How Chicago Angler Conquered Giant Tuna

encounters style and swank in fishing terms. northern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota, for instance, the gullible vacationist is told that he has caught a great northern pike (with accent on great and northern), whereas he has caught only the old familiar friend of his boyhood, the pickerel (Esox lucius), which is no more northern than it is central, and which is found in virtually every type of fresh water in the whole central and eastern section of the country and in waters at a considerable distance to the south.

But, tuna or tunny, the great silvery-sided monsters that lured Howell and his party to Nova Scotian waters this summer are major league fish. Anyone who has caught one will vouch for that. Howell, who owns and operates a 160-foot twin Diesel engined yacht - the Thalia - and gives employment to a crew of twenty principally so that he can pursue his favorite sport of fishing, cruised to Liverpool in the summer of 1933 to investigate at first hand the reports of giant tuna in those waters. In his party then was his fishing captain, Charley Thompson, who, Howell says, knows more about deep-sea fishing than any other salt-water roamer alive today, and who, according to popular belief in fishing circles, actually can smell out tuna, tarpon, swordfish, and the like, just as a bird dog ocates a bevy of quail.

The 1933 Howell expedition to the waters around Liverpool was far from being highly successful. The fishermen of the party captured a few tuna, 20 pounds and under, but the big ones all got away, because of the fact that the reels employed were equipped with lether brakes, and such great force was used by the fishermen in applying those brakes to check the rushes of the fish that line after line was broken. Tactics employed on 140pound sailfish just wouldn't work on 800-pound and 900-pound tuna.

No More Breaking of Lines

This year it was different. Howell and Captain Charley knew exactly the nature of their quarry. When word reached them that the giant tuna were inshore they pointed the nose of the Thalia for Liverpool and took along reels no longer equipped with lether brakes.

"We'll fight these fish to the finish, if it takes a week to each one," said Captain Charley: "but we won't break any more lines."

The reels in question are huge affairs, about the size of a boy's toy drum. Each is equipped with a tension screw by which any amount of drag, up to a certain limit, can be applied to the spool of the reel. In fighting the giant tuna of Liverpool, Howell and his fishing captain decided to use a



"Five giant fish, including the record-breaking specimen, the 792-pounder, and a third weighing 780 pounds, caught . . . " (Thomas M. Howell with the second and third largest of the five tuna.)

at the mouth of the Mersey river, Captain Charley would never give up organized his affairs at once to foil the big fish that until the last ounce of foiled him the year before. He was informed that its strength was exthe tuna, as was their habit the previous year, were hausted. frequenting the inshore waters near the mouth of Man against fish, the the harbor, in which the herring fishermen were fisherman simply would setting their nets. The commercial fishermen, being hang on to his rod at of a deeply religious turn, refrained from hauling first. As the tuna their nets on Sundays. As a result, on Mondays would grow weaker in the nets contained a larger proportion of dead her- its struggles, the fishring than on any other day of the week. Since the erman would retrieve a

were a herring, attracted little interest among the heavyveight gluttons prowling about the fishermen's nets. All other days of the week were equally good for fishing, allowing, however, for wind and weather and

stiff affair of seasoned ; catch for himself a mess of)

WEIGHT WHERE CAUGHT DATE BY WHOM 956 lbs. Liverpool, Nova Scotia Aug. 17, 1934 Thomas M. Howell Swordfish (striped marlin) 1,040 lbs. Vairoa, Tahiti May 16, 1930 Zane Grey Swordfish (black marlin) 975 lbs. Bay of Islands, New Zealand Feb. 25, 1926 Capt. L. D. Mitchell Swordfish (broadbill) 673 lbs. Bay of Islands, New Zealand Jan. 9, 1928 H. White-Wickham 232 lbs. Panuco river, Mexico March, 1911 W. A. McLaren 798 lbs. Bay of Islands, New Zealand Jan. 23, 1931 H. White-Wickham 600 lbs. Fort Myers, Fla. May 2, 1897 E. vom Hofe 180 lbs. Perlas Island, Panama Aug 1, 1931 W. B. Grey 750 lbs. Miami, Fla. 1925 . Richard Tallman 515 lbs. Catalina Island, California 1916 Wallace Beery exception of that relative to Mr. Howell's tuna, all of the records above were supplied by Field & Stream.)

