



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 9

Edition 2



IGFTO Waives 2021 Dues

Your 2020 membership is extended until December 31, 2021 at no cost to you!

Dear Fellow Observers,

As we approach the end of 2020, even under the current circumstances, I hope you have enjoyed some fishing time and have stayed healthy. October 1 st marks the beginning of the renewal process for IGFTO members for 2021 calendar year. All members in good standing will receive a renewal notice by email.

No Tournaments, No IGFTO dues!

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, tournament cancellations and postponements, observer opportunities were extremely limited for 2020. In fact, leg II of the Los Suenos Signature Billfish Series, was the last observer tournament of the year. The IGFTO Board of Directors feel strongly that members should not

That Girl... Marcy Costa

Story by Art McDonald

You've all seen the picture of the lady Observer calling out a release from the bridge of a sportfisherman – it's been in the magazines, both in featured articles, on our website, and announcements about upcoming IGFTO Observer Classes. Bet you didn't know that lady is not a model (though she looks like one). The picture hasn't been photo shopped, and is, in fact, our

very own IGFTO observer Marcy Costa. Let's meet Marcy!

At the age of five, Marcy began fishing the freshwater lakes in Alabama. Her father, an avid weekend "fisherman," was blessed with two girls and no boys, so Marcy became the tomboy who had the patience to sit for hours on their boat waiting for a bite. They enjoyed their time thoroughly and that passion and patience has carried her through a lifetime of love for the water and the sport of fishing.

Fishing Day and Night

During Marcy's high school years, her Dad and she began to learn how to fish the Gulf of Mexico. They would go to Perdido Key, Florida, and fish off the local piers. The running joke in her family was that when everyone was sitting on the beach hanging out, and they couldn't find her, they knew she was fishing on the pier! It wasn't long before her dad bought a boat. They would fish the red snapper bite during the day, and trout fish under the lights at night. It was then she knew she was "hooked!"

Her fishing career was put on hold as real life began – going to college and then entering into the field of pharmaceutical sales. The next chapters were marrying, and having two girls of her own. Like her father, husband Martin is an avid fisherman too (and also an IGFTO member). It was only natural that her girls have been raised on the water, fishing and diving every chance they get. Every year they would vacation in the Florida Keys during mini-Lobster season where

have to pay dues when there are no opportunities to observe in tournaments.

We Value Having You as a Member

We value your membership and want you to be in a position to continue as an IGFTO observer. We are still waiting on tournament information for 2021. As soon as travel restrictions are lifted, I fully expect international tournaments to open up and the demand for qualified observers such as yourself to return to full strength.

I want to thank everyone for your continued support of IGFTO and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in 2021.

Sincerely,
Steve Hargett

P.S. The IGFTO Board of Directors continues to meet virtually and the organization has ongoing operating expenses. Any contribution, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated to help defer these expenses and leave our organization in a position to pick up right where we left off.

You Make The Call
When the fish strikes

By Art McDonald

many family memories were made.

Fishing the Florida Keys

Five years ago the entire family was fortunate to move to the Florida Keys full time. It's been a life-changing experience to have the ocean in their backyard. The mahi fishing is incredible! She also really enjoys fishing for sailfish and swordfish, or deep dropping for tilefish (yummy goldens)! Each day the fishing is different because the Keys have such a diverse fish population. Outside of the Keys, Costa Rica has won her heart with sailfish and blue marlin – Cabo San Lucas is a close second. During her Pacific adventures, she has released multiple sailfish, blue and striped marlin – only, his majesty, the black marlin has eluded her, but you can bet there's one out there with her name on it!

A Volunteer for Fishing Tournaments

In addition to her love for the actual sport of fishing, Marcy has had the opportunity to serve on several committees helping to organize fishing tournaments in the Florida Keys. the Herman Lucerne Memorial Backcountry Championship, the Lucerne Tarpon Cup, and the All Tackle Bonefish and Permit Championship are several of the tournaments she worked behind the scenes. This experience has really made her appreciate the folks who run the tournaments participated in by IGFTO – she has been there. From dealing with sponsors,

You are observing in a tournament that allows the use of live bait. In the early morning hours of the tournament, the boat trolls by a FAD (Fish Attracting Device) with small feathers and captures several live “bullet bonitos” (about 12 inches long) and places them in tuna tubes to keep them alive.

These baits are then bridled and slow-trolled. There is one on each outrigger, and a third on the center outrigger. The rods for all three lines are placed in rod holders and the drag for each reel is set in strike position with a large loop of slack line trailing in the wake.

Fish On!

Suddenly, the captain calls out “there's a fish in the spread” and the left long outrigger goes down. The angler rushes to the rod but waits to pick it up until the slack in the line comes tight. The captain, seeing the line is tight, guns the engines forward in an effort to set the hook and take the fish out beyond the other lines so that it doesn't tangle with them when it runs. After the captain has set the hook and slowed the boat back to trolling speed, the angler removes the rod from the rod holder and fights the fish to a successful release.

