



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A Newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

~Volume 12

Edition 3~

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70th International Billfish Tournament

San Juan, Puerto Rico

August 22-27, 2023

Story by: Art McDonald

The longest continually running saltwater tournament, the San Juan International Billfish Tournament ("IBT"), concluded after three fishing days on August 27, 2023. IGFTO provided 24 Observers to the tournament including Bob Smith, Barbara Evans, Rick Alvarez, Mike Cisneros, Adriana Vale, Alan Buchfuhrer, Joe Miller, Mike McCorkle, Cindy Pruett, Mark Sorel, Jeff Kudla, Ed Hall, John Barrineau, Bob Gordon, Lara Doran, Scott Smith, Todd Gettys, Bill Langan, Richard Tanner, Tom Word, David Cambron, Joe Ingram, Will Harrington, and Art McDonald.

25 Billfish Releases on Day 1. This is a tournament packed with international teams, including those that participated in the 10-Tournament Sportfishing Championship ("SFC"). A total of 59 boats participated with 252 anglers over a three-day fishing period. Things started off with a "bang" as all boats lined up just outside the main shipping channel for the famous "Shootout Start" with El Morro in the background. At 8:54 *Donna Lucy* reported a hook-up and quickly released a Blue

Marlin, and followed up with a Sailfish at 9:17 to take an early lead. As the day wore on, the 63' Hatteras, *Pillo* released three Blue Marlin to take the lead into the second day. A total of 26 billfish were released (25 Blues and a Sailfish) on day one – which, if duplicated over the next two days would have been an IBT record. Unfortunately, Father Neptune had his say with an overnight barometer drop that affected fishing for the next two days.

Day 2 produced only six releases, led by the 64' Spencer, *Quantified* with two releases. Day 3 showed much of the same with eight releases, including a 4th release for *Quantified* which gave them the overall, and final, lead!

A few words about the gang from *Quantified*. They hail from Port Aransas, Texas and competed in the Sportfishing Championship (“SFC”) in 2022 and, this year, 2023. Not only did they win the overall Championship in 2022 (\$1,000,000), they repeated as the SFC winner in 2023. In fact, they were so far ahead prior to the San Juan IBT, they didn't even have to participate to be declared the \$1,000,000 winner this year – but they made the 2,000 mile trip anyway. To top all that off – they WON the 70th IBT – kind of showing up the locals! Led by Captain Justin Drummond, these guys can fish.

IGFTO Observers were included in all activities which included a registration party, Flag Ceremony party, dock parties, a “Platinum Party” on Day two, and an elegant Awards Banquet on Saturday night. Spouses and guests were entertained in organized activities while their “other half” was on the water. All-in-all, the IBT continues to be a can't miss tournament.

See you in San Juan next year!



22 observers participated in the 70th San Juan International Billfish Tournament including IGFTO Vice President Art McDonald seated in the center next to Tournament Director Rick Alvarez.

Member Profile

Dewey Blaylock

Story by: Art McDonald

This issue we acknowledge one of our original IGFTO members, Dewey Blaylock, who's been a valuable contributor to our participation in just about every tournament we attend and a great ambassador of billfish release ethic.

As the son of a distinguished USAF fighter pilot, competition and travel became second nature to Dewey. His father was very outdoors-oriented – so, as a kid, he experienced fishing in Europe and across the southern States of America. Even when Dewey's Dad was on duty tours, both grandfathers competed to "capture" him for the weekend, fishing the lakes and bayous of his home state of Louisiana.

As he entered high school, and his Dad neared retirement, the family moved near Destin, FL where they bought a 30' Chris Craft to keep on the Florida Panhandle. They fished out of Destin every weekend they

weren't sanding, caulking, or painting on the bottom hull of that wonderful boat. That's when Dewey became infatuated with big game fishing (wahoo) and trolling. They never, officially, caught a billfish but did hook a few. At about the same time, Dad and Dewey took a couple of trips to Louisiana to meet up with friends and fish around the rigs, mostly for grouper and snapper during those years. As his education years wound down, Dewey married his wife, and best friend, Patti, and started raising his son, Justin, to enjoy fishing and bird hunting. Justin won his category (age 3-5) during a fishing competition in Baton Rouge, and two age categories above his – a born fisherman!

