

*Interviewer:* What is your name?

*Doug Sokolowski:* My name is Doug Sokolowski.

*Interviewer:* What kind of boat do you own?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I have a twenty-three-foot Century center console.

*Interviewer:* Do you have any friends that go fishing with you?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, I do. I have a good friend of mine that goes fishing with me all the time, and my son, Eric, fishes with me as well.

*Interviewer:* Does anybody in your family fish?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Does Eric?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, he does.

*Interviewer:* Where do you fish at?

*Doug Sokolowski:* We fish in Tampa Bay, around the Skyway. We will also fish across the bay, and we will fish right here in Boca Ciega Bay and a little way off the Gulf or off of Egmont Key.

*Interviewer:* What do you catch in those areas?

*Doug Sokolowski:* We catch anything from redfish and snook and grouper and hogfish and sheepshead and trout.

*Interviewer:* Do you have a crazy story about fishing?

*Doug Sokolowski:* A crazy story about fishing? Well, before Eric was born, my wife and I were fishing for king mackerel out of a reef that's called the Mexican Pride. We were getting done fishing and putting all of our gear away, and I noticed a huge school of baitfish come leaping out of the water.

Between myself and this other boat, this was happening. All of a sudden, this kingfish comes jumping out of the water chomping its mouth chasing these baitfish. I was like, if I had known it was going to be that easy to catch a

kingfish today, I would have just set my boat up over there.

*Interviewer:* What really made you get interested in fishing?

*Doug Sokolowski:* You know, I don't know. That's a very good question. I grew up here in the St. Petersburg area. I always loved being on the water, and it's nice to go out there to be by yourself or be with your son or your best friend and just go fishing. It's relaxing, and you never know what you're going to catch. It's like Christmastime. You never know what's going to be in that package underneath the tree or what fish you're going to catch.

*Interviewer:* When you were a kid, did you have any family members that fished as a hobby or for sport?

*Doug Sokolowski:* No, not for sport. It was just basically a hobby. My dad just asked me one day if I wanted to go fishing, and so we bought some fishing rods and some tackle and went to the pier and started fishing.

*Interviewer:* When you fish, do you prefer to use fishing poles or nets?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Nowadays, I like to use a fishing rod. When I was younger, I used to use a cast net and catch mullet along the seawalls where my grandparents used to live, and that's basically it. I use a cast net nowadays to catch baitfish for when I go fishing.

*Interviewer:* What kinds of baitfish do you catch?

*Doug Sokolowski:* It depends. Sometimes we will catch some greenbacks or some herring, threadfin herring, and stuff like that, or finger mullet, depending on what we want to target.

*Interviewer:* What kind of baitfish do you use for certain kinds of fish?

*Doug Sokolowski:* It all depends. I have always heard that you want to match your bait to what you're catching. If we're going to go for snook, for instance, we might want to try to load up on greenbacks and try to go at that.

*Interviewer:* When you were younger, when you used the cast net to catch mullet, what would you use the mullet for?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Sometimes we would eat the mullet. The big thing is

smoking the mullet fillets. Most of the time, when I was younger, I would do it just to see what I could catch or how many mullet I could get. Also, you would have some other fish mixed in with the mullet, which was always neat.

*Interviewer:* By the bridges, what do you usually catch by like bridges and all that in Tampa Bay?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Usually, when I'm over by the Skyway, we'll catch grouper or mangrove snappers, most of the time. Also, when the tarpon are in season or here, we'll catch tarpon a lot down by the Skyway Bridge.

*Interviewer:* Do you prefer to fish in saltwater or freshwater?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I have mostly done saltwater fishing my whole life. I have done a little freshwater fishing, but, seeing that I live right here on the beach, I have more access to the saltwater.

*Interviewer:* What is the key for good fishing?

*Doug Sokolowski:* What is the key for good fishing? Good bait and a lot of patience.

*Interviewer:* You said you had been fishing since you were a child with your dad, and when did you start getting really serious into fishing?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I would have to say after I moved back to Florida, after I was done working in California. One of the first things I did when I moved back in 1994 was go out and buy a new fishing rod and reel and just started fishing.

*Interviewer:* When your son Eric was born, did that have any effect on your fishing hobby?

*Doug Sokolowski:* It did for a while, because he was little, and so I wanted to stay home and play with him. Then, probably when he was around three or four, I was like, you know, it's time to start teaching him how to fish. I bought him a little fishing rod and a little reel and took him off to the dock and said, here you go, kid, and let's go fish. I started showing him some little ins and outs, and he caught his first snook at the age of three, and I didn't catch my first snook until I was thirty years old, and so I was a little disappointed that he beat me to the punch.

*Interviewer:* What would you say some of the positives and negatives are of fishing as a hobby?

