



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A Newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

~Volume 13



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71st San Juan International Billfish Tournament ("IBT")

Story by Art McDonald

Year 71 of the IBT continued in the tradition began back in 1953 when a Club Nautico member, Chilo Bird, volunteered as the first chairperson. The early years saw the event as primarily an interclub tournament for the various fishing clubs on the island, but it was also among the first to invite international teams from the Anglers Club of New York and the Miami Beach Rod & Reel Club. All were eager to experience the thrill of catching blue marlin in a Caribbean paradise.

Photo: ***The halyard at Club Nautico.***

Photo Credit: E. Hipsley

The oldest consecutive-year saltwater tournament.

The IBT is the oldest consecutive year saltwater tournament in the world. This year's event started with registration on August 13 and concluded with an awards banquet on August 17. The IGFTO provided an all-time high of 34 observers to the tournament, including Bob Smith, Rick Alvarez, Todd Gettys, Ron Teke, Bruce Jones, Jim Sadler, Ed Hails, Rick Wesley, Louann Driver, Mike Cisneros, Sr., Mike Cisneros, Jr., Tom Word, Barbara Evans, David Cambron, Scott Hill, Rich Demaris, Keith Antell, Adriana Vale, Harold Roebuck, Marvin Badler, Tim Turnbull, Jonathan Mursic, Lisa Smith, Tony Lutz, Jorge Delgado Viger, Paul Finger, Jim Nicholson, Dave Maurer, Peter Sanchez, Ed Tapping, Cindy Pruett, and myself, Art McDonald. There were a total of 203 anglers fishing from 45 boats.

Weather was a concern for all.

This year the tournament started with many concerned about the weather in the Caribbean as a tropical depression developed, eventually becoming Tropical Storm Ernesto – and later, Hurricane Ernesto. Ernesto seemed to draw a bead on Puerto Rico the week before the tournament and continued its approach as the kickoff began on August 13. It turned out to be much concern about nothing as the storm lacked intensity as it approached Puerto Rico – but did dump a good amount of rainfall on the island.

Heavy rains caused flooding that compromised the fishing.

This proved to affect fishing as the heavy rains caused flooding in the riverbeds which eventually led to the sea, clouding the water and providing multiple hazards from floating debris (including complete trees). Several boats collided with debris resulting in damaged propellers! Tropical Storm Ernesto did not provide much in the way of clean ocean water needed for successful blue marlin fishing.

Thirty-four total releases.

Day one produced 16 releases (15 blue marlin + 1 sailfish) – not exactly setting the world on fire. Day two wasn't much better with 10 blue marlin releases, followed by a disappointing day three with only 8 releases (all blue marlin). Hanging in there was the Donna Lucy (58' F&S) who released a blue marlin each day – including an early fish on day 3 to take the overall, and final lead, based on time. All-in-all, a total of 34 releases (33 blue marlin and 1 sailfish) were recorded proving that, sometimes, Father Neptune plays a role in tournament fishing!

The disappointing fishing did not dampen the after-fishing enthusiasm. The tournament provided an active dock party on the first fishing evening, and a great "Platinum Party" on the second evening. The awards banquet was a gala event.

The majority of participants and observers departed on Sunday for home and bid San Juan and the IBT a fond farewell.



El Morro gathering for the tournament commencement.

Photo Credit: E. Hipsley

Bet You Didn't Know

Story by: Art McDonald



- Swordfish are commonly called "Broadbill" because their bill is much wider than other billfish appearing much more like a sword than the "rapier" look of other billfish. The edge of their bill is also sharp (gloves needed).

Photo Credit: Carey Chen

- Swordfish enjoy a worldwide population – they are not restricted to geographical areas.
- A swordfish is NOT a member of the marlin family (marlin are part of the Istiophoridae family) – they are a separate species whose scientific name is Xiphias and the only member of this family.
- Swordfish are highly nomadic, traveling both horizontally and vertically in search of their prey – they do not have an air bladder and can descend to great depths (recorded at over 2,200 meters (7,400 feet). it is not rare to see a swordfish "finning" on the surface during daylight hours, however for the most part they spend daylight hours in very deep water. They often rise to the surface at night. Swordfish are unusual in that they possess a specialized tissue behind their eyes that is full of mitochondria and produces heat. This adaptation protects their eyes and brain from the rapid temperature changes that occur when traveling between the deep ocean and surface and keeps them functioning at full capacity despite the frigid temperatures of the depths.
- Adult swordfish have an eyeball approximately 9-10 cm (3 ½ -4 inches in diameter), and its lens is approximately 2.6 cm (7/8 inch) in diameter. The human eye is only about 2.5 cm (2") in diameter. The swordfish has an eyeball twice the size of a comparable blue or black marlin.
- Swordfish have a specialized organ near the front of their head that produces unique hydrophobic oils. These oils are thought to form a highly hydrophobic layer over the skin that reduces drag during high-speed pursuits.

