



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 8

Edition 3

Meet Julio Castaneda

By: Art McDonald



Meet Julio Castaneda – IGFTO member with the broadest smile you’ve seen in ages. Scientist, husband, father, captain, observer, conservationist... and, one heck of a great fisherman. He was born and raised in the fertile fishing grounds of Guatemala and developed the passion as a lad after visiting the fishing club, Club de Caza, Tiro y Pesca de Guatemala, where he saw an impressive mounted Tarpon. The wheels began to turn. Later, while fishing in the Rio San Juan, Nicaragua during a tournament, he bested a beast of a Tarpon to win both the Tournament and the award for

Welcome New Members

Congratulations and welcome to these new IGFTO members:

Lennie Coyner Charlottesville, VA
Michelle Maurer Delray Beach, FL
Roy Briggs Ellijay, GA
Mike Kenny Fort Lauderdale, FL
Bill Crawford Haines City, FL
Julio Colomba Hampton Bays, NY
Sergio Montealegre Herradura, CR
Bill Hardy Islamorada, FL
Douglas Lewis Islamorada, FL
Rod Fletcher Islamorada, FL
Rick Miller Jacksonville, FL
Minor Navarro Rojas Jaco, CR
Gail Allax Jensen Beach, FL
Tom Hassey Jupiter, FL
Chris Starling Lafayette, LA
Shelley Johnson Lake Wales, FL
Don Macaulay Lakewood Ranch, FL
Michael Mata Las Vegas, NV
Rick Smith Louisburg, NC
Wynn Smith Louisburg, NC
Scott Nagem Manassas, VA
JT Nightingale Nantucket, MA
Sandi Darling Naples, FL
James Eisenhower Norfolk, VA
Dave Perkins Panama City, FL
Oscar Gillen Playa Jaco, CR

the largest fish.

An Aquaculture Expert

Julio's family included many doctors and lawyers, but he was more drawn to nature. Attending the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, CEMA, he majored in aquaculture and graduated to become one of the first aquaculture professionals in the Central American Region. Aquaculture (sometimes known as aquafarming) is the controlled farming of various aquatic species to enhance their populations. Currently, Julio's operation is concentrating on marine shrimp, Tilapia, algae and bacterial culture. He is one of the most respected aquaculture experts in the hemisphere.

“Push the Drag to Sunset”

Julio's fishing adventures could fill a book, but one of his favorite stories entails a tournament fished out of the Tropic Star Lodge, in Pinas Bay, Panama. His team hooked a “monster” black marlin and while fighting the fish, the control cable broke. Now they had to land the fish on one engine – no fun, indeed. “Jury rigging” the transmission, while holding up the engine hatch cover, they were in jeopardy of fishing past the lines-out deadline. So the decision was made to “push the drag to sunset” – “it breaks or we win!” At the very last second, the swivel touched the rod-tip and they released a fish that yielded them a well-deserved trophy at the awards banquet.

An IGFTO Observer

Living in Guatemala and Nicaragua, Julio has had the opportunity to encounter countless billfish in his travels, which led him to join the IGFTO a few years ago. As an aquaculturist, he was drawn to the conservative ethic of IGFTO. As an IGFTO observer, he has attended the Los Suenos Signature Series, Flor de Cana tournaments, the Presidential Series in El Salvador, and the International in San Juan, PR. He has even organized local sportfishing tournaments.

IGFA Conservation Committee Member

Julio owns Captain JACC Charters in Nicaragua, a charter operation that caters to both inshore and offshore fishing. He is married to Carla Abarca and calls her “the one Sea Girl with the best fishing luck.” He is an IGFA member, Certified IGFA Captain-Guide, IGFA Observer and was recently appointed by IGFA President Nehl Horton to be a member of the new

Tara Orr Stuart, FL

Gina Teixeira Tavernier, FL

Jorge Rivera VA Beach, VA

Chris Schneider Virginia Beach, VA

Jim Sadler Virginia Beach, VA

Linda A Nolasco Virginia Beach, VA

Mark Wallace Virginia Beach, VA

Lisa Russo-Magaziner Wildwood Crest, NJ

Larry Regula Windsor, VA

David Walden Yorktown, VA

Help Fill Our Upcoming Observer Training Classes

The next course will be held in the Bel Aire Community Clubhouse at 5121 Casa Real Drive in Delray Beach, Florida. Scheduled for Saturday, January 25, 2020. The course runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. In addition to the above, a course will be held for the first time in Quepos, Costa Rica.

When attendees at an Observer Training Course are asked where they heard about the IGFTO, the number one response is from current members like you. Two new courses are coming up and we're looking to you to help spread the word.

