



Tag & Release

A newsletter following the South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series



Series Reflections:

October 2024
Vol. 29 No. 4

Thanks to everyone for a fantastic 2024 tournament series! We held the Awards Reception at Founders Hall and had a wonderful evening celebrating our award recipients. We thank A&P Catering and the Marina Variety Store for catering an exceptional dinner. DJ Trevor D. and Marshall with D&M Productions kept us entertained and moving on the dance floor.

Congratulations to the *Buddy Rowe*, the 2024 Series champions! For those of you who missed the reception, the winners, photos from the event, and awards speeches written by Cameron Rhodes, owner and operator of The Buckskin Billfish, are included in this issue. Guests also enjoyed a highlight reel of footage recorded during the Series, created by Matt Ervin, owner and operator of Make Way Media. We were honored to name Fred Bergen the Carroll A. Campbell Award recipient this year. Our 2024 Mate of the Year Award went to a very deserving young man, John Michael Phillip, for his impressive skills and hard work aboard the *Dugga Boy*.

Additionally, two chairman awards were presented to former chairman Stokely Holder and former vice chairman John Hill. We are sincerely grateful for their service and leadership on the Advisory Board of Directors.

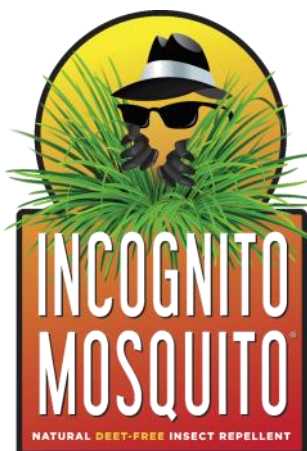
We are excited for the 2025 Series and hope to see a better bite and even more participants! We will be welcoming back the Charleston Billfish Invitational, the 57th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament, the HMY Lowcountry Cup, the Carolina Billfish Classic, and the Edisto Invitational Billfish Tournament. Be sure to mark your calendars for an eventful 2025 Series!

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37th Annual SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series 2025 Tournament Schedule

May 7 - 10, 2025

Charleston Billfish Invitational



May 21 - 24, 2025

57th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament



May 28 - 31, 2025

HMY Lowcountry Cup



June 18 - 21, 2025

Carolina Billfish Classic



July 16 - 19, 2025

Edisto Invitational Billfish Tournament



For more information, please visit:

GovCup@dnr.sc.gov • govcup.dnr.sc.gov

PO Box 12559 • Charleston, SC 29422

Outstanding Billfish Boat, 1st Place:

Buddy Rowe

Owner: Todd Wigfield & Matt Byrd

Captain: Cordes Lucas

11 Blue Marlin, 37 Sailfish

2024 Governor's Cup Series Winners: Billfish Boats



2024 Governor's Cup Series Winners: Billfish Boats

Outstanding Billfish Boat, 2nd Place:

Outlier

Owner: Anomaly Sportfishing LLC

Captain: Ryan Riggs

6 Blue Marlin, 33 Sailfish



Outstanding Billfish Boat, 3rd Place:

Bench Mark

Owner: Stephen Davis

Captain: Jordan Parker

6 Blue Marlin, 17 Sailfish





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Governor Carroll A. Campbell Jr. Award Mr. Frederick Bergen

By: Cameron Rhodes, The Buckskin Billfish

This award is one of our most prestigious honors, recognition of a lifetime of commitment and service to everyone in this very room, as well as every other angler who enjoys blue water fishing off our state's coast. And there aren't enough colorful words to truly describe the character of this year's recipient and the sprawling magnitude of his continued contributions to sport fishing in South Carolina.

Over the years, he has contributed to the Series as a boat owner, a competitor, a parent, a board member and a friend. He has shown that even through stiff competition and challenging circumstances, kindness and sportsmanship are the most important and honorable traits a person can bring to the Series.

Often dressed in colorful, patterned pants that have become something of a signature, this man is a constant source of warmth and kindness. He loves this sport, not just for the fishing itself, but for the camaraderie and quality time that is always paired with it. He regularly travels to each tournament with a cockpit full of family members and friends, including his wife, daughter, and son. He's the first to ask for a photograph of his team gathered around the boat's transom, not to boast on social media, but to simply freeze little moments with his loved ones. He truly and outwardly cherishes his Carolina summers on the docks, a sentiment he shares with staff and other participants with routine enthusiasm.