- Swordfish are scavengers whose diet includes bony fishes, crustaceans (shrimp, crabs, etc.), and cephalopods (squid, octopus, etc.) with squid being their primary diet. When threatened, squid emit a glow, which attracts swordfish. Anglers fishing for swordfish often affix a battery-powered light near their bait ("Pavlov Theory").
 - Maximum recorded speed is 64 kpm (40 mph) – not quite up to the speed of marlin and sailfish.
 - Like many billfish, swordfish produce huge number of tiny, larval offspring in the hopes that a tiny fraction will survive to adulthood. The reproductive strategy is known as R-Section, and large female swordfish can carry as many as 29,000,000 eggs at once. Swordfish live around nine years on average but can live as long as 25 years. They grow fast in the first year, grow slower as they age, and reach maturity after 4 years.
 - Rarely are swordfish seen in schools – they are considered a nomadic species.
 - Historically, fishing for swordfish consisted of baiting tailing fish on the surface as little was known about them. In the 1970's South Florida anglers experimented with fishing for swordfish at night. As the story goes, the local Cuban-Americans began deploying surface long-lines at night after running afoul of the government in their illegal pursuit of lobster in Bahamian waters (boats were confiscated). Fresh swordfish began appearing in local fish markets and the sport fishermen took notice by drift-fishing at night in the depths of the Gulf Stream. The early results were impressive, and the fish were fully mature. Swordfishing thrived from the outset however, as the American commercial long-liners arrived with their miles-long lines, the fishery was, literally decimated within 3 years. Very few swordfish were reported caught for the best part of 20+ years. It wasn't until 2003 that the Stanczyk family (Richard, Scott, and Nick) – owners of Bud & Mary's (Islamorada, FL), caught the first swordfish during daylight hours fishing the depths of the Gulf Stream. Using trial and error methods, they perfected the ability to fish the depths for swordfish despite the Gulf-Stream current (which runs north at an average of 4 mph) resulting in a new fishery, currently being practiced around the world.
 - The all-tackle IGFA record for a swordfish is 1,182 lbs. caught in Iquique, Chile in 1953. While swordfish are global, the areas around New Zealand hold several IGFA world records in various line classes.
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Member Profile - Derwood Roberts

Story by: Art McDonald

This issue we profile IGFTO member Derwood Roberts from Merritt Island, Florida. Fisherman, rod builder extraordinaire, and "adventurous" (his e-mail handle), Derwood is a true Floridian. Born in Orlando, he lived in Cocoa Beach until the first grade. Then the Roberts family moved to Merritt Island. He has never left, pretty much fishing ever since.

He tells a great story about when he was in grade school. He and his Dad went trolling offshore in their 18' fiberglass boat, powered by a single 100 hp outboard.

"Skiing" with Blue Marlin

The two of them were alone when they hooked a blue marlin double-header. Both were fishing barefoot and had just watered down the hot deck when the two fish struck. Derwood's fish was a "screamer" and towed him across the deck past his father (he likened it to skiing).

Dad had an angry blue marlin on his rod. Yet he managed to grab Derwood by the back of his shorts with his free hand and asked "Where ya going?" Derwood answered, "Guess South America." Both fish were greyhounding and heading south but both shook free – bummer! That was the day Derwood was hooked on fishing!

Dad's Charter Business

In 1974 his father started a charter boat service out of Port Canaveral with a 42' Matthews named *Sea Venture* – a double-planked mahogany hull with twin GM 471s. Over the next 35 years, he bought, fixed up, and repaired numerous boats used in his charter business. He built his 35' Delta from the bare hull. He named the boat *Adventurous* and fished Port Canaveral and the Abacos for kingfish, dolphin, wahoo, sailfish, and marlin.

On one trip, in 1987, Derwood was fishing out of Treasure Cay in the Bahamas with his Dad and Captain Chuck New. Chuck had to fly out on a family emergency, so the next day, like the old days, Derwood and his Dad fished alone. Derwood hooked a 74.5 lb. white marlin, a Treasure Cay record that stood for over 10 years.

An Impressive Career

After college, he had a great career. He worked for the *Lockheed Martin Premier Cruise Line* where he met his wife, Debbie. He also worked for *Coastal Tug & Barge*, *Power Line Components*, and *United Space Alliance*. He retired 3 years ago and embarked on, yet, another business venture. He began building custom fishing rods under the name *Adventurous Custom Rods*.

Rod building is an art. Derwood has refined his technique so much that he is one of seven instructors for *Mudhole Rod Building*, teaching the art of rod building at their home office in Oviedo, Florida. He travels across the U.S. teaching both basic and advanced rod building. He averages 2-3 classes a month, each of which lasts 2 or 3 days. He gets a great thrill when one of his customers

sends a picture of a trophy catch using one of his creations.