around the nets. Then one of the herring would All this and more were what made the thrills for

be selected for the hook and impaled upon its point. Howell in the catching of the five giant tuna off He did. On the morning of Aug. 17 he hooked and

Howell prefers to hook his bait through the head, Nova Scotia this summer. On the morning of Aug. | landed the record fish in 1 hour and 48 minutes.

with the point of the hook coming out through the . 6, just as the sun was climbing over the rim of the | There was nothing wrong with that fish, either.

belly. Other fishermen use that method or hook Atlantic away out at sea, Howell; a guest, Arthur It just did not fight as long as the 792-pounder,

the bait either simply through the head or through De Cordova of New York; Capt. Charley Thomp- though it was hooked in the mouth in a similar

With the baited hook in the water, the fisherman fishing boat. Picking up their two bushels of her- in hand after the first thirty minutes and cautiously

would have nothing much of interest to occupy his ring for bait, they tied up their launch to a net played the big fellow to the end. It was towed to

time until that crucial moment when some great buoy about two miles east of the anchored yacht the wharf of a fish shipping house and weighed by

prowling tuna would seize the herring. Then and close to the southern shore of the bay. It isn't tested scales—956 pounds of tuna. It was 10 feet 3

action! Action! The fishing captain would loose recorded that they had any premonition of what inches long and 7 feet 4 inches around at its

the mooring and cast off from the buoy. The was in store. They simply fished, with Howell heaviest point. The meat of the big tuna was given

launchman would start the launch's engine. Some- manipulating the rod. At 11 o'clock the fisherman to the townspeople; its skin was packed in a barrel

son, and a launchman left the yacht in their tiny fashion. Howell knew that he had his quarry well

grip. The guides of the which the tuna took the bait in his mouth. From but by pumping the rod upward and backward linen line right off the spool of the reel. The ing than the fishing rod, through which the that point on it was decidedly lively fishing. About and gaining a few feet of line through the use of tuna rushed to the surface for one mighty splash that is done by Howell line plays, are made of the bait itself. Howell, his fishing captain, a launch- the reel crank when lowering the rod after an up- after another; then down, down it went to the and others on the special hardened metal man, and sometimes a guest, would depart from the ward movement. On and on, through long minutes deep. Out in the open ocean the water was conwhich will not roughen Thalia, moored close in to the town of Liverpool, and therefore will not at daybreak. They would put in at some point would continue. Finally the fish would reach its hour without any signs of the fish weakening. fray the line. Howell turned the rod over to his guest. More The Pacific commerfound that agate guides herring nets, procure a couple of bushels of live the launch, its movements growing feebler with hours followed. Captain Charley took the rod. cial fishermen go after were not exactly suit- herring, and tie their launch to a buoy of a net. each succeeding moment. In the end the tuna Night came on, and with darkness the waves in-

tuna rushed and fought ermen angle in teams against the hook and of three for the fish line. At times the that finally end up in little party of four was little cans. Though drenched with spray. each of the three of a At other times the fishing team has a rod waves threatened to and each has a line, swamp the launch. there is only one hook Several times the fish- to a team, all three of ermen were at the the lines being atpoint of cutting the tached to that single line in order to escape hook. When a team into the bay to get gets a tuna on its hook away from the perils it simply - all three of the sea. But they men acting togetherhung on through the derricks the fish in. third day and through No sport about it at most of the third night | all; simply hard work. until 1 o'clock on the Heaving in fish all day morning of Aug. 9, long that weigh around when the huge fish a hundred pounds with the fighting heart | each is no light task was brought to gaff. even for the husky In all that time Cap- fishermen who earn tain Charley had only their bread from the ". owns and operates a 160-foot twin Diesel engined yacht—the Thalia—and gives employment to a crew of twenty principally so

became deeply interested in the subject of ornithology and took countless photographs of many varieties of the 85 different kinds of birds abounding there. The magnificent albatross.

and was thought at first to be a world's record-

oreaker, though later it was discovered that a reater tuna had been caught previously by a

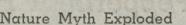
orting Britisher. The tuna was 9 feet 7 inches

ong and its girth measurement was 6 feet 7 inches.

