

The IGFTO Observer -
Newsletter

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Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A Newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 10

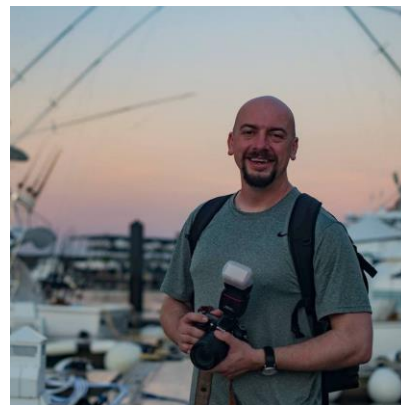
Edition 4

A Letter From The President: Your Membership Matters



On Friday, December 10, IGFTO President and Director Steve Hargett received a plaque on behalf of the IGFTO in recognition of our donation and support of Gray FishTag Research.

Featured Member: Pepper Ailor



Pepper Ailor, photo courtesy of Randall Ortega Chaves.

By Bob Stimolo

Photographing Tournaments and Caring for Our Veterans

If you have attended the Los Sueños Triple Crown Signature Billfish series of tournaments, you have seen Pepper Ailor with his camera taking pictures of just about everything. He has been a generous friend of the IGFTO. He allows us free use of his

Where did the year go? It seems like yesterday we were ringing in 2021 and hoping things would return to “normal”. Our early optimism was thwarted by lockdowns, changing restrictions, and revised schedules with respect to travel and gatherings.

In spite of all this, IGFTO had a good year! Our membership grew, and more of our members participated in tournaments. I am grateful to all of you for your continuing support of our mission: “*Observing Today... Conserving for Tomorrow*”.

Our Fisheries are Strong

Our industry and our fisheries are strong. The tournament circuit is seeing increases in both the number of boats and crews participating. Tournaments are recording solid numbers of billfish released. New tournaments are being planned. I expect this trend to continue.

Our Training Program is Growing

Our Observer Training Course (OTC) Program is doing well. Last year we relocated our Florida OTC to Ft. Lauderdale, FL, near the airport in order to make it more convenient for those flying in from around the country. We also conducted very successful programs in Virginia Beach and Costa Rica.

photographs in our articles, our advertising, and our website. He gives us free access to his archive of photos, which include numerous action shots of Marlin and Sailfish hook-ups, and both boats and crews in action. In addition, he takes a group photo of all the observers at each leg of the Los Sueños Triple Crown.

Pepper also took the signature photo of our Observer Training Course advertisement – the photo of Marcy Costa calling a release from the bridge. This photo has been seen by thousands of potential IGFTO members. Photography (especially good photography) is very expensive. It would be difficult to estimate the money he saves our organization.

Pepper lives in Herradura, Costa Rica with his wife Jordanna. He has worked for Freedom Alliance since 2006, and currently runs the Freedom Alliance Offshore Experience, a charitable program that involves offshore fishing and a series of talks for groups of combat veterans who have experienced war trauma.

Mission to the Maasai Mara National Reserve

Pepper is not an angler himself; but he has developed a love for fishing because of his work at Freedom

Currently we have four OTC programs scheduled for 2022 commencing in Stuart, FL on January 15 (sponsored by the Stuart Sailfish Club Foundation), Marina Pez Vela in Quepos, Costa Rica on February 15, at the Hampton Inn and Suites Stirling Road in Hollywood, FL, on April 16, and at The Shack in Virginia Beach, VA on July 30. Please encourage your fishing friends and family to attend one of these offerings. Our OTC Schedule can be found here: [OTC SCHEDULE](#), and registration can be completed here: [REGISTRATION](#).

More Members are Participating

I am also pleased to report that more of you are taking advantage of your membership and signing up to participate in upcoming tournaments. The demand for observers continues to exceed the supply for most tournaments.

Lastly, I want to thank you for your continued membership regardless of whether your circumstances allow you to participate in tournaments. Your membership is important to our organization, and it is because of members like yourself that we are able to carry out our mission to help preserve our precious billfish resource.

Alliance. He found that the people that donated money and services to support Alliance expeditions appreciated seeing his photos. He became serious about photography in 2013 before joining a short-term mission trip to Kenya with his then soon-to-be wife. He took a three-day course where his instructor challenged him to take all of his photographs with his camera in manual mode for the entire year. Ailor said, "It clicked for me." His instructor also taught him that it was important to specialize in a particular area of photography. He found his niche in outdoor photography.

While in Kenya, Pepper and Jordanna experienced the life of missionaries. They visited an internally displaced peoples camp, distributed medicine and water filters in slums, helped build a house, and visited orphanages. At the conclusion of the trip, they visited the Maasai Mara National Reserve, one of the largest animal reserves in Kenya. Pepper brought a camera and took photographs to record the experience. Three years later, as Program Director for the Freedom Alliance, he took six Marine Veterans to Kenya for a similar visit.

I wish you a happy and safe holiday season and a prosperous New Year. I look forward to seeing you in 2022.

Steve Hargett,
President and Director

P.S. Please consider making an additional donation before the year is out. Your donations are tax deductible. IGFTO is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

27th International El Salvador Billfish Tournament



By Ron Teke

In its 27th year, this tournament is a real sleeper among the Central American tournament circuit. Held November 9-12, 2021 the participants consisted of local boats and a few boats traveling from Guatemala. It has proven to be outstanding in the catch quality, hospitality, and friendliness of the organizers and hotel staff. No, it is not a five-star resort, but the hotel was well managed and the cold showers were actually refreshing.



Several Veterans hooked up on a Freedom Alliance Offshore Experience.

