

# **OFF THE DOCK**

**WITH D. A. MANN**

**~ Hit or Miss ~**

**5/28/25**

To say that inshore fishing has been inconsistent would be the understatement of the year. On Tuesday, I thought that things had moved in the direction of getting back to a resemblance of *normal*. I caught 2 Pompano around Snake Island and some Trout in Blackburn Bay. I tried drifting the Intracoastal for Pompano as I have done a thousand times before but, only caught Sail Cats – in the 8-10 pound range. The encouraging part, though, was what I was catching in between. Grunts, Pins, Flounder, Lizards, Sea Robins, and yes, even Ladies, were not plentiful; but present. I had not seen any of these in the week prior.

Three days later, none of the above. I did pull a Pompano by Snake and some slot Trout by the Gardens; but, nothing else. I fished for 8 hours, only got 9 hits, put 3 fish on ice, and called it a day. Strange. I fished from Roberts Bay to the Blackburn Bridge. 9 hits. 500 casts, 2000 pops of the jig, and 9 hits. It's May. What the Hell is going on? For the entire day, I only saw one other inshore fisherman. The conditions are near perfect – weather and water. So, what gives?? I'm may be spoiled; but, the days of getting a "hit" on every cast are over. The days of limiting out in an hour and catching to release for the rest of the day are over. The days of understanding the fishing landscape have ended. Each day is different. Each day is a new day that requires re-discovery of old techniques, old attitudes, and old methods. You cannot form a game plan the night before you Asscrack. You need to learn to wing-it. Follow your instincts. It is OK to be impatient and

move, move, and move. Nothing is what it used to be. You are not going to be surprised and hook a Blue in the Bay. There are no Permit around the Mangroves in Blackburn, and there are no Spanish Macs running the Intracoastal. You will not see a dozen fishermen following several commercial guys on an incoming tide drifting the Slow Zone north of Albree Bridge with everyone hooking Pompano. When was the last time you even saw a commercial fisherman inshore? Think about it. When was the last time you saw more than a couple recreational fishermen in the bays? (Freedom Boat Clubbers anchored in the channel don't count).

Reds and Snook are plentiful if you know where to look. So are Trout. But where is everything else? I've been fishing these waters for over 50 years and I can tell you, it's different now. Climate change? Pollution? Hurricanes? Midnight Pass? Who the Hell knows. But one thing is certain; you need to try really hard to remember the "Good Ole Days" for that is all you are going to take to the grave. Amen, Brother.

Down a couple Tylenol, rub that sore shoulder, and get ready for tomorrow. Check your rods, make your sandwiches the night before, load your tackle, and get out at the Asscrack of dawn. Maybe tomorrow you'll find it. Maybe tomorrow, you'll limit-out. And maybe tomorrow you'll accept the challenge and come home a hero.

You'll go out – I know you will.

Because you just can't believe it's as bad as it is.