Howell figured that he could land a bigger tuna

bird of ill fortune of "The Ancient Mariner" the delicate-hued flamin go, the rare flightless cormorants - all these and many others were recorded on his camera's "Attached to the end of the line by a brass swivel is a 20-foot twisted wire leader, or trace, which in turn is attached to a tempered steel giant land tortoises, and members of his crew got a lusty strike. Away and shipped to Miami, Fla., where a taxidermist, captured the equally big

and Howell could check the shores. Little if any commercial fishing for tuna for sailfish, and caught one only forty pounds before giving up to be hoisted above the deck of owned and operated first rush of his fish. is done on those shores of Nova Scotia, though out lighter than the world's record-breaker. In the the yacht, like a murderer on a gallows tree. several private yachts Quickly the launch passed along the Pacific coast the tuna is an important same waters he took on his line the 650-pound black. It was generally believed that a shark, no matter and has invested out of the bay into the open figure in the commercial fishing industry as well as marlin swordfish. The thousands of dollars in fishing equipment. Not chose to fish. Let it be recorded here, however,



tack a swordfish. On running their launch closer to the scene they discovered that the floundering swordfish was being torn to pieces by a giant shark Howell was eager to bait a hook and have it out with the shark, but as night was coming on, with the prospect of a long battle through the darkness with the monster—a prospect not relished by Howell because of the fact that he had his young son in the launch with him—he relinquished the job to

his fishing captain. A harpoon was rigged up and socked into the shark's insides. That took a lot of fight out of the creature immediately. The fishermen were not backward about putting plenty of pull on the harpoon rope. The shark was dragged, slashing its tail all the way, to the yacht, where its life was finished off. The swordfish also was towed to the yacht and hoisted by the side of its assassin, whose teeth had torn away great masses of flesh from its sides and tail. Another nature - faking myth exploded by the sight of those two giant carcasses swinging above the calm sea in the light of a dying tropic sun.

A fisherman who pursues his favorite sport sys tematically, as does Howell, learns a great deal about nature. Whether it is the man with the private yacht, who captures the gamey tuna and the fiercely fighting marlin, or the ordinary angler with the twenty-five-cent cane pole, who is content to yank goggle eyes (rock bass) out of the weed beds of some backwoods lake or stream, the final results sport through a wealth of relaxation, punctuated

jects over his desk in nis private office in thousands of feet of movies of his battles with these monsters of the tropical seas the quick eye of the camera catching clearly the leaps of the sailfish as it broke water time after time.

Among Sharks

pagos seas, teeming

with an astounding va-

that Howell encoun-

iety of marine life.

ered the shark as a

game fish. Big, wick-

his tiny fishing launch,

their dorsal fins pro-

their wide, ugly jaws,

It was in the Gala-

By direction of Howell, his yacht cruises up and down the Atlantic coast throughout the fishing seasons as they come in the calendar-in the north in the summer, in the south in the winter. The yacht stops here and there where this or that kind of fish is striking. The 22-foot launch is carried on the deck of the yacht. The captain of the yacht is boss face of the water and of the launch only when that last named craft is on the deck of the yacht, but he is not captain of the filled with chisellike launch when it is afloat on the important business teeth, snapping under of fishing. Capt. Charley Thompson is commander and navigator of the little fishing boat at all times times he baited a hook

aunch . . . (Jaws of tiger shark.)

for these monsters Howell attends to his business in Chicago a great At other times his fishpart of his time. When he figures that he can ing captain tossed a spend a few days or a few weeks on his yacht, he harpoon into the back catches a train and goes east to whatever port the of one or another that yacht at the time may be. His fishing captain approached the launch keeps him informed as to how the fish are biting. too closely. Whether If it is off Long Island that the Thalia is anchored hooked or harpooned, there is always the splendid chance of getting an- the shark always put other big broadbill swordfish; like the 405-pounder. up a desperate fight If it is off Florida, there

capturing the hard. fighting tarpon. But though Noval Scotia. Long Island, and Florida all are dear to the fisherman's heart of Thomas M. Howell, it was in the waters around those far - away Pacific islands, the Gala pagos, that he had hi

