

QLD SPORTFISHERS

Australian National Sportfishing Association QLD



Ron Dempster Award Recipient 2022

Stephen Morgan

About Stephen Morgan

Born in 1972, Steve became a member of the Brunswick Valley SFC (northern NSW) as a Junior. He started contributing to South Queensland Fishing Monthly in 1987 and went on to become editor of Qld Fishing Monthly, NSW Fishing Monthly and Vic Fishing Monthly in 1993.

In 2000, Steve bought the Fishing Monthly magazine business, which at its peak employed 25 staff at its Shailer park office in Queensland.

Just prior to that, in 1999, Steve created the Australian Bass Tournaments (the very first ABT) in partnership with Steve Bain, before adding the Bream ABT in 2000 and the Barra ABT in 2005. Through these tournaments, Steve has proven his commitment to giving back to recreational fishing through several initiatives. These include,

- donations towards stocking groups to the tune of \$200,000; and
- giving away millions of dollars in cash and prizes, including 30 boats.

Following on from this work Steve, became the founder and part owner of the Australian Fishing Championships (AFC) TV series, which is currently in its 17th season.

Having a degree in marine science from UQ and QUT, Steve has served on the board of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF) and is a current board member of the Australian Fishing Tackle Association (AFTA).

As a competitive angler himself, Steve remains the highest money earner in Bream events nationwide, of which he has donated over \$100,000 back to the ABT. He is also the only angler to win an ABT Bream, Bass and Barra event.

Steve currently works in both the fishing and boating space where he specialises in boating video and written content, as well as live streaming from boats during fishing tournaments.

On behalf of QLD Sportfishers, it is with great pleasure that I honour Stephen Morgan's outstanding achievements and commitment to advancing recreational fishing by presenting him with the Ron Dempster award.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'a. Royle', is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Adam Royle
President
Qld Sportfishers

Stephen Morgan – Acceptance Speech

Apologies for not being able to attend and accept this award in person - logistics and family plans have conspired against me - but thank you for considering me for this award.

Having known and worked with Ron Dempster in my early years at Fishing Monthly Magazine (back then, South Queensland Fishing Monthly), I never thought that I would be in the position to receive the Ron Dempster award.

Ron would catch the train from Maryborough to Brisbane and always drop into our Sandgate Road office. He would sit down, accept a drink, and proceeded to teach me all of the things about the English language that I've gotten wrong in previous issues.

"You know why the magazine works, Steve?" he'd lecture across the editorial desk, "it's because Queenslanders are narrow minded, insular and parochial."

Of course, readers loved reading about their own backyard and their own fisheries. It's a formula that still works to this day.

In a way that only Ron could, he was turning perceived weaknesses into assets. Not everyone could circumnavigate a sandfly ridden mangrove island in the Great Sandy Straits and foresee its potential.

I loved the explanation of why the trees closest to the door of the humpy were the tallest.

"They're the closest to pee on and therefore they get the most nutrients, of course," he explained.

And the story withstood the harshest scientific rigour.

I had the pleasure of spending a few nights on Moonboom, with the company of Ron's grandson Tim Dempster. We shared time at university while studying our science degrees.

Through Tim, I understood how the patriarch was revered by his family, and more broadly his community and clubs - which included, of course ANSA.

I've only dabbled in clubs over the years. A bit of Brunswick Valley Sportsfishing Club action in the 1980s with the late Bruce Hibbard at the helm. A little bit of Brisbane Sportfishing Club in the 90s, where I was a little intimidated by star power collected in the hall at Chardon's Corner.

But a combination of these experiences and an addiction to fishing magazines started me on the pathway I have taken in life. I'm a marine scientist who hasn't worked a single day for Fisheries. I'm a publisher with nothing close to journalism training and now I'm a tournament promoter that made most of it up from scratch.

Fast forward to the 2020s and I can summarise what we do in a pretty simple statement - one pushed by Australian Bass Tournaments co-founder Steve Bain in the early 2000s.

Who Shares Wins.

I didn't agree with lots of things Steve did and said, but I did believe in this one.

We publish magazines to help people catch more and bigger fish.

We make content - from the AFC TV show to YouTube videos - to share the love of fishing.

And we run tournaments that randomly pair anglers without boats with boating anglers to accelerate that learning curve.

I think that all of these things have been good for my adopted industry.

We have one, simple brief across all of these media.

Make it repeatable for the consumer.

If the angler reading, listening, going or watching doesn't have some information to help them achieve a fishing experience that they aspire to, then I - and we - have failed.

That's about as simple as it needs to be. Sidestep the egos, the politics, the secrecy and help someone to achieve a fishing dream.

I'm not as erudite as RK Dempster, but I'm sure he'd have agreed with the direction.

Thank you.

Steve

