



TAG & RELEASE

Volume 9, No. 1 March 2004

16TH ANNUAL SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S CUP TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE...

- April 28-
May 1** ***Edisto Marina Billfish Tournament***
Contact: Deidre Menefee
19 Forde Row
Charleston SC 29412
843-345-0369 FAX 843-406-4813
- May 5-8** ***Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament***
Contact: Bryan Richardson/Damien Zanetti
1880 Andell Bluff Blvd.
Johns Island SC 29455
843-768-1280 FAX 843-768-3481
- May 16-22** ***Charleston Harbor HMY Viking Billfish Tournament***
Contact: Deidre Menefee
19 Forde Row
Charleston SC 29412
843-345-0369 FAX 843-406-4813
- June 2-5** ***37th Annual Georgetown Landing Marina Tournament***
Contact: Ricky Ferdon
P.O. Box 1704
Georgetown SC 29442
843-546-1776 FAX 843-546-7832
- June 24-26** ***MegaDock Tournament***
Contact: Emily S. Arthur
P.O. Box 759
Charleston SC 29402
843-577-7705

For more information contact:

Tom DuPre'
Office of Fisheries Management
843-953-9365
email: dupret@mrd.dnr.state.sc.us
<http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/etc/govcup/govcup.html>

A RELEASE TODAY IS A FISH TOMORROW!

Fish Responsibly!

2004 SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S CUP BILLFISHING SERIES SCHEDULE

The 2004 South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series will be composed of five tournaments along the coast beginning April 28 at Edisto Island and ending June 26 at the Charleston City Marina's MegaDock tournament. The Series is entering its 16th year.

"The 2004 series will have some new twists this year," said Wayne Waltz of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. "We are excited to add the MegaDock tournament to the series this year as our grand finale."

The Carolina's Shootout will be held this year as part of the Charleston Harbor HMY Viking Billfish Tournament. This tournament will include a three out of five day fishing format from May 16-22. The Carolina's Shootout pits the top five boats from the South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia Governor's Cup Series in a prestigious, all-catch-and-release event for state bragging rights.

The Governor's Cup Board of Directors took an unprecedented step at its November meeting by making "tagging" an optional part of the tournament series. "Now points can be accumulated for properly catching and releasing billfish, so tagging is no longer required to receive release points," Waltz said. "We are still encouraging anglers to tag tuna, dolphin and wahoo as part of the bluewater conservation endeavor, and to help support on-going studies of these species."

"The Governor's Cup encourages family participation and conservation of our ocean's resources," DuPré said. "By awarding points for the release of fish, the Series rewards anglers who properly land and release these magnificent fish, while at the same time promoting the South

Carolina sportfishing industry, coastal tourism and the coastal economy.”

The Series has become a model program for other states and countries and has inspired an increasing number of saltwater anglers to release fish of all species and sizes.

Before the Series began in 1989, virtually all billfish caught were brought back to the docks. “During 2003, the live release rate for billfish caught off the South Carolina coast exceeded 98 percent, significantly contributing to the future of our billfish populations,” DuPré said. “We appreciate the generous support of our major sponsors including Cummins Mercruiser, Cummins Atlantic, Wachovia, HMY Yacht Sales, W. W. Williams, our Board of Directors and others. This program has made great strides to increase awareness and help conserve numerous valuable species through its

emphasis on catch and release.”

Funds from each tournament are used to support a broad range of marine fisheries research and conservation efforts each year.

Tournament contact email addresses for the 2004 South Carolina Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series are:

Edisto Marina Billfish Tournament (contact: Deidre Menefee, dpmenefee@aol.com)

Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament (contact: Bryan Richardson, bomarina@bellsouth.net)

Charleston Harbor HMY Viking Billfish Tournament (contact: Deidre Menefee, dpmenefee@aol.com)

37th Annual Georgetown Landing Marina Blue Marlin Tournament (contact: Ricky Ferdon,

glmarina@sc.rr.com, www.georgetownlandingmarina.com)

MegaDock (contact: Emily S. Arthur, earthur@charlestoncitymarina.com).

