

OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

~ It's Your Own Damn Fault ~

As a rule, I'm pretty good at finding the fish. In years past, I would target Reds, Snook and Trout. They were the ingredients for the trifecta – The Slam. That was my personal goal for the day. And to my own standards, they all had to be slot fish caught on jigs – no babies. Occasionally, I would buy some shrimp and head for the docks in search of some “doormat” sized Sheepshead. A neighbor across the canal whose wife needed seafood in her diet (or so he said) loved the Sheepies; so, on my way in for the day I would text him if I had been successful. He'd have a bucket waiting for me on his dock and he'd clean them at his table. Other than that, I really didn't set out to catch anything else. Oh, I'd get some Spanish Mackerel, Blues, and Flounder in the mix; but, they were always a welcomed surprise.

With all the above being said, I discovered Pompano a few years ago by accident. Normally, you'd see me out in the flats or around the Mangroves. I didn't fish the deeper water of the Intracoastal for I just assumed the fish were on the grass. After all, that's where the bait lived. No so, Grasshopper. On the way in one day, I drifted the channel casting into the flats with a paddle tail and caught a Pompano. I repeated the drift again with the same result. It was so much fun. They fought like nothing I'd ever hooked. I started rigging with a Silly Willy Pompano jig and a whole new world opened up overnight. I was mesmerized and rarely left the deeper water in the channel when fishing in the future. These fish are a challenge for it takes patience, finesse, and concentration to not only find them, but to get them in the net. It's infectious.

Does it always work out? I wish. I discovered that the successes far outweigh the defeats. So, if you are fishing in my boat watching me land a Pompano and you can't hook one, *it's you own damn fault*. If you are only catching Catfish and Ladies, *it's your own damn fault*. I can tell you how to pack a little Mojo in your attitude and a little JuJu in your tackle box; but, if you aren't listening, *it's your own damn fault*. Do I personally have a 100% success rate? Not quite. If that was true, fishing would be boring and I'd be playing the lottery instead.

I get asked all the time if I'm a charter captain.

The answer is "No"; but, I did play one on TV.