Has an IGFA rule been violated?

Answer: Maybe

The IGFA requires the angler to remove the rod from the rod holder as quickly as possible – which is a call at the discretion of the observer. The circumstances as described here represent a grey area. In instances where the captain throttles the boat forward, it may not be

crews, weather, the accuracy of the scorecards, she understands the complexities of the tournament process. She feels having these experiences has given her a much better understanding of an observer's role in the process.

Thanks to her across-the-canal neighbor, Islamorada Captain and IGFTO member Lee Robinson, she learned about our organization. She took the Observer Training Course in February 2015, and several weeks later attended the third leg of the Los Suenos Triple Crown. Since then, she's been a Los Suenos regular, and also observed in the Flor de Cana Tournament in Nicaragua.

Marcy's fortunate to have had so many opportunities to fish all over the world, and grateful to her dad for showing her how to fish and to love the ocean. She knows "he is looking down on me with a big smile saying, "That's my girl!"

Eating Stone Crabs with Jimmy Buffet

By Art McDonald

Key West – Circa 1989 - One of the great things about the old Key West Blue Marlin Tournament was that it was usually held the second week in October. Why is that so important? October 15 is the opening of Stone Crab season.

possible for the angler to get to and pick up the rod immediately. When this is the case, the IGFA allows a "reasonable" amount of time for the angler to pick up the rod. The guiding principal is that the angler must pick up the rod as soon as it is possible to do so.

A World Record Rejected

A few years ago, the IGFA received an application for a world record. The application was accompanied by testimony that stated that, after the strike, the angler waited to pick up the rod for nearly a minute while the crew cleared the other lines out of the water. That application was rejected!

Costa Rica's Reopening

Costa Rica has opened regular travel for some States and continues to review conditions related to COVID-19 to reinstate tourism. The Ministry of Health expanded the list of states from which tourists can enter Costa Rica. As of October 1, U.S. citizen tourists who are residents of New York, New Jersey, Maine, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Michigan, Rhode Island, California, and Ohio are allowed to enter Costa Rica. As of October 15, U.S. citizen tourists who are residents of Florida, Georgia, and Texas will be allowed to enter Costa Rica. As of November 1, U.S. citizen

We fished the Tournament a number of years on my 46' Hatteras "Hooked Up" (I was the first one to have that name!). Along the years, I had met a local Key Wester who was a professional crab and lobster trapper – his name was Dennis but we knew him as Dee. I never did know his last name. Now, Dee was only around 5'9" and skinny as heck. But, to listen to him, he had been a defensive back for the Denver Broncos, he had raced cars in Indy, he had climbed the Matterhorn. In short (no pun intended), he was a show off! But he was always good for 10 lbs. of fresh stone crabs out of the cooker.

A Stone Crab Eating Ritual

Back then, he only charged us \$6.00 a pound (this is not a misprint). I would call Dee before we left Miami for the trip down to Key West and tell him when we would be arriving at Oceanside Marina. There he would be with a 10 lb. sack of fresh stonies for us. We had a ritual. I would make the mustard sauce, someone would melt the butter, a couple of guys would take the 151 Igloo full of beer out to the dock, and we'd open the salon doors and play Jimmy Buffett's "Songs You Know By Heart" loud enough so that just about everyone in the marina could hear.

I'd issue everyone a left-handed glove and a wrench. We'd sit there on the dock – breaking claws, drinking beer, telling jokes, adding loads of cholesterol to our bodies, chumming up tons of mangrove snappers with the discarded claws, and just acting like - well, fishermen! After all that carnage, we'd schlep the cooler back on

tourists from all 50 U.S. States and Washington D.C. will be allowed to enter Costa Rica. Tourists from these states – or from an authorized country, such as Canada – can fly from an authorized state through a non-authorized state (e.g. Florida, Texas) en route to Costa Rica. The maximum layover time in the non-authorized state is 18 hours, and the traveler cannot leave the airport. Tourists coming from anywhere but the United States must have remained in an authorized country for at least 14 days before travel.

U.S. citizens from authorized states wishing to enter Costa Rica must complete a digital epidemiological health pass (available at <https://salud.go.cr>), obtain a negative PCR-RT coronavirus test taken within 72 hours of their departure from the United States, and purchase travel insurance that covers accommodation in case of quarantine and medical expenses due to COVID-19 (available at <https://tiendasagikor.com/en>). U.S. tourists must also demonstrate, via a valid driver's license or State ID card, that they live in one of the authorized states. No forms of documentation establishing residency in these select states other than a valid driver's license or State ID card will be accepted. Accompanying minors are not required to have a driver's license.

