

The IGFTO Observer Newsletter ~ April 1, 2026 - to - June 30, 2026



The IGFTO Observer

A Newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

~Volume 15



Edition 2~

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Get to know IGFTO Observer Bob Stimolo

As told by: Art McDonald

Bob's passion for fishing began back in 1979. Almost every weekend he would venture off the northeast coast with a friend who owned a boat – a wooden boat, single screw, capable of a top speed of all of 10 knots – certainly limiting their adventures.

The Early Years

They started with inshore fishing, but in the early 1980's there were tuna and marlin being caught just 10 miles off Montauk Point, so they taught themselves how to fish offshore – trial and error method!

Bob had one little problem, as he suffered from severe seasickness, but found out that he was not afflicted if he was at the helm. This pleased the captain, which enabled him to sleep in for the runs offshore. They were successful in catching tuna and managed to hook up several white marlin. During that same time, Bob was courting a young lady by the name of Lynn, who became his wife, and she joined their weekend fishing (and barroom) excursions to Montauk.

The First "Real" Boat

Bob and Lynn bought their first "real" boat in 1990, a 38' Henriques, and currently own the *Lynno*, a 48' Viking Sportfish. They fished the Star Island Shark Tournament in Montauk 12 years in a row and, while never placing in the tournament, they had many fun and memorable experiences.

Not too long after this, Bob saw an advertisement for a course on being an IGFA Certified Observer, offered at the IGFA headquarters in Dania, FL, and attended. The course instructors were Jason Schratwieser (now the IGFA President), and Jack Vitek (now the Editor-in-chief of *Marlin Magazine*).

The IGFTO

As a result of taking the course and becoming IGFA certified, he received an e-mail from Joan Vernon, who handled the Presidential Series, and was looking for IGFA observers for a tournament she was organizing in Costa Rica – Bob signed up. He remembers there was no marina, and anglers and observers were ferried to the participating boats via pangas. It was at one of the tournament dinners that he met IGFTO member, Greg Moore who encouraged everyone he spoke with to join the newly formed IGFTO. Bob was interested, and contacted then IGFTO President, John Treat.

As Bob learned more about IGFTO, he realized that one of the early goals was managing, and increasing the membership levels. One evening, at a tournament in Los Suenos, CR, he spoke with members Steve Hargett and John Treat about the organization's need to maintain a consistent marketing program. He had over thirty years of experience in marketing and volunteered to take on the role of marketing director – a role he maintained until his retirement from the board in January, 2026. Bob is now a Director Emeritus.

Teaching Observer Training Courses

Bob had been conducting seminars as part of his "day job" and volunteered to host training programs for the organization. At first, they were cooperative programs with the IGFA, with Jack Vitek and Bob teaching Observer Training Classes ("OTC'S") in Delray Beach, FL. Later, after Jack left IGFA, IGFTO board member Terry O'Neil joined Bob in conducting the classes together.

Eventually, the IGFA program ceased and IGFTO became the largest organization of its kind worldwide. Bob recognized that one of the biggest challenges the IGFTO faces is its ability to target marketing efforts encouraging qualified new members.



Bob has developed a special fondness for the IGFTO, and the "art" of observing, and for those tournament directors who recognize the contribution observers make to the integrity of tournament fishing and preservation of natural

resources. He finds it interesting that we recognize the need and validity of having judges and witnesses officiating high stakes sporting events such as baseball, football, soccer, basketball, etc., yet we can conduct fishing contests where hundreds of thousands of dollars are awarded with little or no verification. AMEN!

Aqua Inspiration 2026 Report

Article by: Reese Bowles

It is my pleasure to report on the fifth anniversary of Aqua Inspiration!

Stop One - Marina Pez Vela in Quepos, Costa Rica.

2026 found us returning to Costa Rica on Monday, June 1st. Junior Achievement Costa Rica (JACR) and the International Gamefish Tournament Observers, Inc. (IGFTO) provided instruction to both Junior and Senior high school students at the school in Londres. We introduced students to the activities planned for Tuesday. Students received their event shirts, final instructions, and their excitement factor was already on full display.

Tuesday June 2nd, the students arrived at Marina Pez Vela and enjoyed a warm breakfast. Following breakfast, the students were broken down into small groups and assigned a group leader, or guide for the day. Everyone rotated through nine educational stations around the marina.

Nine Educational Stations.

Fuel dock safety, the Costa Guarda as a career, yacht yard maintenance and repair, reef building and environmental stewardship, conservation practices related to billfish, hospitality, spin casting fundamentals, teasers and dredges, hands-on rod handling, and requirements for becoming charter mates and captains.