For more information on the South Carolina Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series contact Tom DuPré of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources by e-mail at dupret@mrd.dnr.state.sc.us or by phone at (843) 953-9365.

Visit the website at <http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/etc/govcup/govcup.html> to learn more about the South Carolina Governor’s Cup Billfishing Series, and to keep up with the standings.

Written by Jennie R. Davis

SC GOVERNOR’S CUP BILLFISHING SERIES TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES - NEW ITEMS FOR 2004 IN BOLD ITALICS

1. Fish must be caught in accordance with all state and federal laws to qualify to earn points or awards. All anglers, including female and youth, must strike their fish in order to be eligible for series points or awards. After a fish strikes, only the angler is allowed to touch the rod. Once the leader is brought within the grasp of the mate or is wound to the rod tip, then the angler may have assistance to **catch and release** or boat the fish. Vessels may provide assistance to other vessels for boating fish.

2. White marlin and sailfish are **catch and release** only. **Tagging is optional and not required for points.** The minimum size for landed blue marlin is 101 inches measured in a curved line along the body from the fork of the tail to the tip of the lower jaw.

Note: 101 inches exceeds the federally mandated minimum size limit by two (2) inches. Should the federal size limit be increased, the minimum size for blue marlin eligible for weighing in SC Governor’s Cup Series tournaments will be increased automatically to exceed the new minimum size by two (2) inches.

3. A penalty of 300 points will be assessed against a boat for each blue marlin brought to the dock not meeting the minimum South Carolina Governor’s Cup Series size requirements.

4. Boats guilty of wanton waste of fish taken in a Series event will be disqualified from earning points in that event.

5. Scoring for eligible billfish weighed-in is based solely on those points officially awarded each boat by each tournament. Boats earn one point per pound and fraction of a pound for their single heaviest billfish weighed in each tournament. No points are awarded for additional billfish weighed in any one tournament.

6. **Only blue marlin, white marlin and sailfish are eligible for catch and release points. Tagging is optional and not required for points. Scoring for billfish caught and released in good condition is as follows:**

Blue Marlin 300 points

White marlin 150 points

Sailfish 100 points

7. **To qualify for catch and release points, a billfish must be fought to the boat according to program guidelines. A billfish is considered caught when: 1) the leader is grasped by the mate or the leader is wound to the rod tip. (A leader may be no longer than 30 feet); 2) the billfish is positively identified; and 3) the fish is released in a healthy condition. Boats are encouraged to remove the hook or to cut the leader as close as possible to the hook.**

8. White marlin and sailfish may not be brought into the boat. Any white marlin or sailfish boated for pictures or any other reason will not receive **catch and release** points. Blue marlin brought into the boat for measurement without the use of a gaff, harpoon or other device will qualify for **catch and release** points provided they are returned to the water in a healthy condition and are meet the federal minimum size limit. (currently 99 inches).

Note: Federal law prohibits the boating of undersized billfish.

9. Any billfish gaffed, harpooned or otherwise injured in an attempt to boat the fish will not qualify for **catch and release points**, even if ultimately returned to the water.

10. For a vessel to qualify any billfish for points, every person aboard the vessel 18 years of age or older must sign an affidavit swearing that all rules and regulations were observed in reference to the described fish. Failure of any person to sign, for any reason, disqualifies that fish.

11. Affidavits must be completed the day the **catch and release** or landing occurs, except when a medical emergency involving the boat's crew prohibits completion of the form or when a mechanically disabled boat cannot return within the prescribed weigh-in period. In these instances, the forms must be completed and returned within ten (10) days of the **catch and release**. Boats fishing out of other marinas or ports must fax or hand-deliver the completed **catch and release** affidavit to tournament headquarters prior to the close of the weighing scales on the day of catch with the exception as noted above.

12. Boats will be awarded 25 participation points for each Series tournament entered up to a maximum of **three** events. A boat's points total will include participation points as indicated along with points for landed or **caught and released** billfish from all tournaments fished. Points will count toward aggregate point totals for Outstanding Billfish Boat and Outstanding Billfish Conservationist. Points cannot be transferred from one boat to another.