And while he brings great positive energy to our sport as a participant, he's also shown steadfast support for the next generation of anglers by sponsoring countless youth awards at various tournaments. While presenting these awards to young winners, he takes the time to shake their hands, to look them right in the eye, and to offer them his heartfelt congratulations as he describes their achievements to gathering crowds.

We were lucky to have him bring this same personable and sincere attitude to his work as a member and chair of the Gov Cup's Advisory Board. It's easy to accept the status quo in boardroom settings, but tonight's honoree instead sought out and invited other perspectives to the table. In the 6.5 years that he was a board member, he chose to fully understand an issue before making a decision, a characteristic that no doubt also serves him well when practicing law.

His contributions to our sport and the conservation of South Carolina's natural resources simply can't be tallied. Yes, some aspects can be measured in donations or time. But his most lasting impressions, those stemming from his quality of character and contagious enthusiasm for blue water fishing here in the Palmetto State, stretch well beyond any metric we can muster. So, it is our great privilege and honor to announce that this year's Carroll A Campbell Award goes to Mr. Fred Bergen, owner of the Legal Holiday.





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Outstanding Dolphin:

Glazed

Owner & Captain: Miles Herring

Angler: Wilson Springs

70.0 pounds



2024 Governor's Cup Series Winners: Meatfish

Outstanding Tuna:

Mingo

Owner & Captain: Jody Tamsberg

Angler: Joel Tamsberg

31.6-pound Blackfin



Outstanding Wahoo:

Adamada

Owner: O.L. Thomspn III

Captain: Grady Chandler

51.1 pounds



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Advisory Board of Directors Chairman Awards

By: Cameron Rhodes, The Buckskin Billfish

Stokely Holder

Mr. Stokely Holder served on the board for 8.5 years, the longest run for a board member in the Series' history. As Chair, Mr. Holder championed efforts to expand the Series' content creation, including videography, and strengthened collaboration with each of the tournaments. Please join us in thanking Mr. Holder for his many years of direction and service to the Series, as well as



John Hill



We'd like to extend our gratitude to Mr. John Hill, our former Vice Chairman. He served as a committed board member for 6.5 years and as Vice Chair was a passionate advocate for the South Carolina Memorial Reef, as well as a steadfast source of support for staff and Series traditions. Please join us in thanking Mr. Hill for his many years of service to the Governor's Cup, the South Carolina Memorial Reef, and our state's anglers.

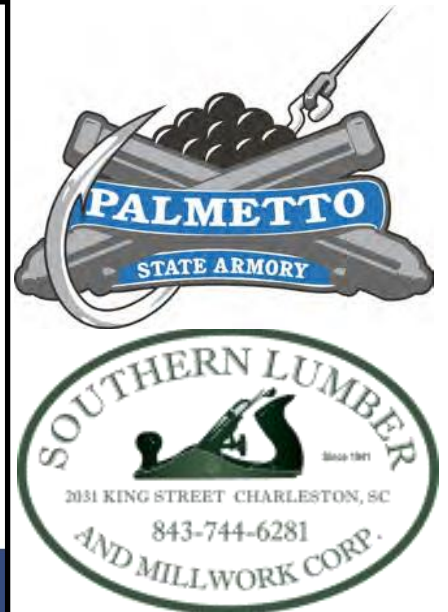
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Mate of the Year Award: John Michael Phillips

By: Cameron Rhodes, The Buckskin Billfish

This year's recipient is the kind of person who embodies those very attributes, whether in a tournament or simply sitting back at the dock. He's charming, professional, polite, welcoming and friendly. No matter how busy he may be while rigging baits or putting in the work to keep a cockpit running smoothly, he is the first to pause and offer a passerby a much-needed water or a helping hand.

Although others may act as if their cup is already full, this year's recipient is eager to learn, readily open to critique and growth. And while he's committed to improving his own skills, he still carves out the time to share his knowledge and expertise with others. This year he mentored two young mates just getting started in the sport, taking the time to carefully and patiently teach them the skills they'll need to be successful in this industry.



