



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 9

Edition 4

A Message From Steve Hargett

As we come upon the holiday season, I wish to express my best wishes for the safety and health of you and your family. I value and appreciate your membership in the IGFTO.

Tournaments are Reopening for 2021

We should be encouraged that the end of this dangerous pandemic is nearing; vaccines are on the way. Major billfish tournaments such as Los Sueños and Pescadores are on again for this coming season and many of our members have signed up to observe.

Thank You for Voluntary Donations

All membership dues have been waived for 2021. To those of you who have made voluntary donations I thank you. Even when there are no tournaments, the IGFTO has ongoing operating expenses and your donations have been very helpful. To those of you who are considering making a donation please remember that they are tax deductible for 2020 if made before December

You Make The Call Assisting the Angler

By Art McDonald

So there you are – on the RIP in San Juan observing in the **International San Juan Billfish Tournament**. You have been assigned a boat with some real “macho” anglers. They have no intention of using a fighting chair to assist capturing their quarry. In fact, this sport fishing boat is equipped with only a rocket-launcher. There is no traditional fighting chair.

A “Jumbo” Takes the Bait

It is in the mid-morning when a jumbo Blue Marlin appears in the spread and attacks the port teaser. The Captain throws the switch on the teaser reel and draws it quickly toward the boat. The fish is all

31, 2020.

Please Help Us Find New Tournament Opportunities

I would also like to mention that the Board of Directors is always looking to add more tournaments to our schedule. If you are aware of a release tournament that currently does not use observers, please share that information with me or another board member. We have been successful in developing new tournament opportunities with those that have not used observers in the past.

Thank you for your membership and continued commitment

Steve Hargett
President

We're Back!

Tournaments are reopening. IGFTO is participating

Two of our most popular tournaments are on schedule for January through March of 2021. As of the first of November, 2020, Costa Rica has opened to all international travelers. The Los Sueños Eighth Annual Signature Triple Crown is inviting observers for its three leg series. Two calls for IGFTO observers have been sent for the following dates:

Leg I: January 20-23, 2021

Leg II: February 24-27, 2021

Leg III: March 17-20, 2021

Covid Safety a Priority in Los Sueños

over the teaser and spectacularly lit up. At the appropriate time, the assigned angler pitches a rigged mackerel, the Blue accommodates, and the fight is on.

Just Helping? Or Helping Fight the Fish!

This fish is a stubborn one, and after some initial jumps, she sounds. The fight becomes a “down & dirty” affair. Your intrepid angler gives it his all in a stand-up harness but then begins to tire. His fellow anglers shout words of encouragement but, as time passes, his arms and legs begin to tremble. One of the other anglers grabs his shoulders to steady him as the fight progresses and, fifteen minutes later, the fish is wired and released successfully.

Has an IGFA rule been violated?

Technically, there is nothing that prohibits someone from touching the angler. However, there is a fine line between touching an angler and providing assistance to the angler in fighting a fish. For example, if an angler were about to slip or fall because of rough seas and a crewman ever so briefly grabbed the angler by the shoulder to

The tournament will be respectful of Covid safety practices including observer check-in by email, and a mandatory virtual meeting by invitation on the Wednesday before the start of each Leg. To apply as an observer go to signaturetriplecrown.com/observers. Stay In Costa Rica is offering a 50% discount on Los Sueños condo rentals.

Lady Anglers Only in Pescadora

Also back on schedule is the Pescadora Billfish Championship held in Quepos, Costa Rica. This tournament is for women of all nationalities and experience and held at Marina Pez Vela. Participants can choose a mix of hook-and-hand and hook your own fishing. The tournament is scheduled to take place February 18-20, 2021. An IGFTO observers meeting is set for 5:00 pm on Thursday, February 18. Meetings, Docktail party, and Awards Dinner are currently planned to take place. Contact Steve Hargett (captsteve57@hotmail.com) to sign up.

More to Come

Your IGFTO Board of Directors is working hard to line up additional tournaments for 2021. Stay tuned.

Industry News

Observer Training Courses Announced

IGFTO has scheduled four Observer Training Courses (OTC) for 2021.

Dates and locations are:
February 27, 2021 Delray Beach, FL

steady him or her and immediately let go, IGFA would not consider that a breach of IGFA rules. On the other hand, if an angler was being held by the waist, harness, or shoulders so that he or she was relieved of some of the strain of fighting the fish, then that would be considered an infraction. IGFA rules require the angler to fight the fish alone and without assistance. Situations like this can represent a grey area and are judged by the IGFA on a case-by-case basis. Here are some photographs in which it appears obvious the anglers are being assisted in fighting the fish!



Caption: Affectionately hugging? Or breaking an IGFA rule?



Caption: Is this fellow steadying the

April 24, 2021 Delray Beach, FL
July 24, 2021 Virginia Beach, FL
November 13, 2021 Delray Beach, FL

Due to Covid-19 restrictions and CDC adherence, we recommend that prospective attendees not make travel arrangements until attendance has been positively confirmed. For more information go to www.IGFTO.org.