13. Boats must fish a minimum of two Series tournaments to qualify for Outstanding Billfish Boat and Outstanding Billfish Conservationist. Vessels fishing only one tournament qualify for Outstanding Billfish, Lady Angler, and Youth Angler awards.

14. In the event of a tie, the boat accumulating their points the earliest shall be the winner. If a tie still remains, the boat fishing in the most Series events will be declared the winner.

15. Awards will be presented for the heaviest dolphin, wahoo and tuna caught by boats participating in the series and for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place outstanding female and youth (under sixteen years of age) anglers. The awards for female and youth angler will be awarded for the heaviest tuna, dolphin or wahoo if no female or youth angler has landed or **caught and released** a legal billfish. Billfish caught by female or youth anglers will earn regular Series points for the species.

16. A Blue Water Conservation Award will be presented to the boat accumulating the most points tagging dolphin (50 points), yellowfin tuna (100 points) and wahoo (150 points). All fish must be caught on legal Series tournament fishing days and tagged using official tags supplied by the Marine Resources Division's Marine Gamefish Tagging Program. Completed tagging reports will serve as official entry forms and must be submitted to Marine Resources Division personnel working the tournament or the weighmaster on the same day the fish was tagged.

17. Creel limits for dolphin are 7 per angler per day or 26 per boat per day, with no minimum size restriction. Creel limit for yellowfin tuna is 3 per angler per day with a minimum legal size of 27 inches curved body fork length. There is no minimum size restriction or creel limit on wahoo.

Note: Size or creel limits will automatically be changed in SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series tournaments to reflect changes in federal or state laws.

18. All awards are presented to the boat. Invitations to the annual Governor's Cup awards reception are limited to winning boat crews and boat owners whose boats fish two or more yearly series events.

19. It is the intent of the S.C. Governor's Cup to encourage release of healthy billfish, therefore the use of 130 lb. class line is allowed.

20. A boat owner may request an official ruling from the Governor's Cup Series. The request for a ruling must be submitted in writing to a member of the Tournament Committee. The Tournament Committee shall rule on the request within seven (7) days. Any ruling of the Tournament Committee may be appealed by writing to the Board of Directors within forty-eight (48) hours, excluding weekend days and holidays. The Board shall render results of an appeal, in writing, to the appellant within thirty (30) days. All decisions of the Board are final. All rulings will focus solely on compliance with Governor's Cup Series rules, not individual tournament rules.



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2003 BILLFISH STATISTICS AS REPORTED BY 3/8/04

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of boats reporting fish from SC waters | 110 |
| Total number of billfish reported from SC waters (68 in tournaments and 164 non-tournament) | 232 |
| Fish landed in tournament fishing | 5 |
| The tournament release rate exceeded 94% | |
| No fish were reported landed in non-tournament fishing | |
| Non-tournament recreational release rate was reported at 100% | |
| Total number of boats reporting billfish from non-SC waters | 13 |
| Total number of billfish reported from non-SC waters | 18 |
| Total number of SC Blue marlin reported (26 in tournaments) | 53 |
| Total number of SC White marlin reported (5 in tournaments) | 8 |
| Total number of SC Sailfish reported (41 in tournaments) | 168 |
| Total number of SC Longbill spearfish reported | 0 |
| Total number of SC Swordfish reported | 3 |
| Average number of SC billfish caught per boat | 2.11 |
| Average number of SC Blue marlin caught per boat | .49 |
| Average number of SC White marlin caught per boat | .07 |
| Average number of SC Sailfish caught per boat | 1.53 |
| Average number of SC Swordfish caught per boat | .03 |
| Number of boats with multiple catches from SC waters | 47 |
| Percent of boats with multiple catches from SC waters | 44% |

TOP BOATS (SC WATERS)

| | |
|----------------|----|
| LAI D BACK | 11 |
| SECOND HELPING | 10 |
| SPECIAL LADY | 9 |
| ALI L | 6 |
| DEM BOYZ | 6 |
| JUNCANEWT | 6 |
| RAPID PACE | 6 |
| PARADOX | 5 |