We need to maintain our membership numbers to meet the growing demand for IGFTO Observers.
Thank you!

Observer Training Courses Schedule



IGFA Central American & Caribbean Regional Council of the Conservation Committee.

When your travels take you to one of the Pacific Tournaments, be sure and look up Julio – you can't miss him with his infectious smile!

Observer's Report from the 66th International Billfish Tournament

By: IGFTO Observer Greg Moore

15 August 2019 San Juan, Puerto Rico
N 18° 33.15 W 066° 17. 24

Left Long! Left Long! The captain shouted down from the bridge.

I saw it at the same time – a big dorsal fin slicing through a wave, then a tail. I yelled to the mate, "It's a blue!"

The angler grabbed the rod and climbed into the fighting chair and the blue was taking line. The captain was already backing down. Backing down hard, taking water in the cockpit. The blue surfaced abeam of us, tail-walking all lit up, blue and gold. He jumped four, five times, then grey-hounded across the water. Next, he was thrashing his sword in a circle, big shoulders out of the water. Then he was gone.

The captain kept backing, following the arch of the line as the angler tried to get line back on the reel. The blue had gone deep and the boat settled with the line down at a slight angle astern. The angler worked, pumping the blue up. It had been 10 minutes since hookup. It would be another 10 until I saw color coming up. I was to the right of the mate, looking over the side when we saw the double line coming up. The mate waited with arm outreached. Waited. Waited. Then grabbed the leader as soon as it was within his reach.

"Release," I yelled.

The mate wired up the blue and cut the leader short while the blue laid on its side next to the boat. The mate towed the blue by its bill a few yards, then pushed him away. With a flip of his tail, he was gone.

High fives all around, then the crew started resetting lines.

Saturday, January 25, 2020
Delray Beach, FL

Tuesday, February 18, 2020
Marina Pez Vela,
Quepos, Costa Rica

Clearance Sale!

Yeti IGFTO 26 oz Double Wall
Vacuum Insulated Bottle

Keeps cold cold and hot hot
Was \$40.00 For a limited time
now just \$29.95!

Save over \$10.00

Go to IGFTO.org and click on the
Ship's Store

Brand New Women's IGFTO Work Shirts!

Specially created for our better observers these shirts are cut to fit the fairer sex. Shirts are IGFTO blue with our logo and are in stock in Medium, Large, and Extra Large Sizes.

Available at the IGFTO Ship's Store

Upcoming tournaments

Every one of these tournaments promises to be an exciting event at a fantastic location. Don't wait until it's too late, sign up today!

For more information, log into the members section of IGFTO.ORG and navigate to the Tournaments and Tournament Information for Observers Sections. Email Steve Hargett: captsteve57@hotmail.com
Stuart Light Tackle Sailfish Tournament, Stuart, FL, December 11, 2019

Los Suenos Ladies Only Tournament, Los Suenos, Costa Rica, January 14, 2020

Observing on Short Notice

A few weeks earlier, my wife, Pat, and I received a call from Art McDonald, director of IGFTO. He needed two more observers on short notice to observe at the 66th International Billfish Tournament in San Juan. I told Art we're in.

Now, the anticipation of another trip, another adventure. We started with airline tickets, then the necessities. Observer shirts. Check. Sunglasses. Check. Visors, hats. Check. Sunscreen. Check. IGFTO logbooks. Check. Deck shoes, slickers. Check. Ready to go!

The Oldest Continuous Running Billfish Tournament

The International Billfish Tournament in Puerto Rico is the oldest continuous running billfish tournament in the world. It is run by Club Náutico de San Juan. The director, Salvador Egea Jr., and his staff saw to all the details of running an organized tournament that drew 45 boats from five countries. The tournament attracted dozens of sponsors and was attended by directors of the IGFA and the Billfish Foundation. Club Náutico's three-story building houses a lounge, banquet rooms, offices and ship's store adjacent to the 100-slip marina.

On the first day of fishing, all participating boats lined up from east to west in front of buoy #1 outside the El Morro fortress for the 45-boat shotgun start – an adventure in itself. The flare gun fired, all throttles forward and the race was on. Ten minutes later it was, "Lines In." The fishing grounds start within three miles of shore.

Blue Marlin Country

This is blue marlin country. No sailfish here. All of the IGFTO observers saw blue marlin releases during the three-day tournament. At the awards ceremony and banquet, Sal Egea reported 54 blue marlin and 2 white marlin released. Lady Abi, a 66-foot Viking, led the fleet with four blue marlin releases. Top angler was Charlie Berkley, who released three blue marlin aboard the 45-foot Hatteras Fishing Tales, the third-place boat finishing behind Pink Lady (on time).