The U.S. Embassy provides regular updates on travel to Costa Rica in regards to COVID-19 restrictions. To subscribe to these regular updates and other travel advisories visit www.step.state.gov to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment

the boat, hose off the dock, and retire to the bridge for an after-dinner “real drink” (like Scotch)! On that trip, my boat was at the very end of the dock – last slip.

Dee Invites a Friend

On the 2nd night of the Tournament, Dee asked “10 lbs. tomorrow night?” Of course, I said “yes!” He then said: “If I bring 15 lbs., and only charge you for 10, can I bring a friend?”

We said, “Sure – see you tomorrow night!” With that, he was off, and we ended up on the bridge sipping some more of the good stuff!

The next day we actually released a small Blue Marlin – way too tiny to consider weighing in (maybe 175 lbs.). When I was pulling into the slip at the marina, I saw Dee with his friend. A real puny guy, smaller than Dee. He couldn’t have been 5’6” or weighed more than 150 lbs. We were introduced to his bud, Jimbo, a local from Key West. “Ok, boys – let’s eat some claws,” and with that we jumped in! During the gluttonous feast, several folks wandered down the dock to say hello to Jimbo and Dee – we were all intrigued because, heretofore, the last couple of days, we had the end of the dock to ourselves.

At nine p.m. Dee and Jimbo were ready to leave. Dee said, “I have to pull traps tomorrow morning at 6:00 AM – do you want 10 lbs. tomorrow night.” “Of course” I said – Jimbo do you want to join us again?” “Nah, I have to go out of town” was the answer so we bid him a farewell, put the cooler back into the

Program (STEP) which is a service of the Bureau of Consular Affairs from the U.S. Department of State.

cockpit, hosed off the dock, and hopped up on the bridge for a nightcap.

Jimmy Who?

The next morning, as usual, I got up at five a.m. to do my bilge work, and, while the rest of the crew were still sleeping, went up to the tournament tent to get a cup of coffee. Along the way, several folks stopped me to say, “Geese – that was impressive, we don’t see him very often,” or, “he doesn’t come out much in public,” or “how long have you known him!”

At first, I was dumbfounded and asked, “Who are you talking about?” “Jimbo, Jimmy, you know - Jimmy Buffett. “Who?” “JIMMY BUFFETT?”

I bolted back to the boat and got everyone up....”Do you know who that was last night with Dee - Jimbo?” “That was Jimmy Buffett!” In our defense, Bubba, Jimmy’s nickname, had recently shaved his beard and, while I was certainly a fan, I had never seen him in concert and only had small cassettes of his music and they did not have very good photos of him.

A Grin a Mile Wide

On the way offshore to “Woods Wall”, the entire fleet was buzzing that Jimmy Buffett was on the Hooked Up last night. We were heroes – even though we never had a clue! When Dee arrived late in the afternoon, we jumped all over him. He had a grin a mile wide and said, “You guys had no idea - did you? Jimmy had a ball – nobody asked him to sing, nobody asked him for a

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photo, nobody asked for his autograph – he was one of the guys.” “Heck,” I said, bring him back – I want my picture with him, I want to hear him sing, I want his autograph!” Alas, he had left town.

I have said many a time, I need to go to a Buffett concert – get a stone crab and, while he’s on stage, run stage front – waive the claw, and yell “Jimbo – remember Key West, October, 1989?” How could he forget? And that, ladies and gentleman, is a true story!

Welcome Capt. Esteban Gutierrez to the Team



I want to welcome Captain Esteban Gutierrez as a new member of the IGFTO marketing team. Captain Gutierrez is a U.S Navy Veteran, and founder of the Blackbeard Fishing Company. His company offers all-

inclusive inshore and offshore adventures out of Southwest Florida and Costa Rica. Esteban holds an MBA and has an extensive background in marketing. He is fluent in English and Spanish and will be helpful to our organization as we expand our training program in Costa Rica.

Esteban has assumed responsibilities of publishing the IGFTO newsletter and maintaining the IGFTO social media presence. If you have any pictures, stories or suggestions associated with furthering the IGFTO brand, reach out to Esteban at his email address., Esteban.Gutierrez@IGFTO.org.

Please help me welcome Esteban,

Steve Hargett

Our Condolences to the Teke Family

The IGFTO Board of Directors would like to extend our sincerest condolences to longtime member Ron Teke and his family for the loss of his wife Tania. She was a true lifetime partner to her husband for 49 years; traveling and enjoying life's adventures. She loved fishing with Ron and family gatherings. All who knew her will miss Tania's radiance and love of life.

Please put Ron and his family in your prayers. If you would like to support a cause that was dear to Tania, please

make a donation to:

KCB Kids Fishing Derby
PO Box 510526
Key Colony Beach, Fl 33051

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.