Studies Wild Life

On those islands twelve large ones and several hundred small ones, lying 500 miles west of Ecuador, Howell

Out, out ran the fish line, alerpool, whose inhabitants have a lot of civic pride. In the waters around "Whether hooked or harpooned, the shark always put up a desperate fight

(Battling a hooked shark in Galapagos waters.)

fish's sword. Howell, however, witnessed a tragedy on a \$500,000 tour around the world - mainly to a worm fisherman and he never learned the finer of the shark-infested seas that disproved the long- catch fish.

It was when he and his party were finishing up mont, and within easy distance of streams inhabited for a fish to bite. except possibly another swordfish, that would at- sport to popularize him with the people, that he brotherhood.

his most fun." (Howell with 140-pound sailfish.) idea was that the shark was afraid of the sword- long ago he set out with seven or eight companions that, though Coolidge remained to the end basically points of the sport, he was not a sham fisherman. accepted theory that sharks always steer clear of Of the group of men who take up fishing late in He actually learned to like it. In his neat business life, the late Calvin Coolidge, former President of suit and his white collar, and under the shade of a the United States, was an outstanding example. It -cowboy hat wished onto him by well - meaning is said of Coolidge that when he was a boy in Ver- friends, he would sit for hour after hour waiting

a day's fishing that they saw a swordfish flounder- by those beautiful and gamey little fish, the brook President, millionaire, common man—it is fishing ing helplessly on the surface of the sea. They trout, he showed little if any interest in fishing. It that puts them on the same level and gives them the could not fathom the mystery at first, because they was only after he became President, and it was imbelieved there was no creature in those waters, pressed upon him that he should take up some of all walks in life can meet on the equal plane of



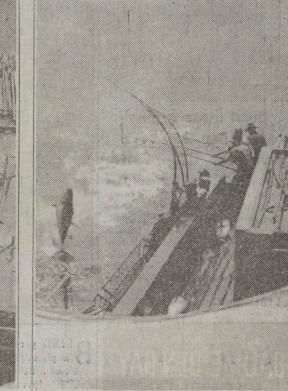


Another of the group Zane Grey, the novelist, who is known as the world's premier fisherman from the fact that he has traveled to almost every well known and many an obscure distant fishing ground in seeking rariety in the sport Grey has fished the and the Hawaiian waters, and has cast his line more than once in the clear wa-

ters of far-off South Sea islands. He has . in the waters around those far-away Pacific islands, the Galapagos . . . he had



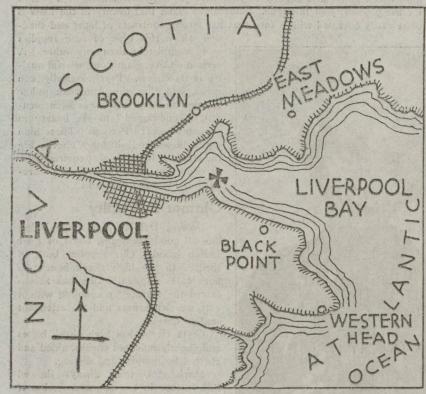
angle in teams of three for the fish that finally end up in little cans."



a team . . . all three men acting together-

Chicago Sunday Tribune

'The big fish . . . forage about the nets of the commercial fishermen placed along the shores of the bay . . (The best tuna fishing grounds as viewed from the deck of Howell's yacht.)



of the Mersey river . . . " (Cross indicates tuna fishing grounds.)

linen line, which has a dry test of 72 pounds on a ders of the fisherman harness extends to the reel. dead weight and which when wet will resist with- Several rods and reels, of course, are taken along out breaking about 30 per cent in excess of the in the boat, and in addition a gaff, plenty of rope. 72 pounds. Attached to the end of the line by a and plenty of food supplies and motor fuel. The brass swivel is a 20-foot twisted wire leader, or fishermen never know how long they will be at sea

