning year after year. Again this year the support was fantastic and a huge thankyou must go to all of those organisations and individuals who donate to make the event what it is. A full list of sponsors is shown below, in no particular order:

Photogallery



Allan Forbes - Winner of the Largest Fish - 24.8kg Wahoo



Asher Landini - Winner Juniors



Scott Perkins - Winner Committee's Choice 6.85kg Snapper



Tony Heugh - Kingfish 15.1kg



Ray Powell - Another Sombo from the deep!



Geoff Flanagan -Great Wahoo - 23.5kg



The 3 Kings.....well maybe not!



Glen Griffiths - Winner Largest Cobia

Results - Over All

Place	Competitor Name	Division	Total Species	Total Weight	Bonus	TOTAL SCORE
1	POWELL, Ray	SENIOR	11	49.19	100	1691.9
2	FEATHERSTONE, John	SENIOR	8	36.7	100	1267
3	GEORGE, Glenn	SENIOR	8	34.08	100	1240.8
4	SMITH, Greg	VET	10	21.33	0	1213.3
5	COOKE, Alastair	SENIOR	8	29.22	50	1142.2
6	KIELLY, Kell	SENIOR	7	26.03	0	960.3
7	CHRISTIE, Paul	SENIOR	6	29.57	50	945.7
8	HEUGH, Tony	VET	5	34.17	100	941.7
9	VERCOE, Brett	VET	6	22.78	50	877.8
10	PAYNE, Tony	SENIOR	6	19.7	0	797
11	GEORGE, David	SENIOR	3	38.2	100	782
12	GLEN, Mick	SENIOR	6	12.5	0	725
13	FORBES, Allan	SENIOR	3	31.05	100	710.5
14	HOGAN, Chris	SENIOR	5	15.65	50	706.5
15	GRIFFITHS, Glen	INTERMEDIATE	5	18.38	0	683.8
16	BARRY, Steve	SENIOR	3	25.94	100	659.4
17	HASTE, Shayne	SENIOR	5	14.91	0	649.1
18	BUCCHOLZ, Luke	INTERMEDIATE	4	18.99	50	639.9
19	FLANAGAN, Geoffrey	SENIOR	2	33.11	100	631.1
20	SAKKER, James	SENIOR	3	19.34	50	543.4
21	LANDINI, Asher	JUNIOR	3	19.28	50	542.8
22	ERIKSSON, Allan	VET	3	17.8	50	528
23	TRIPPE, Simon	SENIOR	4	10.83	0	508.3
24	HACKETT, Brian	VET	4	9.92	0	499.2
25	HICKS, David	SENIOR	4	7.91	0	479.1
26	DUNCAN, Rees	SENIOR	4	6.22	0	462.2
27	BOYD, Steve	SENIOR	2	18.09	50	430.9
28	FINCH, Ron	SENIOR	2	17.43	50	424.3
29	FEATHERSTONE, Michael	SENIOR	3	11.76	0	417.6
30	CZISLOWSKI, Peter	VET	2	16.34	50	413.4
31	JONES, Paul	MASTER	2	14.92	50	399.2
32	MARSH, Donovan	JUNIOR	3	6.83	0	368.3
33	SPICER, Naomi	LADIES	3	6.05	0	360.5
34	KOSTER, Albert	SENIOR	3	4.92	0	349.2
35	SHAW, John	SENIOR	3	4.41	0	344.1
36	BARNETT, Craig	SENIOR	3	3.18	0	331.8
37	DAVISON, Michael	VET	1	16.9	50	319
38	FLINT, Michael	SENIOR	1	11.7	50	267
39	KEYS, Paul	SENIOR	1	11.7	50	267
40	BARRY, Mark	SENIOR	2	6.54	0	265.4
41	THORNYCROFT, Guy	SENIOR	2	6.14	0	261.4
42	ARMOUR, Neil	SENIOR	2	6.05	0	260.5
43	HILL, Chris	SENIOR	2	4.46	0	244.6
44	SPICER, Joshua	INTERMEDIATE	2	4.05	0	240.5
45	MARTIN, Shayne	SENIOR	2	3.52	0	235.2
46	MALONE, James	JUNIOR	2	2.36	0	223.6
47	SCOTT, Perkins	SENIOR	1	6.85	0	168.5
48	CRISMALE, Craig	SENIOR	1	3.15	0	131.5
49	NELSON-HAUR, Luke	SENIOR	1	2.33	0	123.3
50	O'BRIEN, Marcus	SENIOR	1	1.85	0	118.5
51	JONCKHEER, William	INTERMEDIATE	1	1.59	0	115.9
52	FITZGERALD, Jordan	JUNIOR	0	0	0	0
53	WRIGHT, Darcy	MASTER	0	0	0	0
54	SWAVLEY, Mark	SENIOR	0	0	0	0

Results - Categories

Juniors	Asher Landini	1st
	Donovan Marsh	2nd
	James Malone	3rd
Intermediates	Glen Griffiths	1st
	Luke Bucholz	2nd
	William Jonckheer	3rd
Seniors	Ray Powell	1st
	John Featherstone	2nd
	Glenn George	3rd
Veterans	Greg Smith	1st
	Tony Heugh	2nd
	Brett Vercoe	3rd
Masters	Paul Jones	1st
Ladies	Naomi Spicer	1st

Results - Largest of Species

<u>Largest Fish</u>	Weight (kg)	Name
Cobia	7.2	Glen Griffiths
Kingfish	16.9	Mick Davison
Mulloway	10.9	Kel Keilly
Samson	11.75	Ray Powell
Mackeral	13.9	David George
Tuna	5.61	Kel Keilly

Results - Largest Fish

Wahoo	24.8	Allan Forbes
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Results - Committees Choice

Snapper	6.85	Scott Perkins
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