



TAG & RELEASE

<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov> Volume 13, No. 4 November 2008



DNR



Governor's Cup Billfishing Series 2009 Schedule...

May 13-16

Edisto Marina Billfish Tournament

Contact: Becca Smith
3702 Docksite Road
Edisto Beach, SC 29438
(407) 463-2082, FAX (843) 869-3738
smithbecca@gmail.com

May 27-30

42nd Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament

Contact: Ricky Ferdon
P. O. Box 1704
Georgetown, SC 29442
(843) 546-1776, FAX (843) 546-7832
glmarina@sc.rr.com www.georgetownlandingmarina.com

June 24-27

Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina Billfish Tournament

Contact: Deidre Menefee
19 Forde Row
Charleston, SC 29412
(843) 345-0369, FAX (843) 406-4813
dpmenefee@aol.com

July 8-11

HMY/Viking MEGADOCK Billfishing Tournament

Contact: McKenzie Estes
P. O. Box 759
Charleston, SC 29402
(843) 278-4920, FAX (843) 577-7704
mestes@megadock.us

July 22-25

Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament

Contact: Bryan Richardson
1880 Andell Bluff Blvd.
Johns Island, SC 29455
(843) 768-1280 FAX (843) 768-3481
Dockmaster@Bohicket.com

For more information contact:

Amy Dukes
SC Governor's Cup Tournament Coordinator
843-953-9365
dukesa@dnr.sc.gov <http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/>

Series Reflections

Well, the awards have been handed out, everyone has been congratulated and had their pictures taken, and plans are already under way for next year. In the last newsletter I briefly summarized the billfish catch, which was a record season at 224 billfish released. I also highlighted the notable meat fish catches and thanked everyone for a good summer. As I sit here in October most of the business of the Series for the year has been done, but I wonder, what will the 20th anniversary season be remembered for? Perhaps it will be remembered by some for the transition from Tom Dupre's leadership to that of me and Amy, but that is a bit egotistical. Perhaps people will remember circle hooks, the record number of sailfish or the new state record dolphin.

While all of those are good candidates, in reality the season is most likely to be remembered for what did not happen. Yes, for the first time in the 20-year history of the Series, **NO YELLOWFIN TUNA** were harvested. Several small fish were hooked in Georgetown but they were under the legal size. During the 20 years of the Series, yellowfin landings have bounced around a good bit, with the most (494) being brought to the dock in 1999. A decline in abundance has been apparent for a while. The last decent year was 2003 when 233 yellowfin tuna were landed in billfish tournaments in the state. Forty-six fish were landed in 2006 and only six in 2007, but no one that I have talked to expected them to totally disappear. Tournaments in N.C. experienced a similar phenomenon with few if any yellowfin being caught. In fact, with 176 boats fishing for five days at Big Rock during early June, only one yellowfin was landed, and not until recent months have some started to turn up at the sportfishing port of Orgen Inlet at Cape Hatteras.

Of course, declining trends in



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abundance are nothing new in fisheries, but the nearly complete absence of yellowfin really caught people's attention. While at present the cause of the decline remains unknown, biologists for NMFS are presently involved in assessing the population of yellowfin tuna in the Atlantic basin so that management decisions to protect the species can be made by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. NMFS scientist Craig Brown, who is leading the assessment for ICCAT, told me "Any apparent declines in abundance that you may be observing off the U.S. coast may also be influenced by changes in local availability. It is possible that changes in environmental conditions (such as water temperature) or prey availability could make yellowfin tuna less available to local fishermen. This has also been postulated as a partial explanation for recent declines in bluefin tuna catch rate."

In addition, it is apparent from the international data that the decline in yellowfin tuna in general has been under way for some time. When we spoke back in August, Craig and NMFS were not aware of the absence of yellowfin from the catch in our fishery, but you can rest assured they are now! During a meeting of the NMFS Highly Migratory Species advisory panel in October, representatives from both Carolinas, including North Carolina Governor's Cup Director, Randy Gregory, made it very clear that we are greatly concerned and need an explanation. As a result NMFS plans to make this a dedicated topic at their next advisory panel meeting.