2003 SCGC TOURNAMENT LANDINGS

Yellowfin tuna, Dolphin, and Wahoo

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Edisto | |
| Yellowfin tuna | 138 |
| Dolphin | 216 |
| Wahoo | 14 |
| Bohicket | |
| Yellowfin tuna | 125 |
| Dolphin | 189 |
| Wahoo | 7 |
| Georgetown Landing | |
| Yellowfin tuna | 6 |
| Dolphin | 500 |
| Wahoo | 7 |
| Charleston Harbor | |
| Yellowfin tuna | 3 |
| Dolphin | 155 |
| Wahoo | 29 |

LANDED BILLFISH SIZES 2004

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Edisto 5/3/03 | |
| length | 117 1/8" |
| 1/2 girth | 30 5/8" |
| weight | 586 |
| Georgetown 5/29/03 | |
| length | 102 3/8" |
| 1/2 girth | unknown |
| weight | 392.2 |
| Georgetown 5/29/03 | |
| length | 107 1/4" |
| 1/2 girth | 28 3/8" |
| weight | 444.4 |
| Georgetown 5/29/03 | |
| length | 108 1/2" |
| 1/2 girth | 27 3/4" |
| weight | 383.5 |

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BILLFISH NUMBERS AND SUCH

I thought you folks might be interested in some fish numbers we collected last year. Please bear in mind that these figures come from you. We talk to owners, captains, mates, anglers, marinas, dock hands, and just about anyone else who will talk to us. This is in addition to all the dockside interviews we conduct at the tournaments. I'll start out with data collected at the tournaments.

A total of 131 different boats fished the 2003 South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series, and 49 caught billfish. 90 eligible fish were hooked, and 68 were successfully landed. 4 were brought to the dock, 61 were tagged, and 3 were released without tagging.

Of 32 blue marlin hooked, 22 were successfully landed. 4 were brought to the dock. Those were caught by "ReeSea" (586.0 lbs.), "Totally Hooked" (444.4 lbs.), "Anticipation" (393.3 lbs.), and "Hat Trick" (383.5 lbs.). Sixteen were tagged and released, and 2 were released without a tag. There were 8 white marlin hooked and 5 landed. All were tagged and released. 50 sailfish were hooked and 41 were landed. 40 were tagged and 1 was released without tagging. Crunching the numbers a little more shows that 69% of the blues hooked, 63% of the whites hooked, and 82% of the sails hooked were landed. The overall release rate for fish landed in the Series exceeded 94%.

During the 2003 Series the following data were collected for tuna, dolphin, and wahoo:

272 yellowfin tuna were reported caught, 149 of those were measured for length (39.5" avg.), and 59 were weighed (42.8 lbs. avg.). 1060 dolphin were reported, 514 measured (38.5" avg.), and 107 weighed (32.4 lbs. avg.). 57 wahoo were reported, 38 measured (48.6" avg.), and 34 weighed (34.8 lbs. avg.).

Overall reported billfish catches for 2003, which include tournament and non-tournament fish, made it a slightly below average year. Total blue marlin reported - 53, white marlin - 8, sailfish - 168, and swordfish - 3. Total - 232. The 1993 to 2002 ten-year average is 311.

With 110 boats reporting 232 billfish, it works out to an average of 2.11 per boat. Breaking this down further comes up with .49 blues, .07 whites, and 1.53 sailfish per boat. 47 boats (43.1%) reported multiple catches. The overall release rate for reported non-tournament billfish in SC was 100%.

Not included in the above totals are 17 fish tagged by 13 boats in non-SC waters.

If you caught billfish in SC waters in 2003 and have not received a state billfish certificate, please get in touch with me at (843) 953-9365 or at dupret@mrd.dnr.state.sc.us. Certificates are issued for landed, tagged, or released billfish. If you tag billfish outside of SC waters using SCDNR tags, you are also eligible for a certificate. If you tag billfish in SC waters using tags from another program, you are still eligible for a SC certificate, but only if you report it to the SCDNR.

Written by Tom DuPré

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*excerpt from The First Thousand Pounder
by Zane Grey*

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