About this time Dewey's career kicked in. Traveling for business allowed him time in airport kiosks, where he always bought a good fishing magazine for both reading and learning. The family also traveled to an occasional fishing destination every year. When retirement rolled around, the family moved to Port St. Joe, FL, and Dewey's fishing passion could finally be fulfilled. He studied for, and obtained a full captain's license, did a little chartering, and fished (A LOT!). The waters of the Gulf of Mexico called him daily – so much so, he purchased a 2004 32' Regulator. They caught their fair share of grouper and snapper, but Dewey realized that trolling was his passion. He had all the old lures his dad had acquired during his duty in Hawaii, and some original lures from Destin. Wahoo and mahi were his main quarry.

Back in the early 2000s, Dewey and a buddy made a run to Bimini to taste the Bahamas fishing, then twice they went to Costa Rica. With the abundance of billfish in Costa Rica, he became completely hooked on billfish after catching sailfish in nearly every leader class and with multiple methods. He states, "I had to supply my habit and meet like-minded folks, so I took the original IGFA course early in 2004, and proceeded to sign up for every tournament for which observers were needed." He went to Venezuela, Guatemala, Turks and Caicos, St. Thomas USVI, Aruba, Stuart, FL, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Puerto Rico. His favorites: Venezuela for the variety and numbers of billfish, and Puerto Rico for the pageantry and dedication to billfish conservation. Leaving no stone unturned, he also traveled to fish: Alaska, Florida Keys, Bimini, Venice, LA, Canada Lakes, Cayman Islands, and even rigged gear to fish on the sailing trips around the Caribbean his wife loved so much. When the sails were up, his trolling rigs were attached to the stern. He also, finally, got to fish at the Tropic Star Lodge (Pinas Bay, Panama) with incredible results.

When Bob Malerba, John Treat, Terry O'Neill, and others, formed the IGFTO, he immediately signed up to become a member. He's proud of the success of the organization and the mission supporting conservation through release-only tournaments as well as leading efforts on education and political fronts.

Among the friends and contacts he has made as an IGFTO member, are many of the tournament directors, fishing club leaders, outstanding anglers and mates, and directors of big game fishing tournaments. In 2005, Dewey was invited to help with a video review for the Mobile Big Game Fishing Club in an effort to promote the catch and release of billfish. Over nearly 20 years, he has worked with leaders of numerous billfish tournaments to encourage releasing billfish. The release category in many tournaments now rivals the meat-fish category in prize and Calcutta monies. Additionally, the size of billfish that must be released in these tournaments has increased substantially – no more 350 lb. marlin on the docks!

In recent years, the number of fish caught AND released in these tournaments has been phenomenal. Newer technologies certainly help, but from Dewey's perspective, the ratio of fish released each year to boats fishing these tournaments has very much improved. Also improving are the release techniques resulting in the release of healthier billfish.

Tournament directors like Johnny and Kate Dorland, who strongly promote the Billfish Foundation, and clubs like the Mobile Big Game Fishing Club and the New Orleans Big Game Fishing Club – are all dedicated to the conservation of billfish species.

Dewey has appreciated the respect, awards, and recognition he has gotten from IGFTO supported tournaments, and from the many gulf-coast tournament operators and fishermen. Some of these tournaments are among the largest donors to the Billfish Foundation. He feels like the small role he has played has resulted in some added measure of billfish conservation.

As Dewey says: "Fishing is in my blood. Happiness is a planned fishing event!" I agree!



Dewey on duty as an observer.



Dewey with Mr. Wahoo.

Bet You Didn't Know
Story by: Art McDonald

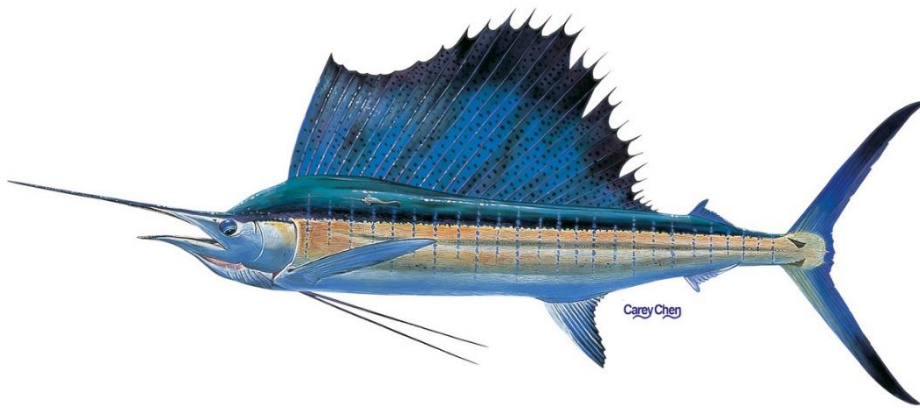


Image usage courtesy of Carey Chen

About Sailfish:

There are two species of sailfish. The species found in the Pacific Ocean is *Istiophorus*. The species found in the Atlantic is *Istiophorus Platypterus*. It is believed that they are the same fish, but their average size differs. Pacific sailfish are larger than the Atlantic by about 45%. Scientists are not certain why this is, but they suspect it is related to the oxygen content in the water.

The largest Atlantic sailfish caught weighed 142 lbs. according to the records of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA). The largest Pacific Sailfish recorded weighed 221 lbs. All Atlantic sailfish records on conventional line classes were caught off the coast of Africa. Sample seawater oxygen levels are much higher in this area than on the western edges of the Atlantic Ocean and correspond with samples taken from the Pacific Ocean. A recent study of data from the Japanese longline fishery provided evidence that eastern Atlantic specimens can attain much larger sizes than previously recorded.

Sailfish are sometimes referred to as "Snoots" because of their long bill. They often raise their dorsal fin when they are feeding in a school of baitfish. Groups of sailfish that are congregated together are often called Pods.

Over 100 sailfish can gang up on schools of baitfish during epic herding and hunting events (I have seen this often in Isla Mujeres, Mexico). During these hunts, the sail-like dorsal fins are used to herd the fish into a ball. Individual hunters will change color to indicate when they are going in for a kill, helping to prevent unwanted injuries within the pod.

Sailfish are reported to be the fastest swimming fish in the sea with estimated speeds approaching 70 mph (although there is some controversy about this).

Sailfish can have a life span is 13-15 years, but the average is 4-5 years. Yours truly captured an Atlantic sailfish off Key Biscayne, Florida on April 17, 1996. It had been tagged on February 13, 1984 off Delray Beach, Florida. It survived for 4,416 days – over 12 years! Female sailfish can lay up to 4,500,000 eggs in one spawning. Eggs hatch within 36 hours. Sailfish grow to 5 feet in their first year.

Sailfish broadcast their moods through changes in skin color that is controlled by their nervous system. They can also change to copper/bronze, neon blue, and purplish tints on their skin when they are hunting food, excited, or tired. Exactly why they change is still debated by experts, but most agree that it is a physiological change, similar to how a human's skin can become pink when embarrassed.

White Shark Satellite Tag

Story by: Roxanne Wilmer
Gray FishTag Research

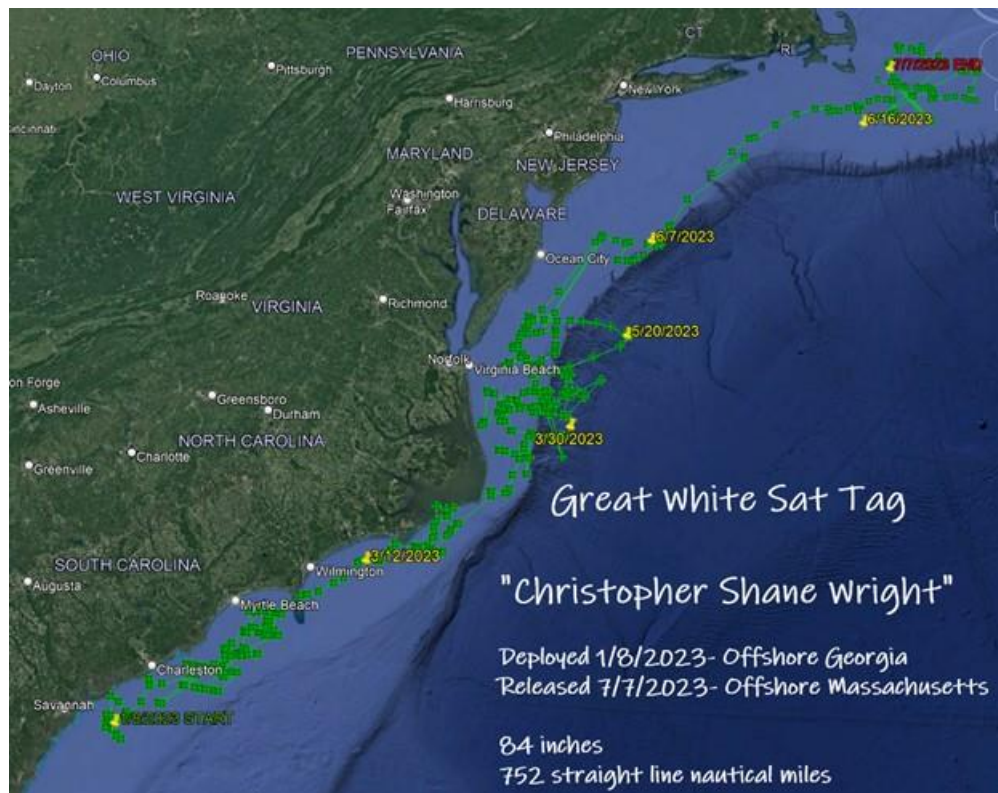
Hi Friends:

On January 8, 2023, we partnered with Star brite and Captain Jimmy Armel from American Fishing Charters to collaborate on a new study for our program.

The heart and mission behind this study is to collect research data on Great White Sharks while bringing awareness to fellow fallen Army Rangers that Jimmy has served with.

The goal was to locate a juvenile White Shark off the coast of Little Tybee Island, Georgia, and deploy a satellite tag to track the migration and behavior patterns for six months. Captain Jimmy was on the rod and tag stick, Ryan Davis at the helm and Devin on the leader when the satellite tag was deployed on a seven-foot White Shark named after "Christopher Shane Wright."

Congratulations Captain Jimmy! The satellite tag remained intact the full six-month duration. Once released, the satellite tag transmitted its stored data for 18 days. Both the duration time and the transmitted timeframe provided a great data set.





Some words from Jimmy: *“We had a mission and a purpose, to get a satellite tag into a Great White, and name it Chris Wright, contribute to research to help protect these beautiful animals and to get the stories of America's gunfighters out there that didn't make it home.”*



SPC Christopher S Wright

SPC. Christopher Shane Wright

Died August 19, 2010, serving during Operation Enduring Freedom

Christopher Shane Wright, 23, of Tollesboro, Kentucky died in Pech, Afghanistan of wounds sustained in a fire fight with the enemy during a combat operation. He was on his third deployment in support of the War on Terror.

Christopher was a squad automatic weapon gunner assigned to C Company, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and Hunter Army Airfield in Georgia. He was born on January 31, 1987, and was a native of Kentucky.

His awards and decorations included Combat Infantryman Badge, the Expert Infantryman Badge, and the Parachutist Badge. He was also awarded the Army Commendation Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, two Iraq Campaign Medals, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and Army Service Ribbon. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation for Valor, and the Purple Heart.

As a Ranger, Christopher, selflessly lived his life for others and distinguish himself as a member of the Army's premier light-infantry unit, continuously deployed in support of the War on Terror and fought valiantly as he served his fellow Rangers and Nation.

As in all our research efforts, we couldn't be a part of this work without the generous support from our sponsors, contributors, and local captains. Our team would like to extend a special THANK YOU to **Star brite and **Captain Jimmy** for making this interesting work possible.**

With appreciation,

Roxanne



Feedback? Have feedback for us, send an email to our [webmaster](#)

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Annual Dues Reminder

This year's renewal commenced on October 1st. In order to be considered a "member in good standing" and to be eligible to both sign up and to participate in tournaments as an IGFTO Observer, your dues **MUST** be current. Check your emails frequently; we've made it convenient and easy to pay with the invoice and link provided therein. Have a question about your dues, send an email to our [Treasurer](#).

Directors: To contact one of the IGFTO Directors, navigate here: [DIRECTORS](#)

Correction: In the last IGFTO Newsletter our subject profile was on Barbara Evans. Included in that profile was reference to Barbara having a United States Coast Guard Captain's license and "running a fishing operation on her own boat, the Pirate Princess." The article suggests Barbara is acting as a professional captain, which she is not! She invites guests on her boat to fish with no income or remuneration received. We regret the error!