Aqua Inspiration Goal.

Introduce students to the opportunities that exist in the marine industry. We had two volunteer group leaders this year that attended the First Aqua Inspiration as students and both are now employed by Marina Pez Vela!

Onward to Golfito, Costa Rica - Stop Two.

On Wednesday June 3rd, we packed everything up and transferred to Golfito, a four-hour drive to the south. I love it! One of the most interesting places in Costa Rica.

Thursday June 4th, we visited the Collegia Golfito for the JACR team building activities with 50 more students. This is the fourth year having Marina Bahia Golfito host Aqua Inspiration.

Marina Bahia Golfito, JACR, and IGFTO hosted the fourth year of Aqua Inspiration. Students arrived, had breakfast, and were assigned groups and guides for the day. We rotated students through our educational stations located around the marina.

Great Success!

The Aqua Inspiration event was a great success, and we are continuing to introduce the students to the opportunities that exist in the marine industry with a good dose of conservation and environmental stewardship. I send a big thank you to all the volunteers who continue to improve the planning and execution. Special thanks to all our sponsors that make Aqua Inspiration a success!

With just one day of showing students the opportunities that exist, we can touch their lives and help shape future careers of our younger generations.

Please consider supporting the Aqua Inspiration future.

Your tax-deductible donations are welcome to support future Aqua Inspiration classes.

[DONATE HERE.](#)

Select Aqua Inspiration from the drop-down menu, and either the PayPal or Venmo concession. You can also donate by mailing a check in U.S. funds to:

IGFTO

P.O. BOX 30191

Pensacola, FL 32503

Are You Bored This Summer

Article by: Art McDonald

So here we are – dead of summer. No football! No basketball! No Ice Hockey! Yeah, baseball is still in play, but none of our teams are worth a damn..... so how do we entertain ourselves on these lonely weekends? I have a suggestion – especially for the newer IGFTO members.

Have you given any thought to going back into the past IGFTO quarterly newsletters? There's some great information on individual tournament experiences by our members, interesting facts about conservation issues, billfish facts, member profiles, and practical situations with "You Make The Call" that, I'll bet, you'll enjoy.

IGFTO has published 44 Newsletter issues (including this one) full of some great reading! It's easy – merely go to the IGFTO website and click on the link "Newsletters" – you don't even have to remember your password. [READ HERE.](#)

Enjoy!

You Make the Call

Article by: Art McDonald

Location: Anywhere
Tournament: Billfish only
Rules: IGFA

So, there you are in some exotic locale (don't they ALL have great rum drinks?) observing in a billfish tournament.

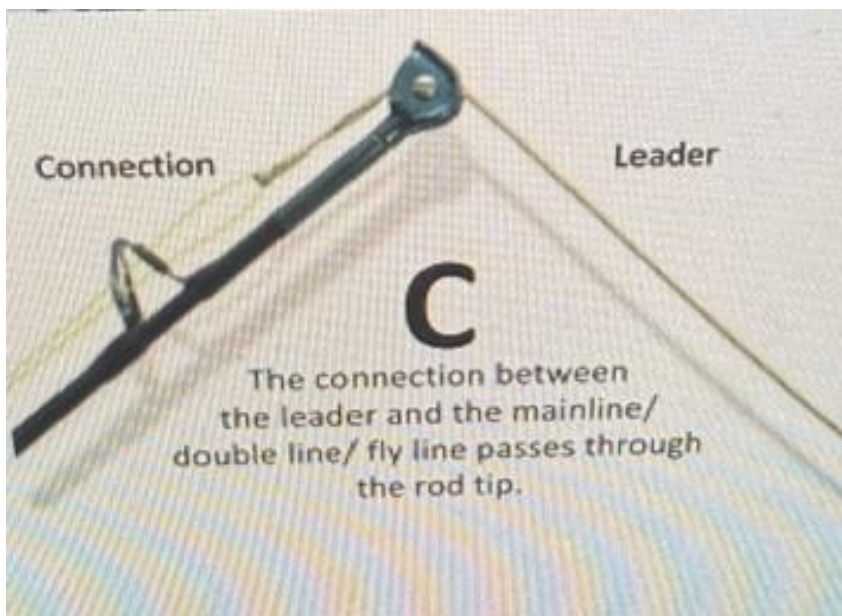
IGFA rules prevail – NO EXCEPTIONS! The bite's been good – mostly blue marlin in the 250-400 lb. class. You've observed several releases in the past couple of days. The boat you're on today isn't really in the money as you realize the participants are a tad "green." Your crew are fishing natural baits in the standard 2-rigger, 2-flat line combinations.