Sometimes it takes a catastrophe to get attention, but the very fact that we have access to a long-term data base like that chronicling the history of the S.C. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series gives us credibility and a seat at the table when decisions are made about our fisheries. Thanks for participating and making this long-term data set possible, and here's to another 20 years that will hopefully witness the return of yellowfin tuna to our coast.



Cerveza Wins the 2008 South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series

Cerveza is the 2008 S.C. Governor's

Cup Billfishing Series' Outstanding Billfish Boat, with the catch and release of 21 sailfish throughout the Series' tournaments.

After fishing in only the last three of the five tournaments of the 2008 season, the crew of *Cerveza* took the top honors accruing 4,275 points, with competitors *Roulette* and *Daymaker* following closely behind, each with 3,775 points. The Series began May 14 and featured five tournaments that spanned through July 26. Participating boats earned points for tagged or released billfish, including blue marlin (600 points), white marlin (300) and sailfish (200). In addition, boats are awarded 25 participation points for each Series tournament entered up to a maximum of three events.

This year's Governor's Cup Billfishing Series marked the 20th anniversary, a series established by Governor Carroll Campbell in 1988 to promote the state's billfishing tournament industry, increase coastal tourism and encourage the conservation of ocean resources through the tagging and release of billfish. This year, the Series reached a notable accolade with a 100% release rate of billfish caught during the Series. The program is coordinated by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), with Wallace Jenkins serving as the Program Coordinator, and Amy Dukes as the Tournament Coordinator. The Series has accomplished much toward the enhancement of marine resources conservation and serves a critical role in ensuring the health and future of pelagic fisheries with the promotion of management and preservation of these stocks for future generations.

This year's winner, *Cerveza*, based out of Pirates Cove, N.C., is owned by Thomas Russell of Reston, V.A., and captained by Butch Davis. Prior to fishing in the S.C. Series, *Cerveza* took

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WANTED - Billfish Catch Reports

Attention SC Billfishing Anglers! Please report boated and/or released billfish caught in SC waters throughout the 2008 fishing season. Anglers who release a billfish will receive a SCDNR Billfish Release Certificate. To report billfish landings or to request billfish release cards contact Amy Dukes at 843-953-9365, or email dukesa@dnr.sc.gov.

The winner of the 2008 "TOP CONSERVATIONIST BOAT OF THE YEAR" is the **Aggressor**, owned by Richard Coen and captained by Michael Runey. They received a \$500 gift card courtesy of "Sportsman Warehouse", located at 476 Piney Grove Road, in Columbia, SC. *Congratulations and Good Fishing!*

top honors in the Bahamas Billfish Championship (BBC) in June. The BBC has a similar structure to the S.C. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series, in regards to accumulation of points through a Series of tournaments. *Cerveza's* crew was composed mostly of family members including Russell's father, James, brother, Jeff, and his three children, Matthew, Nicole and Jessica. All of the children received awards during the Series for Outstanding Youth Anglers, and Nicole and Jessica were also recognized as Outstanding Lady Anglers.

The battle for this year's title of Outstanding Billfish Boat began at the Edisto Marina Billfish Tournament. Bad weather only allowed boats to fish one out of the three tournaments days, with *Hoy Boyz*, owned by John Hoy and captained by Jack Hoy, securing the win with a release of a blue marlin and earning 600 points. Just two weeks later, *Roulette* surged past the field with an impressive two days of fishing at the Georgetown Marina Blue Marlin Tournament. The boat, owned by Richard Pingree of Beaufort and captained by Mike Glaesner, successfully released 3 blue marlin, 1 white marlin and one sailfish, to earn 2,300 points.

The Series moved to the Charleston



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Harbor Resort and Marina Billfish Tournament, where *Cerveza* released 11 sailfish during the event, earning the boat 2,200 points. *Rascal*, owned by Norman Pulliam and captained by Mark Rodgers, provided *Cerveza* with tough competition with the release of 9 sailfish and 1 white marlin, earning the boat 2,100 points. *Daymaker*, owned by Mark Daniel of Georgetown and captained by Jay Weaver, had a good showing at the Charleston Harbor tournament with the release of 6 sailfish to add to their boat's 1 white marlin and 1 sailfish, both released at Georgetown, earning the boat 1,700 points.

At the MEGADOCK Series tournament, *Cerveza* once again dominated with a notable 6 sailfish released, pushing their tally of accumulated points to 3,400. *Daymaker*, *Roulette* and *Rascal* each released 3 sailfish, bringing *Roulette* up to 2,900 points, *Rascal* to 2,700 points, and *Daymaker* to 2,300 points.

This set the stage for the last tournament of the Series, the Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament. *Cerveza*, *Daymaker* and *Rascal* fished on Thursday, and *Cerveza* released 4 sailfish pushing the point lead to 4,200, and *Daymaker* and *Rascal* each released 3 sailfish, giving *Daymaker* 2,900 points and *Rascal* 3,300 points. *Cerveza* decided to fish on Friday along with *Roulette*, but only the *Roulette* was successful with the release of two sailfish making their point total 3,300. Now with the *Cerveza* fished out and holding the lead with 4,200 points, they had to wait it out, with *Daymaker*, *Rascal* and *Roulette* all fishing on Saturday to either end the Series with a win or a defeat. *Rascal* did not release any additional billfish; *Roulette* released 2 sailfish; and *Daymaker* released 4 sailfish to win the Bohicket Tournament. Both contenders fell just short of overtaking *Cerveza* to win the overall Series.

Additional award winners for the 2008 S.C. Governor's Cup Billfishing Series include *Summer Girl* as the Blue Water Conservationist with the tag and release of 27 dolphin; *Daymaker* and angler Ryan Riggs winning the Outstanding Dolphin award; *Legal Holiday* and angler Fred Bergen Jr. earning the Outstanding Tuna award; and *Blessed Adventure* and angler Ruby Robbe with the Outstanding Wahoo honors. Congratulations to all the 2008 Series winners. And a special thank you



to all the 2008 participants for making this year's Series fishtastic!

Special Recognition Awards

The entire S.C. billfish community's support drives this Series. We must recognize those individuals who have given of their time and direction to enhance the Series. Four special recognition awards were presented to individuals who have made major contributions to the Series and its success. For the past 20 years, William "Sam" Hiott, Michael Altine and J. Stan Hurteau have served as stewards of billfish conservation as well as outgoing Advisory Board Chairman, Francis Johnson, who has shown great leadership over the past six years. Their support and dedication are commendable.

The 2006-2007 Shootout was hosted at this year's MEGADOCK tournament and was a resounding victory for the S.C. team with a complete shutout. The final score was 2,600 to zero, based on accumulation of release points. This was a two-year event, because the NCGC was unable to host the annual event last season. We would like to thank the 2006 and 2007 winners for participation during this year's Shootout: *Artemis*, *Caramba*, *Dough Boy*, *Syke Out*, *Game On*, *Home Run* and *Houdini*. Our top six boats from the 2008 Series will represent us at the Shootout next fall as part of the NCGC: *Cerveza*, *Daymaker*, *Houdini*, *Petrel*, *Rascal* and *Roulette*.



2008 South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Final Standings

Outstanding Dolphin – 77.5 lbs., Ryan Riggs (Wando)
Aboard *Daymaker* owned by Mark Daniels (Georgetown), Captain Jay Weaver

Outstanding Tuna – 28.7 lbs., Fred Bergen Jr. (Savannah, GA)
Aboard *Legal Holiday* owned by Fred Bergen (Savannah, GA), Captain Matt Key

Outstanding Wahoo – 82.8 lbs., Rudy Robbe (Edisto)
Aboard *Blessed Adventure* owned by Rudy Robbe (Edisto), Captain Jim Bost

3rd Place Outstanding Youth Angler – 5 Sailfish released, Nicole Russell, 13
Aboard *Cerveza* owned by Thomas Russell (Reston, VA), Captain Butch Davis

2nd Place Outstanding Youth Angler – 6 Sailfish released, Thomas Garmany, 16
Aboard *Bench Mark* owned by Stephen Davis (Greenwood), Captain Bobby Garmany and
Aboard *Roulette* owned by Richard Pingree (Beaufort), Captain Mike Glaesner

1st Place Outstanding Youth Angler – 6 Sailfish released, Mathew Russell, 15
Aboard *Cerveza* owned by Thomas Russell (Reston, VA), Captain Butch Davis

3rd Place Outstanding Lady Angler – 1 Blue marlin and 1 Sailfish released, Kasey Dantzler, 16. Aboard *Dough Boy* owned by Ben and Cynthia Dantzler (Elloree), Captain Ben Dantzler Jr.

2nd Place Outstanding Lady Angler – 4 Sailfish released, Holly Mc Alhany (Wando) Aboard. *Syked Out* owned by David Sykes (Isle of Palms), Captain Dan Woody

1st Place Outstanding Lady Angler – 5 Sailfish released, Nicole Russell, 13
Aboard *Cerveza* owned by Thomas Russell (Reston, VA), Captain Butch Davis

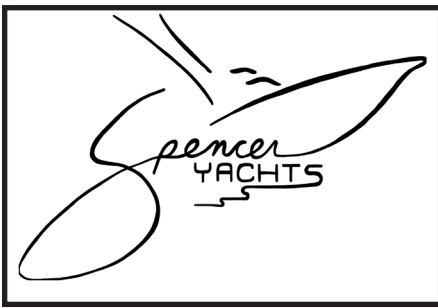
Blue Water Conservation – 27 Dolphin (tagged and released)
Summer Girl owned by Leasure, Smith, and Hooker (Charleston), Captain Stevie Leasure
Points: 1,350

Outstanding Billfish – None landed

Outstanding Billfish Conservationist – 21 Sailfish released
Cerveza owned by Thomas Russell (Reston, VA), Captain Butch Davis
Points: 4,275

Outstanding Billfish Boat – 21 Sailfish released
Cerveza owned by Thomas Russell (Reston, VA), Captain Butch Davis
Points: 4,275





Top 12 Boats from the 2008 SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series - Final

1) Cerveza	4275	5) Houdini	2475	9) Bench Mark	1475
2) Roulette	3775	6) Petrel	2075	10) Evans B	1475
3) Daymaker	3775	7) NOFA	1875	11) El Tejano	1475
4) Rascal	3375	8) Miss Wy IV	1675	12) Heavy Iron	1475



Congratulations to the crew of the Cerveza!





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Save The Date

The S.C. Billfish Memorial Challenge will host a Skeet Shoot on Sunday, December 7, to continue fundraising efforts in support of an offshore reef that will serve as a permanent memorial for those within our billfish community who have passed.

Location: Partridge Creek Gun Club, 1487 Hwy. 78, Ridgeville, S.C.

Event Schedule: Lunch 11am - 12 pm, Shooting Competition 12pm-4pm

Entry Fees: One shooter with lunch for two, \$125

Two shooters with lunch for two, \$200

Prize: 1st Place \$500, 2nd Place \$250, and 3rd Place \$100

For more information: Please contact Shannon @ 843-270-0003 or

Shannon.seabrook@comcast.net

Looking Ahead...

The SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Newsletter is going Electronic! Starting in 2009, you can receive and view our "New and Improved" full color newsletter online. Please watch for further details in our next newsletter to register your e-mail address. Good Fishing!

Albury Brothers Boats



The S.C. Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Division reminds the public of Coast Watch, which was developed to better help citizens report violations of saltwater recreational and commercial fishing laws, as well as marine environmental laws.

The Coast Watch hotline number (1-800-922-5431) is toll-free and available 24 hours a day.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, gender, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, PO Box 167, Columbia, South Carolina, 29202.

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