*Doug Sokolowski:* The negatives, I would say not having enough time to go out on the water during the week, because I have other things to do. The positives, I have time with my son or my daughter or my wife. We all go out and go fishing and have a good experience together. It's learning and teaching them about the fish that we catch and conservation and stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* Besides fishing, what other hobbies do you like to do?

*Doug Sokolowski:* What other hobbies do I like to do other than fishing? I like camping. I like being out in the woods. I go hunting when I'm allowed, because of work and my family. We will go to South Florida during deer season. When the weather cools down, we'll also go and hunt hogs.

*Interviewer:* Besides deer and hogs, what other animals do you hunt?

*Doug Sokolowski:* That's basically it, other than fishing. That's pretty much all.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever thought about getting a different boat than your Century?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, I have. I have thought about getting a little bit bigger boat, maybe a twenty-nine or a thirty-foot boat. That way, I could go a little further out into the Gulf and catch some other different species of fish.

*Interviewer:* If you did get a bigger boat, what kind of fish would you catch out there?

*Doug Sokolowski:* You know, it's hard to tell. I know, the further you go out, you have a chance of getting a dolphin, or mahi-mahi. Maybe some wahoo. I know the tuna come down through here every once in a while.

*Interviewer:* What kind of bait would you use for like the tuna and the mahi-mahi?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I would probably use something like maybe a blue runner or some bigger threadfin herring or something like that or

maybe ballyhoo.

*Interviewer:* What is the biggest fish you have ever caught?

*Doug Sokolowski:* The biggest fish would be probably a 250-pound yellowfin tuna. I caught that out of Venice, Louisiana, about two or three years ago.

*Interviewer:* Now, since you moved to Florida -- You said in 1994, correct?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I am originally from Florida. I just moved away.

*Interviewer:* When you moved back, did you notice any changes from when you were fishing as a kid, any increases or decreases in species or changes like that?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, I did. One of the very first things I noticed when I moved back to Florida was the water quality in Tampa Bay and in Boca Ciega Bay. When I was younger, the water was really murky, almost brown or black in color. When I moved back, I noticed that it was a lot cleaner. The water, you could see through it to a deeper depth, and I noticed there was a lot more abundance of certain game fish, like trout and redfish and snook, which I thought was just incredible.

*Interviewer:* When you came back, you definitely enjoyed the change?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Definitely. You can actually do a lot more sight fishing, where you can see the fish off in the distance, and then you can set your boat up or whatever to intercept the fish coming towards you, and it was really neat. Half the time, I would just sit there and watch the fish feeding, because it was pretty amazing to me.

*Interviewer:* Since you do it as a hobby, have you got a lot of friends of yours interested a lot more into fishing and helped them become a lot more experienced and make them really want to go out fishing?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Actually, my very good friend that I fish with, Michael, he used to be a fishing guide in South Carolina, and so I've been fishing a lot with him for about four years, and I've learned a lot from him about fishing and the types and whatnot, and it's become a lot more enjoyable.

*Interviewer:* When you fish, have you ever been on a really long fishing trip?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, when I was tuna fishing. We did a twenty-four-hour fishing trip out of Louisiana, and we didn't make it the twenty-four hours, because we hit our limit for yellowfin tuna at the twelve-hour mark, and so we just ended up going out and fishing for some grouper and for some blackfin tuna.

*Interviewer:* How many of the yellowfin tuna did you catch?

*Doug Sokolowski:* I don't recall what our limit was. I think we ended up with maybe ten yellowfin. There was four of us total on the boat, and so I think that's about how many.

*Interviewer:* When you catch the yellowfin, is it hard to reel them in?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, and they're a very fast fish. When they hit the line, they will just pull or take line off of your reel at the blink of an eye, and the 250-pound one, it took us about an hour-and-thirty minutes or so to get this thing to the boat. Every time we would get it close to the boat, it would see the boat and take off running again.

*Interviewer:* What is your favorite fishing technique?

*Doug Sokolowski:* My favorite fishing technique is when I bring my son on the boat and he catches all the fish. No, but my favorite technique is I like using a rod and reel and using live boat.

*Interviewer:* Do you like sight fishing, like you said?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Yes, I like that. It's really neat. You can learn a little bit about the fish that you're trying to pursue and learn its little ins-and-outs and how they behave. That way, it helps you set yourself up a little bit better.

*Interviewer:* For people that want to get into fishing, what would you recommend? What would you tell them of what they should do or how they start into it for fishing as a hobby? What would you tell them?

*Doug Sokolowski:* Go on out and try it. It's really fun. You don't need a boat. Just get a fishing license for a month or a day from the state

and get a decent fishing rod and reel and go out to one of the local piers and try it out that way.

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