Well, as many of you know by now, determining the Series winner came down to the wire as we entered the Edisto tournament with three boats battling for the Series lead. After Megadock, Caramba had accumulated 4,175 points, while Home Run and Sadie Beth each had 3,775 points. All top three boats fished on the first day of the Edisto tournament. Home Run had an amazing day, releasing five sailfish to gain the lead by 400 points; Sadie Beth released two sailfish and Caramba released one sailfish after spending much of the day fighting a mystery fish in hopes that it was a big Blue Marlin. Caramba’s owner Bob Faith and Captain Dale Lackey found themselves in a similar situation to two years ago, when they were neck and neck with Daymaker for the Series Outstanding Billfish Boat award. The Caramba crew then made what turned out to be a critical decision; just as they had in 2010, they were going to fish on Friday even though much of the fleet was going to take a lay day because of an uncertain weather forecast. Two other boats, Sportin’ Life and Crystal Blue, also fished and it turned out to be a great fishing day; Caramba released four sailfish and moved back into the Series lead by 400 points. Saturday was another strong day of fishing with 23 sailfish released, with Home Run releasing two. This tied the Home Run in points with Caramba at 5,175; but put them in second place for the Series based on time. Based on my research of the archives, there has never been a tie in points in the history of the Series. Certainly each boat owner and their captains deserve a great deal of credit for competing all the way to the last day of the Series. Further, Caramba becomes the only boat to have won the Series three times (Congrats!) and Dale Lackey becomes the only captain to have won the Series four times, having won his first in 1996 on Cummins Marine and his last...
three on Caramba (2006, 2010, and 2012). His closest competitors among captains are Charlie Aimar and Mike Glaesner, each of whom has been the winning captain twice during Series history.

While there are always winners, all who participated in the 2012 deserve congratulations. More billfish were released (300) during this summer than ever before in the Series; the next closest years being 2011 and 2007, when 225 and 224 billfish were released, respectively. When you examine the 2012 numbers closer, the 153 participating boats averaged a 1.96 billfish release rate. The next closest year was 2011, when 1.48 billfish were released per boat. This is a far cry from the early 2000’s, when the billfish release rate averaged only 0.26 billfish per boat. So keep up the good work; these data really help describe the fishery and the abundance of the various species released and landed.

Where are they now...

As we gear up to enter the Series 25th year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on my predecessors in the position of overseeing the Series. We owe them a lot, especially as it relates to promoting the concept of billfish conservation. After retiring from the agency in 2006, Don Hammond (Program Director: 1989-1998) went on to found the consulting company “Cooperative Science Services”, which so far has focused on studying the movements of Dolphinfish. Wayne Waltz (Program Director: 1999-2004) retired from the agency in 2005, but went on to work as a federal aid coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I am happy to report that after several years in exile in Atlanta, he was able to orchestrate a return to the local USFWS office where he remains to this day. Finally, my predecessor Tom Dupree (Program Director: 2005-2007), who was involved with the program almost since its inception, is the only one of the three who has truly retired. When he is not supporting Clemson athletics, he uses his spare time for creating quilts. If you don’t believe me, see his and Meri’s photo (above) holding up the quilt they had made with T-shirts from past Series events. It’s a pretty cool strategy for emptying your T-shirt drawer! Well, I have surpassed Don’s tenure, but who knows. Either way, it has been fun so far and I look forward to the future!
Fourth Round Results from SC Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series – Megadock Billfishing Tournament

The fourth tournament in the 24th season of the South Carolina Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series, The Megadock Billfishing Tournament, took place July 11-14 at The City Marina in Charleston. A total of 38 boats participated in the tournament, and 71 billfish were released; 20 blue marlin, 2 white marlin and 49 sailfish. No billfish were landed during the tournament. Wallace Jenkins, Series Program Director for SCDNR, said “We had three great days of weather and the number of blue marlin caught is outstanding for this time of the year. In recent years, Megadock participants have seen primarily sailfish with as many as 138 released; this year was far more balanced.”

The Outstanding Billfish Boat was awarded to Micabe, owned by Michael Larrow of Ridgeland, and captained by Jay Weaver. The boat crew secured their first place win with the release of two blue marlin and three sailfish, accruing 1,800 total release points.

Second place for Outstanding Billfish Boat went to Red Passion, owned by Bill Ingram. Captain Gary Richardson and the crew released two blue marlin and one sailfish to accumulate 1,400 release points.

Caramba took third place for Outstanding Billfish Boat. The boat is owned by Bob Faith and captained by Dale Lackey, and the boat crew released two blue marlin and one sailfish to earn 1,400 release points. Caramba was also the Blue Water Conservation winner for tagging and releasing 7 dolphin over the course of the tournament.