Around 11:00 AM the right rigger goes off, and a nice sized blue marlin is immediately airborne – hooked himself. The angler is tight while the marlin is greyhounding across the water, then sounds. 15 minutes into a "give-and take" your fisherman is looking a little worse for the wear but slowly gaining line. Typical

of a blue marlin, the fish senses the boat and begins a rise toward the surface, with the captain backing down quickly.

All of a sudden, the double line appears and the mate grabs it and yells "RELEASE" – you know better! A couple of wraps later the second mate cuts the leader, and everyone is congratulating the angler. You say something to the captain about the double line not being the leader – perhaps his view was blocked but he disagrees. As protocol, you tell the captain you have a problem with this, and, after docking you do not sign the score sheet and report your position to the tournament director. The tournament director sides with you!

Comment: The IGFTO has received several comments from observers that a certain number of the crews do **NOT** know that the double line is **NOT** the leader and cannot, under any circumstances, be touched in order for the release to be successful. If you suspect that there may be an issue with the crew's misinterpretation of the rules, it makes sense to remind them that touching the double line is illegal.



The yellow portion above is the double line which attaches to the leader via a knot. The double line is part of the main line and is **not to be touched** by another person other than the

angler. Your clue when the end comes, is to pay attention when the bimini twist knot appears and wait until the knot attaching the double line hits the rod tip or mate grabs the actual leader (NOT the double line).

In Memoriam*

By: Art McDonald

*Excerpts from The Billfish Foundation magazine and the Neptune Society

IGFTO was saddened to learn of the passing of Sine Mate, a long-time IGFTO observer.

A native Dane (Denmark), Sine moved to Ft. Lauderdale in 1971 after a nursing career in Denmark – she quipped "I never want to be cold again" and resumed her nursing career at Mercy Hospital in Miami.

In 1980 she retired from nursing and became a real estate agent, working for several firms, most recent of which was Coldwell Banker. Sine loved South Florida and soon found fishing as her favorite pastime. She twice won the biggest kingfish award at the Pompano Beach Ladies Fish-Off tournament and proudly



hooking (and releasing) a blue marlin on her first practice day in the Azores during the annual Blue Marlin World Cup.

She learned of the formation of the International Game Fish Tournament Observers and eagerly joined. She observed in many tournaments as her career would allow, becoming, in many years, the IGFTO leader in tournaments attended, which included events in the Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and Aruba.

She was 83 years old. [READ MORE](#)

Photo credit: The Neptune Society.

Want More Information? Navigate to: [IGFTO](#), [upcoming OTCs](#), and [FAQs](#).

Have feedback or want to submit an article? Get in touch with our [webmaster](#).

IGFTO has three upcoming observer training courses open for immediate registration. IGFTO Members - please extend an invitation to your qualified family and friends to attend. Members in good standing are invited to attend any OTC, on a space-available basis, as a refresher; ensure you log in and select the location.

Get Involved Training About Us FAQ Newsletter Store Contact Us Donate Log In				
Training Course Schedule				
Selecting an Observer Training Course date will initiate the new Observer membership application process. If you're already an Observer, sign up for your refresher course by selecting the "Member Refresher Course" button above.				
STATUS	DATE	CITY	VENUE	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
● OPEN	August 23, 2026	Ocean City, MD Marlin Club August 23, 2026	Ocean City Marlin Club 9659 Golf Course Road Ocean City, MD 21842	Our third year offering; on the heels of the Mid Atlantic. PayPal price includes convenience fee. Register & Apply
● OPEN	August 26, 2026	American Legion Kent Island, MD August 26, 2026	American Legion 800 Romancoke Road Stevensville, MD 21666	Class will begin at 4 p.m. PayPal price includes convenience fee. Register & Apply
● OPEN	October 31, 2026	Hampton Inn & Suites Fort Lauderdale Airport/South Cruise Port	Hampton Inn and Suites 2500 Stirling Road, Hollywood, FL (954) 922-0011	PayPal price includes convenience fee. Register & Apply

Thanks for taking a few minutes to catch up. As always, Tight lines, and all the Best,



Evan A. Hipsley, Jr., *Member Since 2014*

IGFTO President | Director | Webmaster



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.

This email was sent to EVAN.HIPSLEY@igfto.org

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Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow