Luke has been a Warrnambool (Vic) local for 13 years and although he has fished all over the country he loves nothing more than to fish close to home. In recent years the advances in boats and the recuperation of Southern Bluefin Tuna stocks have made this species a genuine target for recreational anglers. Luke has 5 years experience as a deck hand on tuna charter boats out of Portland and 8 years in the tackle industry – experience that enables him to share plenty of secrets for anyone interested in targeting SBT!

Luke’s Hot Tips For Southern Bluefin Tuna

- Trolling for southern bluefin tuna in Southwest Victoria can turn up anything from school fish starting at 10kg to barrels of well over 100kg. In recent years it’s become more common for fish to school relatively close to the coastline, making it possible for small boat owners to troll, cast to, or baitfish for tuna.

- Tuna move fast, so networking with people who are on the water regularly can help pinpoint where they are. Social media has helped people find the fish but can also be “old news”. There’s no substitute for putting in the hours to figure out the patterns.

- Sometimes when fish aren’t where you’d think they would be it can pay to drive around on the plane, covering water and watching for bait, birds, current lines, temperature gradients etc until you locate the fish.
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**Luke Southern Bluefin Tackle Recommendations**

- The tackle that is used depends on the target. 30 or 50 wide overhead game reels are preferred for the larger fish. A Shimano Talica 30 wide reel loaded with 24kg braid, a nylon topshot and couples with a matching rod is a good compromise. This outfit is not too heavy or bulky when school fish are present, but has the line capacity and drag required when a barrel takes the lure.

- For targeting school fish it’s possible to go much lighter. Standard snapper and gummy fishing rods with 20lb braid will do the job if you just take the time to play the fish out.

- When casting to school fish a 7-8’ rod with a light tip capable of casting small stickbaits and paired with a 4000-6000 size spin reel and 20lb braid is perfect.

- For leaders, Luke ties a 1-4m double in the mainline using a plait, a 150-300lb wind on leader is joined to the double using a cats paw. To the end of the wind on leader Luke crimps a swivel, followed by another short leader to the lure. If you’re not going to be changing lures too often the lure can be attached direct to the wind-on leader without the swivel and subsequent short leader.

- For school fish it’s ok to simply attach a 3-4m leader of 50lb direct to the braided mainline.

**Best Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishing Lures**

- **The Halco Laser Pro 190mm Double Deep** is a great hard bodied bibbed lure option for school tuna. It runs well at relatively fast speeds and stays about 1-2m below the surface and don’t blow out. The pilchard and king brown colours are Luke preference and he recommends replacing the trebles with in-line single hooks for safety when a fish is landed.

- The handmade **Tornado Lures T6** is a cup faced skirted trolling lure that runs well at various locations in the spread and takes plenty of barrel tuna. The redbait, evil and bleeding mackerel colours are Luke’s preference, but being handmade it’s possible to have whatever colour combinations you like.

- **110mm Hooker Sinking Stickbait** from Fish Inc is a great casting lure for schoolies. During the summer months if the fish aren’t actively feeding, make a long cast and retrieve with the typical GT long sweeps. After a few casts the fish will often start to follow and with successive casts they’ll get more eager until you start hooking fish.
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- **Bluewater Magazine** is the place to go if large, angry gamefish are on the top of your list. Packed with how-to articles, gear reviews and the latest game fishing news.

- **Bowdidge Marine Designs** has literally hundreds of boat plans available for anyone interested in making their own timber, plate or composite boat for 1/3 of the price of a bought boat. With forums and online support on tap you’ll never feel like you’re left alone to figure it out for yourself. Anyone can build a boat with the help of Bowdidge Marine Designs.

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- **Tackle Tactics.** Distributors of some of Australia’s finest fishing tackle, Tackle Tactics distribute the Okuma rods and reels, ZMan lures and Headlockz jig heads.

- **Spotters** have supported Luke and are his preference in polarised fishing eyewear.

- **Tornado Lures** make hand made trolling lures in Geelong, Australia at very reasonable prices. Their T6 is one of Luke’s preferred barrel tuna lures.