Outstanding Dolphin was awarded to Kevin Meany for his 45.4-pound dolphin caught aboard his boat Lucky Hooker. Jason DuBose was the captain.

Angler Jessica Mitchell, fishing aboard El Tejano, won the Outstanding Wahoo award with a 57.4-pound fish. The boat is owned by John Hill and captained by David Redd.

Chris Ravenel won the Outstanding Tuna award aboard Rookie IV, owned by Eddie Buck, Sr. and captained by Jay Champlin, for his 14.6-pound Blackfin.

First place for Outstanding Lady Angler went to Joanna Strickland for releasing two white marlin and one sailfish aboard Wildlife, for a total of 800 points. Ten-year-old Locke Johnson won first place for Outstanding Youth Angler by earning 600 points for the release of one blue marlin aboard Petrel.

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Outstanding Billfish Boat
1st Place
Micabe
Owner: Mike Larrow
Captain: Jay Weaver
2 Blue Marlin and 3 Sailfish released
1800 pts

Outstanding Billfish Boat
2nd Place
Reel Passion
Owner: Bill Ingram
Captains: Gary Richardson and Mike Larrow
2 Blue Marlin and 1 Sailfish released
1400 pts

Outstanding Billfish Boat
3rd Place
Caramba
Owner: Bob Faith
Captains: Dale Lackey and Chris Jennings
2 Blue Marlin and 1 Sailfish released
1400 pts

Outstanding Dolphin
Lucky Hooker
Owner: Kevin Meaney
Captains: Jason Dubose and Kevin Meaney
18.8 pound Dolphin
250 pts

Outstanding Tuna
Rookie IV
Owner: Eddie Buck Sr.
Captains: Jay Champlin and Chris Ravenel
14.6 pound Blackfin
200 pts

Outstanding Wahoo
El Tejano
Owner: John Hill
Captains: David Redd and Jessica Mitchell
51.4 pounds
200 pts

Top Series Boats/Point Standing after CBC
Caramba 5175
Home Run 5175
Sportin’ Life 4675
Sadie Beth 4575
Micabe 4275

Billfish Release Numbers
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The final chapter of 24th SC Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series was completed the last weekend in July at Edisto Beach. The weather was excellent with three viable days of fishing, participation was up from the previous year, and there were a lot of public spectators at the nightly weigh-ins, making it a great family-friendly event to be a part of. The evening social events were held at the waterfront park adjacent to the marina on Big Bay Creek for the second year in a row, and several local and state government dignitaries made an appearance throughout the weekend. A total of 27 boats participated in the tournament, and 88 billfish were caught and released, including 82 Sailfish and 6 Blue Marlin.

“This season, billfishing was phenomenal and the 88 fish released during the Edisto Tournament pushed the Series to reach a new record number of billfish releases! A total of 300 billfish were released over the summer’s five events, including 58 Blue Marlin, 32 White Marlin and 210 Sailfish!” said Amy Dukes, Series Tournament Coordinator.

The crew of Laff-A-Lot earned top honors in the tournament for earning 1,800 release points to win the Outstanding Billfish Boat award, with the release of six Sailfish and one Blue Marlin. Frank Thronhill of Charleston owns and captains the vessel.

Second place honors for Outstanding Billfish Boat went to Micabe, owned by Mike Larrow, and captained by his son-in-law Chris Jennings. They finished with 1,600 points for eight sailfish releases.

First place honors for Outstanding Billfish Boat went to Laff-A-Lot, owned and captained by Frank Thronhill. Second place honors for Outstanding Billfish Boat went to Micabe, owned by Mike Larrow, and captained by his son-in-law Chris Jennings. They finished with 1,600 points for eight sailfish releases.

Sportin’ Life, owned by Manly and Graham Eubank and captained by Mike Glaesner, finished third with seven sailfish releases, earning 1,400 points.

Angler EJ Nettles aboard Short People, owned by Aaron Nettles, Jr. and captained by Jeff Hagan, won the Outstanding Dolphin award for his 25.8 pound catch.

The Outstanding Tuna was awarded to angler Joanna Strickland for her catch of a 25.8 pound Blackfin Tuna aboard Wildlife, owned by her husband Ken Strickland, and captained by Stuart Lackey.

The Outstanding Wahoo award was won with a catch of a 25.8 pound fish by angler Tom Blanchard aboard Reel Hooker, owned and captained by Lee Clark.

First place for Outstanding Lady Angler went to Joanna Strickland aboard Wildlife for the catch and release of three Sailfish. The first place Outstanding Youth Angler was 8-year-old Rance Jennings, for releasing four of the eight Sailfish caught aboard the second-place Outstanding Billfish Boat, Micabe.
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.

Total cost - $414.00 • Total copies - 1,550 • Total cost per copy - $0.27