

A Reel Big Deal

Delta Gear Vice President Scott Sakuta dishes on a murderous tarpon and how to find the perfect gear reel ratio

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One time not long ago, under the foreboding glow of moonlight, Scott Sakuta was almost murdered by a tarpon.

It was late at night and Sakuta was fishing with his father, Bob, and several other employees at Delta Gear, when they caught his would-be executioner and wrangled it into their boat. It looked like a normal tarpon — a sizeable, silvery *Megalops* — but it wasn't. It had hate in its little fishy heart.

As Sakuta positioned the 150-pound leviathan on the boat for revival before casting it back into the water, the tarpon tilted its head — mouth agape — right at him. This fish was on a scaly, slippery warpath, and poor Sakuta happened to be directly in its line of fire.

"I'm leaning over the boat, and the fish jumped and hit me right in the face — it was like being punched by a 150-pound punch," he says. "I saw stars and I almost went over the side of the boat. When I came back to work, I had a big black eye and a big scratch, because this tarpon had just punched me in the face."

The moral of the story: Forget the Kumite, fishing is northeastern Michigan's real bloodsport.

That's not to say that the idealistic image of fishing — lounging on a lawn chair at the edge of a serene lake, pole in one hand, lite beer in the other — is untrue. Some people *do* do that. Sakuta just isn't one of them.

"I've caught a lot of the saltwater trophy fish: blue marlin, sailfish, tarpon — the one I haven't had the opportunity to catch is the white marlin," Sakuta says. "My dad's an outdoorsman, so we fished for years and years together on the lakes and rivers in Michigan. Right around 2003 or 2004 we started to investigate some of the more exotic, warmer climate fish.

"At one point we considered possibly making reels — we have the machines and the gears, so we toyed with that for a while."

It's not quite as troublesome as a terrible tarpon but, according to Sakuta, finding the right gear ratio reel can be — pardon my pun — fishy business.

Sakuta says that choosing the right gear ratio reel is one of the more confusing aspects of fishing, but with some basic understanding of what the numbers really mean, it gets much easier to understand.

It's not something the average lawn chair fisherman contemplates while he's angling for bite-sized bluegill, but choosing a reel with the right gear ratio can often be the difference between a Friday night fish fry and eating dinner out of a paper sack.

Fishing website *Wired2Fish.com* outlined what you should be looking for in a 2013 article:

"The gear ratio of a reel is measured by how many times the spool turns for each single turn of the handle. For instance, if a reel has a gear ratio of 6.4:1, every time you turn the handle, the spool inside turns exactly 6.4 times.

"A lower gear ratio reel (5.1:1 through 5.4:1) is ideal for big baits that pull a lot, such as deep crankbaits. These reels have the highest amount

of torque, allowing you to put less effort into retrieving the bait and more energy towards finding the fish.

"Medium gear ratio reels (6.1:1 through 6.4:1) are great for multiple techniques and presentations, making them very popular among bass anglers. Whether you're plowing through nasty cover with a squarebill during the prespawn or bombing spinnerbaits on shallow flats in the fall, a medium gear ratio reel will do the job.

"If you're fishing any lure that you primarily work with your rod, a high gear ratio reel (7.1:1 through 8.1:1) is the way to go. You're often pulling the bait with your rod tip, but you need to have the ability to quickly take up your slack when you get a bite. A fast reel also helps when fighting a big bass—you need all the speed you can get in order to quickly pull it away from any line-fraying hazards."

Unfortunately for Sakuta, the "ideal" gear ratio reel couldn't save him from getting round-housed by a homicidal tarpon.

But then again, that fish probably would have made Jean-Claude Van Damme cry "matté."

(For more information on Delta Gear or Scott Sakuta's fishing adventures, check out the June 2015 issue of *Power Transmission Engineering* at www.powertransmission.com). 

