*How to... land a Great white shark*

By Matt Hayes, champion fisherman

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Jaws inspired me to go after a Great White. It had never been done before and when I phoned around to charter a boat people thought I was mad. Nobody wanted to help until eight years ago, when I came across a skipper called Rolf, a German-Australian guy, who had tried to catch a Great White but, having hooked one, was pulled into the sea still strapped to his fighting chair. He looked as though he was water-skiing, apparently, but survived and was willing to take me.

To catch any predator you have to go where it likes to eat. We went to Port Lincoln off the coast of Australia. It's on the way to the Antarctic and you could feel the temperature drop the further we went. We anchored up in about 40ft of water. After a nine-day wait I became aware of the shark before I saw it. I saw this fin coming towards me and knew instantly it was a Great White - it was much wider than anything I'd seen before and swam with a swagger. It was at the top of the food chain and knew it. I tried to shout to Rolf but couldn't. My voice froze. Then, after nibbling at the bait, it turned and swam off. I thought my chance was gone but then its grandmother returned. She was enormous, twice the size - about 15ft long and 1,500lbs. As Rolf started to drag the bait in, the shark followed and ended up biting into our boat. Its teeth sounded like nails scraping down a blackboard. It was unreal.

When it eventually took the bait, I wasn't sure if I could land it. The first thing that hit me was the shark's power. It used its size to fight deep and dirty. It turned into the toughest fight I've ever had. No one else is allowed to touch the equipment and if your rod even clips the side of the boat it's disqualified as a catch. Rolf, who had been keeping up with the shark well, told me there was no more he could do. I had to put it under pressure and hurt it, or it was over. We'd been going for over an hour and I was knackered, nearly in tears. I was on the verge of giving up when I felt its head give a few inches. I felt a huge rush of adrenaline and for the first time knew I was winning. That one second told me I could beat it. I piled on the pressure and after two exhausting hours landed it.

We pulled it to the side of the boat and tried to cut it free. One of my deck hands dropped the cutters overboard so I ended up having to do it with a hacksaw. I was leaning over the side of the boat with a couple of guys holding my legs. I was close enough to touch it. As I was cutting the cable I looked right into one of its eyes. It was about the size of the bottom of a coffee mug and jet black. It just sucks you in. There's no warmth in the eye of a Great White. Once I'd cut through the wire I watched it swim off. I was knackered but totally exhilarated.

1 For bait use a huge lump (around 16lbs) of tuna on a 2ft hook. Also leave a trail of fish oil and guts in sacks. The wire is very tough, like clutch cable.

2 Let your skipper follow the shark with the boat in reverse. I wasted a lot of energy being too eager. Let it waste energy first, then fight it.

3 Drive yourself backwards with your legs, then reel in the slack as you rock forwards. Do this until you land it. It could take hours, though.

4 Once caught, cut it loose - never try to unhook it. The hooks are made of galvanised iron so they rust quickly and don't harm the shark.

Article found at:  http://observer.guardian.co.uk/osm/story/0,,946776,00.html