Sponsor an OTC

If you would like to discuss sponsoring a course in your area, email Steve Hargett at steve.hargett@igfto.org or call 404-386-3388.

NMFS Calls Orders Billfish Release

The National Marine Fisheries Service has determined that all Atlantic Blue Marlin, White Marlin, and Roundscale Spearfish must be released for the remainder of 2020. The NMFS has determined that the 250 limit for landings has been reached. Tournament directors are working with The Billfish Foundation, NMFS, and the International Game Fish Association to look at this data with the eye towards revisions in the future.



angler, or helping fight the fish?

Featured Member: Reese Bowles



Caption: Captain Reese Bowles: "Save the Bay: Practice Catch and Release"

Story by Art McDonald

Bet you didn't know we have a celebrity in our midst at IGFTO – meet Captain Reese Bowles.

Reese is a native of Virginia Beach, where he still resides. He grew up on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay working on head boats at Lynnhaven Inlet. When he was old enough to drive, he became a mate on charter boats at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. He earned his USCG Captain's license in 1986 and ran several offshore boats from Ocean City and

The Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel

The Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel (HMS-AP) met on December 7, 2020 to discuss three topics including:

1. Shark Management
2. Blue Marlin, White Marlin, and Roundscale Spearfish Management and,
3. HMS Electronic Technologies Plan.

Of specific interest to IGFTO was the Blue Marlin, White Marlin, and Roundscale Spearfish Management brief. Discussion topics included:

- *Marlin stock status
- *International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas Marlin management
- *Domestic Atlantic Billfish regulations
- *Recent Marlin harvest trends
- *Quarter 3 Billfish accounting update -2020, and
- *Management approaches, should they be needed.

For more information on the conservancy of Blue Marlin, White Marlin, and Roundscale Spearfish Management, navigate to the NOAA website at the following link and a slide presentation in .pdf format will open:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2020-12/2021%20HMS%20AP_Billfish%20Management_PUBLIC_final.pdf?null

Captain Bouncer Smith Retires

Legendary Captain, guide, angler and conservationist Bouncer Smith of South Florida has announced his retirement after 60 plus years

Virginia Beach. Along the way he graduated from Princess Anne High School, Tidewater Community College, and Old Dominion University – that was just the beginning.

A Radio Personality with a Capital P!

Reese is best known as an outdoor radio personality on local station AM850 from 5:00 AM to 7:00 AM every Saturday morning when his show Catchin' With Captain Reese airs. The show provides updates to area anglers on current fishing hot spots, conditions, and conservation regulations. Fish stories (some true – some not), and fun conversations with listeners add a folksy dimension to the Saturday morning program. At the conclusion of the show, Reese heads out on the water in his 32' Mirage sport fishing boat to give "On-The-Water Reports." These reports are scheduled on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and Sundays from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m..

Hosting a fishing radio show came easy to Reese, as his Dad, Joe Bowles, did on-the-water reports for WTAR during the late 1960's. He's also been trained to film, edit, and produce fishing videos and was a reporter for Fox 43

on the water. A leading billfish conservationist, Smith's influence both locally and globally will be felt for years. Best of luck in your retirement captain.



Captain Bouncer Smith. Photo courtesy of the Miami Herald.

television for a summer season where he created fishing forecasts and gave one-minute reports on location. He's been a guest on local television many times and featured in newspaper articles. He has traveled and researched fishing in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific areas as a representative of IGFTO.

Emcee, Weigh Master, and Award Winning Conservationist

Besides the radio show and water reports, he's been asked to emcee numerous fishing tournaments such as the Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament, Catchin' for Kids Tournament, Mid Atlantic Rockfish Shootout, Frostbite Challenge, and the Wine, Women and Fishing Tournament. He also participated as a guest at the Mid-Atlantic Boat Show each February. He also enjoyed being the weigh-master for the Virginia Beach Billfish Tournament.

He is a two-time recipient of the Dr. James Wright Conservation Award, and an active promoter for the Red, White, and Blue Kids Fishing Day at the Virginia Beach Police Training Center. He has also taught 5 sessions on conservation, tagging, and releasing, as well as fish

handling. He was the proud co-founder of the Catchin' For Kids, a yearly charitable fishing event that raises funds and toys for Toys For Tots.

Fishing Club Founder and Catch and Release Advocate

He is the founder and coordinator of the first Rod and Reel Club in Virginia Beach Public Schools and has been recognized by the Virginia Beach Superintendent of Public Schools for his work with the Salem Middle School Rod and Reel Club. He's been awarded the Virginia Beach Anglers Club Media Award, the Coastal Conservation Association Partner in Conservation Award, and the Virginia Beach Dr. Jim Wright's Memorial Conservation Award. During his radio shows, guest appearances, or when simply speaking to friends, he supports and promotes "Save The Bay: Practice Catch and Release." Reese is also an avid fisherman.

Now that he's joined forces with IGFTO, he sees it as a great opportunity to continue his catch and release mantra. He's an IGFTO veteran observer in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Los Sueños and Quepos Costa Rica. He wishes to

thank IGFTO for “making my dreams of travel and fishing through retirement a reality.”

**We're here for you.
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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.
