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Your drag is your best friend

So what is a drag? Well, I'm sure most of you know it's the screw thingy at the front of your spinning reel, the star looking contraption on your baitcaster and the lever on your trolling reel but are you using it properly?

The number one reason people I spend a day on the water with lose fish revolves around their drag and the fact they don't know how to use it. 80% of anglers are happy to play about with herring, whiting or even small tailor that aren't going to do much to your 6kg line.

However, when they get the opportunity to fish for better fish, they often completely forget about the role the reel's drag system plays in helping you beat a big fish. How do you think you land a 200kg marlin on 24kg line? By using the drag to allow the fish to run when it wants to but with pressure applied smoothly to tire it out.

Your drag is basically there to stop your line breaking once a fish puts more pressure on the line than it can bear. The spool turns and gives the fish line until it decides to stop and, at this time, you can start to work it back to you.

On one trip, I was witness to some awesome tailor chopping into mullet and a friend (who shall remain nameless) hooked them and lost them all. Now, these fish were only 3kg and while being tough, they weren't more than his 6kg line could handle.

After the second bustoff I thought something was wrong and tried to pull some line from the reel. The spool might have well have been glued in place! As soon as the fish surges, the drag was too tight to allow the spool to give line smoothly and PING. Several good fish gone and unhappy boys on the beach.

I'm not going to bore you with how a drag works but I will explain how to set it correctly and this starts at choosing the correct line to start with. Too heavy and you won't be able to cast properly (and fish



Whack! The fish is on and gets an adrenaline surge. A well set drag means you're ready to tire the fish and get it back to the boat for ...

WILL be able to see it and shy away). Too light and you're going to bust off while casting or lose fish.

As a rule fish 6-10kg from a beach, 15-24kg for deep sea, 4-6kg in the rivers and so on. Then, every time you go fishing, get a small scale and hook it to the end of your line while a friend holds the rod as if they were fishing with it. Pull the scale and see what weight it pulls down to. This is your drag weight and it should be roughly 1/3 of the line's breaking strength for most situations.

This means 6kg line will be set to 2kg, 15kg to 5kg and so on. Sure, certain situations will require you to use more or even less pressure but only mess with the drag if it's caused you to lose a fish.

The first instinct of beginners is to screw down the drag when a fish runs. In my life

I've seen a lot of fish lost and I would estimate 50% are lost due to not letting a big fish run compared to 5% that ran them into trouble. If they touch a drag I've preset, I'll smack them across the hands with a ruler. SET IT AND DON'T TOUCH IT.

Use the force young Skywalker, the force of the drag and you will land bigger and better fish.



... a great photo of a great capture