Sports Engineers Play

By: Ir. Yap Keam Min

Figure 1: Crystal clear water

In these times of sluggish construction prospects, it is interesting to investigate what engineers do for recreation. Remember the old saying "All work no play makes Jack a dull boy". Although my New Zealand partner has always reminded me that on the contrary "All play and no work makes you a poor boy."

Golf is perhaps the most popular game among engineers for recreation or networking. However golf is a mental game, very much involved with psychology and when one's mind is troubled, one really cannot play well. With the recent incredible fluctuating prices of construction raw materials especially cement and steel and the depressing state of the construction industry (reference: "The Malaysian Construction Industry" in JURUTERA October 2005), it is indeed a gargantuan task to play good golf.

The writer wishes to introduce Deep Sea fishing, and to be precise…. Go and catch a Marlin in the East Coast of Malaysia. Yes, we do have Marlins in the country and plenty too. However our Marlin weighs around 50 kg, the unofficial record is 110 kg. If one is lucky, one can certainly land at least six fishes in a day. So forget about the shortage of projects and don't worry about your CPD points, just go fishing. Malaysia is blessed with some of the best fishing grounds in the world and the place we are going to is Aur Island. It is part of a group of beautiful volcanic islands (inactive I hope) in the South China Sea approximately 70km off the port of Mersing, Johore. The most famous of these islands is Tioman which is about 2 hours away by boat.

The place is simply amazing….. quiet, peaceful and a great place to recharge before you go back to bending moments and shear forces. The water in these islands is crystal clear and having a dip in the cool water is out of this world. The best part of Aur is that it's still pretty much un-commercialised. The most popular tourist groups are divers and anglers.

Our trips normally consist of four days and three nights (believe me it's never enough), staying in kampong style chalets. One does not need air

Figure 2: Hurricane in the East Coast?

Figure 3: The ultimate in fishing; catch and release a Marlin

Figure 4: Ir. Yap KM (left) and Ir. Loo K.Y with a beautiful 11kg prime Tengirri

Figure 5: Ir. Chan H.M (left) and Ir. Yap K.M with a colourful dolphin fish, this type of fish is not common in our market

conditioning as the nights can be chilly. The chalets owners do the cooking (one can find the best curry in the world here) and obviously fish is the main dish. Fish straight from the sea is indeed wonderful to eat. Some of the common fish caught are Spanish mackerel (tengirri), snappers, groupers, barracudas and of course Marlins.

Marlin being the majestic fish we all know from Hemmingway's "The Old Man and the Sea", Marlin should be treated with respect. We must admit that we use to land them but nowadays we release them.

Marlins are fussy eaters and using live baits is the best way to hook them. Fishing for Marlin is like geotechnical engineering; it needs experience and feel. The beak of the big fish is tough and when the fish takes the bait, one has to slack the line for it to swallow otherwise it will not hook the fish. When we started to catch these great fish we used to use 80 lb lines. We were not too sure of what to expect and had to use a higher safety factor.

Nowadays, we hardly use more than 30 lb lines and again like foundation design; one may reduce the safety factor with experience.

Hooking a Marlin has always been considered the ultimate in angling. The greatest excitement of all is to hook, fight and release the great fish. Aur is not too far away and certainly one does not require a fat bank account to enjoy this paradise. ■