He's also always happy to offer support and guidance to anglers as they fight a first fish or try something new. He's a constant source of encouragement and positive energy in the cockpit. Even while actively watching the spread, he checks in on everybody to not only ensure they are having a good time, but to also boost morale when it's needed most. He's the first to lift others up in the wake of a mistake, and the first to wholeheartedly celebrate them when they succeed.

While fishing this year's Series with a relatively new program, he helped his team release a total of 6 blue marlin and 13 sailfish, finishing the season in 5th place overall.

Since he wholly embodies what it means to be an exceptional mate, we are thrilled to announce that the 2024 Mate of the Year is Dugga Boy's John Michael Phillips.





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Outstanding Lady Angler, 1st Place:

Holly McAlhany

Boat: Sweet Spot

Owner: Sweet Spot Marine

Captain: Rob Mahoney

5 Blue Marlin, 5 Sailfish



2024 Governor's Cup Series Winners: Lady Angler

Outstanding Lady Angler, 2nd Place:

Carson Smith

Boat: Lady-S

Owner & Captain: Mark Smith

2 Blue Marlin



Outstanding Lady Angler, 3rd Place:

Makyla Wyatt

Boat: Reloaded

Owner: Will Sprang

Captain: Wren Fogle

1 Blue Marlin



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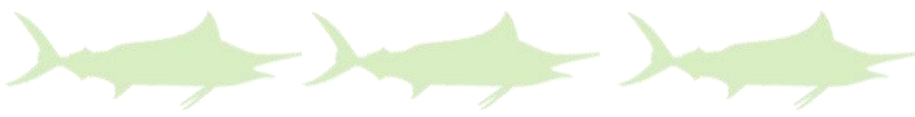
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Outstanding Youth Angler, 1st Place:

Leila Gressette

Boat: Man Cave

Owner: Billy Gressette

Captain: Chase Merriman

1 Blue Marlin, 5 Sailfish



2024 Governor's Cup Series Winners: Youth Angler



Outstanding Youth Angler, 2nd Place:

Hunter Alex

Boat: Can Do

Owner: Christopher Alex

Captain: Alex Pennekamp

1 Blue Marlin, 2 Sailfish

Outstanding Youth Angler, 3rd Place:

Sidney Thomas

Boat: Sea Fix

Owner: Harry & Fran Johnson

Captain: John Thomas

1 Blue Marlin, 1 Sailfish



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SAFMC Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award: Willie Ladue

Willie Ladue was recently recognized by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council with the 2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award. “Staff Sergeant William Ladue was nominated by First Sergeant and JEA Coordinator Garret Hering. SSG Ladue works the Lower Charleston Unit within Region 4 covering South Carolina’s coast and is responsible for enforcing recreational and commercial saltwater as well as freshwater fisheries. He serves as a Field Training Officer for new hires assigned to his unit, and considered a leader when it comes to knowledge of the waterways in his area of operation.

Known by his fellow officers as “Willie”, Ladue is also known as his unit’s go-to officer for JEA, with over 100 hours of patrol time in 2023. He made multiple commercial saltwater fisheries cases that include license violations, shellfish and crabbing violations, and illegal trawling violations. Ladue is also responsible for numerous recreational saltwater cases, including bag and size limit for saltwater gamefish and multiple illegal use of gill net cases. He was the lead officer in four trawling in closed state waters cases this past year, issuing five citations that totaled over \$31,000 in fines.

According to JEA Coordinator Hering, “Willie is always willing to help his coworkers with whatever they need and rarely seeks credit for himself. Moreover, he is always willing to be the officer who makes the case but gives citations to the younger officers who are with him at the time.”

“While the 2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year recipients are at different stages in their careers, they share in the qualities, values, and dedication to the protection of marine resources,” said Council Chair, Carolyn Belcher. “We are happy to share this well-deserved recognition.” Congratulations, Willie!

Article Credit: [Game Warden Lucas Barnard and Staff Sergeant William Ladue Receive SAFMC Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#)



Photo Credit: SAFMC

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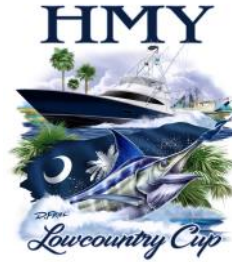
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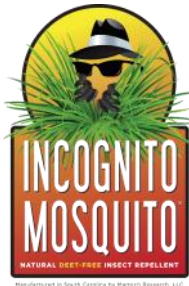


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