Chicago Sunday Tribune * *

have his line in the water. The fishing boat ". . . Liverpool, located in the narrowest reach of Liverpool bay and at the mouth is a gasoline launch, 22 feet in length and with drag of 40 pounds, just sufficient to let the fish a beam of 7 feet. In its rear cockpit is located a know they were not free and intended in the end, swivel chair upon which the hero of the day sits to wear down the rushes of the monsters. with his rod in hand. The butt of the rod fits into The big tuna reel carries 600 yards of 36-thread a socket in the seat of the chair: From the shoul-

trace, which in turn is attached to a tempered steel when they set out to catch a giant tuna. The hook that is about four inches long and more than 62-hour stretch with the 792-pounder might have two and a half inches wide at the widest part of extended to twice that length of time, or more.

lines too quickly.

Fishing for the big

tuna of Nova Scotia as

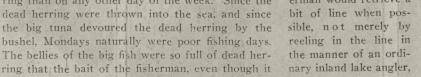
it is done by Howell is

That is, only one fish-

erman at a time must

solo performance.

When the Thalia this summer reached Liverpool, The rod used with this equipment is a straight, located in the narrowest reach of Liverpool bay and



Black sea bass

the run of herring.

Up to a certain point the procedure of Howell and his fishing captain in going after a big tuna was not greatly unlike that employed by a humble -lake-fisherman in setting out to-

hickory weighing 26 - bluegills or wall - eyed pike. ounces. It has a single Fishing for the big tuna of grip, and the reel seat Liverpool bay was simply stillis located below the fishing up to that point at

one would sound the

signal horn on the

craft. The yacht, lying,

in the harbor off the

town and all prepared

for the warning signa

from the launch, would

have its propeller throb-

bing by the time the

anchor was weighed. I

would slip silently away

from the town to fol

low the launch, for no

one would know just

how far to sea the bat-

tle with the tuna would

take the little fishing

Fight to Finish

The tuna, which had

taken the bait in about

eight fathoms of water,

in nearly every case

would go for the open

ing for deep water as

sea, most likely sound-

it rushed away from

the launch. The launch.

with its engine running

would attempt to keep

up with the rush of the

fish, but in most cases

for the first fifteen or

thirty minutes actually

would be dragged along

by the frantic tuna.

Usually the first rush

of the hooked fish

would be the worst.

But always, always tug-

ging on the line until

the end, the creature

able for his type of These herring, unimposing and unromantic little would be dead, or nearly dead. As it would float creased in height. deep - sea fishing, be- fellows of about three-quarters of a pound each, helplessly beside the launch, the fishing captain Through that first night the fishermen took turns They fish from the cause they had a ten- could serve no nobler purpose in the world than as would gaff it to hold it securely until a rope could with the rod. The next day it was the same, with decks of steamers or dency to wear away his bait for the mighty tuna. Tossed into the water be fastened around its tail. Then the elated fishermen the sea seemingly growing heavier all the time. All other sizable craft that

Salt Water Rod and Reel Records

rushed the tuna. Captain supplied with a complete set of measurements of sea turtles that lay their Charley chopped the mooring the fish, is mounting the specimen. line in two and the launch was When the taxidermy assignment is finished the sand of the Galapagos free, its motor already firing. mounted tuna will be presented to the town of Livmost to its end before the in their giant tuna, but who prefer to fish for a some of the more relaunch could gain momentum living for the little herring that swarm about its mote islands he fished

hook . . . " (Hook, swivel, and 20-foot leader [coiled] are shown here actual size.)

sea, the Thalia trailing behind, being a game fish to with those on board viewing the Catalina Island the spectacle through glasses. sportsmen. Commer-The big fish sounded. More cial fishing for the than once it threatened to take tuna, however, is a all of the 600 yards of taut far different undertak-

about the launch, they attracted the tuna waiting would start for the yacht with their trophy in tow. that next day and all through the second night the are powered. The fish-

. . a 650-pound black marlin swordfish from the waters around the Galapagos Islands are relatively the same. The fisherman gets his in the Pacific . . . " (Taken off Tower Island, Galapagos archipelago.)

Sunday September 23, 1934