The banquet, just like the beach party and the dock party complete with fireworks on the previous nights, was a grand event. Sal closed the proceedings with his

Los Suenos Signature Series
Billfish Tournament, Los Suenos,
Costa Rica.

Leg I, January 15-18, 2020
(Maximum Observer Number Met)

Leg II, February 26-29,
2020

Leg III, March 25-28,
2020
Pescadora Billfish Championship
Tournament, Quepos, Costa Rica,
February 20-22, 2020

Time to Renew Your IGFTO Membership!

It's that time of year. Go to IGFTO.org right now, log in, then click on "Members" and, under "Members" click on "Renew Membership". Choose "Member", "Submit", and follow the prompts. Your \$100 renewal fee is completely deductible because IGFTO is a tax-exempt 501c(3) non-profit corporation. Your membership is the only way to get news and invitations about the best gamefish tournaments on the planet!

thanks to all who attended and an invitation to attend the 67th edition.

The anticipation starts!



The team of IGFTO observers poses for a photo at the San Juan International Billfish Tournament. Left to Right: • Dave Perkins • Martin Bracamonte Dominguez • John Pugsley • Rick Alvarez • Jim Cox • Jim Sadler • Pat Moore • Greg Moore • Marvin Badler

We're here for you.

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MYSTERY MARLIN SPEARFISHES

Part 2

By Art McDonald

In our last **IGFTO Observer** we discussed the most elusive of all billfishes – the Spearfish. As you may recall, we identified 4 species of Spearfish – the **Shortbill Spearfish** (*Tetrapturus angustirostris*), the **Longbill Spearfish** (*Tetrapturus pfluegeri*), the **Mediterranean Spearfish** (*Tetrapturus belone*), and the **Roundscale Spearfish** (*Tetrapturus georgi*). The Roundscale

Spearfish (aka called a “Hatchet Marlin”) was discussed in that previous article – as it is oftentimes confused with an Atlantic White Marlin. Let’s take a look at “the other guys.”

Shortbill Spearfish are a species of marlin native to the Indian and Pacific oceans with occasional records from the Atlantic Ocean – it is probably the easiest of all the Spearfishes to identify as it’s bill is short (almost non-existent) – barely longer than its lower jaw, and the dorsal fin is shorter than that of any of the billfishes. They are called “chuckers” or “Hebi” in Hawaii which maintains one of the only areas in the world that a Spearfish can be predictably be caught – usually in the early spring. Sadly, they are considered excellent table fare and many are not released.



Shortbill Spearfish

Longbill Spearfish inhabit the northwest, central and south Atlantic and can be distinguished by its bill, which is about twice as long as it’s lower jaw. The specific name honors taxidermist Al Pflueger who identified it as a different species in the late 1950s. It is the largest of the Spearfish species with a maximum weight of 128 pounds (58 kg). It is distinguished by having 2 anal fins (the anus is well in front of the first anal fin), and an elongated dorsal fin that extends 2/3’s of its body length. The color is a dark blue shading to silvery, white underneath.



Longbill Spearfish

Mediterranean Spearfish are, as the name suggests, are generally are isolated limited to the Mediterranean Sea where it is and are particularly common around Italy and, it is documented, they often travel in pairs (unknown as to which is male/female like Dolphin (Mahi). It is reported there have been commercial catches in the Atlantic Ocean near Madiera (off Portugal) and possibly in other areas of the Atlantic Ocean (unconfirmed). Prime fishing times are August-November in the Mediterranean. Its body is moderately slender and its bill is fairly short with a dorsal fin that tapers to a point. It also has very short pectoral fins. As this species is predominately found in the Mediterranean it probably will be extremely rare for an IGFTO Observer to have to identify this little guy.



Mediterranean Spearfish

It is somewhat puzzling that the IGFA only recognizes the Shortbill (Pacific) and what they determine as an “Atlantic Spearfish” (*Tetrapturus SPP*) which is not an identified scientific name for any of the primary non-pacific Spearfishes (the Roundscale, Longbill or Mediterranean species). The rationale for this is unclear. Unless you are lurking the waters of Hawaii the chance of you encountering a Spearfish is probably limited to fishing in the western Atlantic, Caribbean, or Gulf of Mexico – and, most likely, your encounter will entail a Roundscale Spearfish – oftentimes mistaken for a White Marlin. Remember, the Roundscale has an anal opening 5” forward of the anal vent, and it does NOT have spots on its dorsal fin (White Marlin have spots). I’ll bet a bunch of us need this elusive critter to complete our Royal Slam... Hawaii, here we come (save one for me..... to complete my Royal Slam)!!!



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International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the “catch and release” of billfish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.