

Behemoth Blackfish

Daiwa congratulates teen angler for catching Rhode Island record blackfish

Cypress, CA (December 10, 2021) – When 17-year-old Paul Newman of New Milford, New Jersey, set the hook on a Rhode Island blackfish back on November 7th, he had no idea what a big deal a “typical” blackfish tap would turn out to be.

For the record, the huge white chin was caught on an 8’ custom rod matched to a size 300 conventional style reel spooled full of 30-lb. test Daiwa J-Braid x8 line (white). **It ate a white crab impaled on a SNAFU RIG.** The behemoth measured 33” long with a 23” girth.

“At first I thought the fish might be foul-hooked,” revealed Newman, “but then the rod tip began to bounce and I realized it was a real solid fish. Once the battle got going, it cut in some heavy head shakes and made several strong runs that took it from within yards of the boat all the way back to the rocky bottom in deep water. Fortunately, I was using Daiwa J-Braid x8, which is very strong and abrasion resistant. You really need to have the best line on your reel when fishing in the sticky places where double-digit bulldogs are a possibility.”

Newman and the entire crew were astounded by the behemoth’s size when it finally hit the deck of Captain Connor MacLeod’s Newport charter vessel, Tall Tailz. “It truly was the fish of a lifetime,” said MacLeod, who is no stranger to seeing huge tautog aboard his vessel. According to the captain, Newman played the trophy tog to perfection, taking his time and guiding it expertly into position for Markez Zalla, who booked the charter, to scoop it aboard while the skipper cleared tangled lines.

“It was immediately apparent that we might have a new state record when we decked that beast,” continued MacLeod. “Our hand-held scale put it over 21 pounds, so we decided to put the fish in a big tub of water to keep it alive for a possible release as we headed for the nearest certified scale. “I told the guys we would come back out after the official weigh-in and fill our limit, which we did.”

While the fish fought hard, Newman noted he couldn’t really tell the difference between the record-breaker and other double-digit tautog he’s decked over the years. “I knew it was big, but I figured it would weigh in the mid-teens,” he said. “I never even considered hooking into a 20-pounder.”

21.57 pounds, to be exact, according to the certified state scale at Stop and Shop in Middletown, RI, the closest official scale they could find. The previous Rhode Island blackfish state record weighed 21 pounds, 4 ounces and was decked by C.W. Sunquist way back in 1954. While the crew had hoped to release the big blackfish alive following weigh-in, the fish didn’t survive the journey, so Newman is planning to have it mounted.

MacLeod, a Daiwa pro-staffer, noted that all the blackfishing set-ups on his vessel feature Daiwa Saltist reels spooled with Daiwa braided lines.

“It’s hard to overrate the importance of having a top braided line when blackfishing, especially if you fish sticky areas with a lot of current or target big fish,” said Newman. “I love this line for serious bottom fishing. It lays flat on the spool and has a very small diameter so it gets down to the bottom easier with lighter weights. It’s also highly abrasion resistant – clearly superior to other braids I’ve used over the years. That’s crucial when you work the nasty bottom where the biggest bulldogs live.”

According to MacLeod, Newman also deserves a pat on the back for making an extra effort to set his team up with the best possible chance to connect with big fish. “The biggest blackfish here often favor white crabs,” noted the skipper, “but there weren’t any available locally for our trip. Paul drove two-and-a-half hours from his home to Atlantic City to pick up a bunch for his crew. That’s real dedication to the cause.”

No doubt Newman put himself and his rail mates in the best position to have a great charter, and his efforts haven’t gone unnoticed.

“It’s great to see that level of effort and fishing passion pay off in a state record catch,” said Marc Mills, Field Marketing Manager at Daiwa Corporation. “Congratulations to Paul Newman on a terrific catch, to Captain MacLeod for putting his fares in the right place at the right time, and the entire crew for a job well done. We’re thrilled with the great reception our J-Braid lines are receiving, and that serious anglers like Paul and Capt. MacLeod are making Daiwa braids their top choice. We couldn’t be prouder than to see these lines put to such good use.”





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