A Fortunate Intro to Los Sueños

Among the donors to the Freedom Alliance were Gerald and Virginia Lindholm. They owned the 55' Viking "Rebel" and their captain was Tony Carrizosa, currently the captain of "Team Galati". In 2013, the Lindholms invited Pepper and 17 veterans to Los Sueños to participate in an offshore fishing adventure and vacation event. Pepper was introduced to Los Sueños visionary and CEO Bill Royster and Tournament Director Ashley Bretecher. At the conclusion of the inaugural event, Pepper sent Ashley the photos he took of the event, and she liked what she saw. She invited him to photograph the Triple Crown in 2015, and he has been photographing the tournament for the last seven years.

The Freedom Alliance

Freedom Alliance was founded in 1990 by Oliver North to honor and encourage military service and promote a strong national

Twenty-seven boats were registered, but there were only enough observers for 15 of them. Each day, observers were placed on the top-performing boats. Opening day began with a shotgun start.

The boats had to leave for the fishing grounds by passing through a serious inlet with hazardous conditions. Consequently, the tournament schedule each year is timed to coincide with slack high tides. The billfish catch during the three days of fishing consisted of 488 Sailfish, 9 Blue Marlin and 2 Striped Marlin. Sailfish scored 100 points each and Marlin 500 points.

Daily Sailfish catches were prolific

Daily Sailfish catches were prolific. The vessels *Spindrift*, *The King and I*, and *Monique* turned in daily Sailfish releases of 36, 47, 51, and 44. Boats either went 50 miles trolling lures and teasers for Marlin, or stayed closer to shore using rigged ballyhoo and dredges for Sailfish. It was a close tournament to the end. *The King and I* won the overall tournament with both Marlin and Sailfish catches. *The King and I* won the Marlin event and *Spindrift* won the Sailfish event.

Slammer Dorado were found everywhere

defense. In the aftermath of the *USS COLE* bombing in 2000, they created a scholarship fund for the children of military personnel who have sacrificed life or limb in the service. To date it has distributed more than \$20 million in college scholarships for the children of military heroes.

Freedom Alliance maintains a number of programs that benefit our military and their families, including emergency grants for those wounded overseas, recreational programs for disabled veterans, mortgage-free home giveaways, and much more. Sponsors help give a tangible expression of appreciation to those who carry the burdens of war on our behalf.

In 2018, Pepper began working with Dr. Edward Tick, a psychotherapist who spent over 40 years working with veterans of this and previous generations. Together they developed a curriculum for the Offshore Experience to help combat veterans deal with the burdens they carry from war. Their program helped vets realize their experiences would not let them return to a “normal” civilian life. Instead, it focused on helping them recognize that they are warriors for life and developed techniques to help them find peace with life after war. One soldier stated, “After questioning myself for so many years and my

An unusual amount of large, slammer Dorado were found everywhere by most crews. Some catching as many as 20 per day. There was a “fun fish” category and most crews weighed Dorado in the 30-35 pound range. A few nice Yellowfin Tuna and a couple of Wahoo were also caught.

Famed Marine Artist Carey Chen was in attendance and completed two original paintings while at the event. He still managed to fish each day with different crews. What a talented, super guy Carey is. I got to spend Day 1 with him on Paco Saca’s boat. Paco was the event organizer.

The opening night party was great and as usual the Friday night Awards Banquet was spectacular ending with a fireworks display. The 2022 tournament will take place November 11-14.

You Make The Call

By Art McDonald

You have been assigned as an Observer on a relatively small boat. The seas off Cap Cana, Dominican Republic, are beginning to build as clouds gather and a storm seems imminent. Just as everyone is planning to move from the cockpit to the main cabin one of the mates yells “marlin” and one of the reels goes off. Suddenly the cockpit is filled

purpose in life post-military career, I truly had a breakthrough and an amazing experience...I am doing so much better because of what I got to experience there and the people I got to know.”

Always a Need for Donors

The Freedom Alliance Offshore Experience has evolved from an annual event to conducting monthly events at Los Sueños Marina. All expenses are covered by donations of money, fishing trips, captains, and bait. Generous donors provide these along with lodging, food, and travel support. The program is ongoing; there is always a need for additional donors.

If you would like to learn more about the Freedom Alliance or make a donation, email Pepper at pepper.ailor@freedomalliance.org or call him at 571-388-2026.

Industry News

Upcoming Observer Training Courses

January 15th, 2022 - Stuart Sailfish Club Tiki Hut, Stuart FL

with anglers yelling, reels cranking, teasers, and dredges coming aboard. One of the anglers grabs the hooked up rod and plants himself in the fighting chair. He starts furiously pumping the rod to take up the slack in the line. One of the mates, trying to clear the cockpit, ducks under the line but the angler is in the midst of pumping and the rod hits the mate on the shoulder. Has an IGFA rule just be violated?

The answer is NO. An individual who makes incidental contact with the rod in the midst of an angler fighting a fish is not a violation of IGFA rules unless that individual provides assistance to the angler in fighting the fish. If, for example, the mate was helping the angler to rest the rod on his shoulder in order to save his strength or rest, that would be a violation of the rules.

Welcome Our New Members

It was my great pleasure to congratulate nine new members on their successful completion of our Observer Training Course. The program took place near Ft. Lauderdale airport. A number of attendees signed up to observe at Los Sueños Leg I upon completion of the course. Congratulations to all, Steve Hargett, *President and Director*

Diana Davis, Juno Beach, FL
David Faulk, Baton Rouge, LA
Bob Gasaway, Lawrenceville, GA
Stephen Kohatsu, Long Beach, CA
Lynda Munshower, Key Largo, FL
Jonathan Mursic, Whitby, Canada
Ray Oliver, Seabrook, TX
Ray Sypher, Port St. Lucie, FL
Bo Bennet, Riggins, ID

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