Dad and Grandad

He is also the proud father of a daughter and son. He has a granddaughter and grandson, and all enjoy time on the water and hanging out!

Derwood heard about the IGFA observer training class in Stuart, FL in 2015 and joined the IGFTO soon after. He has observed in Stuart, FL, St. Thomas USVI, Aruba, the Dominican Republic, San Juan, PR, and Costa Rica – which he says is his favorite. He enjoys fishing in different and exotic places. He loves meeting new people and learning new fishing techniques. He credits the IGFTO with enabling him to visit fishing venues he would be unable to afford if he were not a member.



L to R: Derwood Observing; Nice Bull Mahi Mahi; two healthy Red Snappers.

Photo credit: Various.

What's left for the rest of the year you ask?

El Salvador 30th Anniversary International Billfish Tournament; 5-8 November 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/ESIBT/>

Hollywood, FL Observer Training Course; 9 November 2024. Information and Sign up available here: <https://www.igfto.org/news/2/Observer-Training-Course-Schedule>

9th Annual Guatemala Billfish Invitational; 5-9 December, 2024. <https://pacificfinsresort.com/9th-annual-guatemala-billfish-invitational/>

Want More Information? Navigate to: [IGFTO](#), upcoming [OTCs](#), and [FAQs](#).

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Observing Today... Conserving for Tomorrow

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Observer Training Course Schedule

Thank You for your interest in becoming an IGFTO Observer. Click REGISTER to enroll.

Registration is OPEN unless otherwise indicated.

Hampton Inn & Suites Fort Lauderdale-Airport | 2500 Stirling Road, Hollywood, FL, 33020. | +1 954-922-0011 | 11.9.2024

Marina Pez Vela Quepos C.R. Training Room adjacent to the Ship's Store | 2.18.2025

Future classes to be announced

IGFTO News

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Future classes to be announced
[Details]

Date: Saturday November 9, 2024

Welcome Aboard!

Congratulations and Welcome Aboard to our most-recent Observers from the Ocean City, MD class held on August 25, 2024 on the heels of the Mid Atlantic Tournament. Observers are always welcome and encouraged to attend one of our courses as a refresher.

Randy	Bode	Ocean City	MD
Tammy	Bode	Ocean City	MD
Tim	Bunting	Berlin	MD
Melissa	Emmerich	Ocean City	MD
Tabitha	Howell	Berlin	MD
Kurt	Howell	Berlin	MD
Jennifer	Hybki	Berlin	MD
Mark	Janocha	Ocean City	MD
Greg	Lange	Annapolis	MD
Lisa	Montgomery	Forest Hill	MD
Mike	Robertson	Port Orange	FL

Jeff	Stine	Ocean City	MD
Robert	Wood	New Bloomfield	PA



Ocean City Maryland Observer Training Course Graduates and IGFTO Staff.
Photo Credit: Ocean City Marlin Club Staff

Around the Tournament Circuit



You never know who you'll run into on the tournament (trail) a.k.a. circuit. IGFTO President, Evan A. Hipsley, Jr. (center) is pictured with Dr. Jan McDowell, Research Professor at Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and Peter Chaibongsai, Director of Conservation Programs of The Billfish Foundation during The Mid Atlantic Tournament 2024 in Ocean City, MD. Evan had just left Puerto Rico a few days earlier where IGFTO participated in the 71st edition of Club Nautico de San Juan's International Billfish Tournament.

Photo Credit: Peter Chaibongsai



IGFTO President Evan Hipsley welcomes new Billfish Foundation specialist Racine Prinzo at the Mid-Atlantic Tournament in Ocean City, MD.

Photo Credit: Lynette Catha

Welcome Billfish Foundation Constituent Engagement Specialist - Racine Prinzo. A dedicated ocean advocate, Racine channels her passion into supporting the conservation of billfish species and supporting the anglers who share her love for them. She holds a Master's degree in Marine Biology and Ecology from the University of Miami where she researched the perspectives of speed restriction zones along the U.S. East Coast. racine_prinzo@billfish.org

Dues Renewal Campaign Kick Off

It's that time of year again Observers. IGFTO's renewal campaign launched on October 1st and will run through December 31, 2024. Look for your renewal eBlast. To keep up with increasing expenses, a slight increase has been added; your Board continually strives to keep costs down, however many

external factors beyond our control contributed to the decision. Thanks for your continued dedication to IGFTO and gamefish conservancy.

Have feedback or want to submit an article? Get in touch with our [webmaster](#).



Thanks for taking the time to catch up on our happenings during our "between tournaments" time of the year. As always, Tight lines and all the Best,



Evan A. Hipsley, Jr.

IGFTO President | Director | Webmaster

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