



Tag & Release

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



Series Reflections:

**October 2026
Vol. 31 No. 5**

Thanks to everyone for a fantastic 2026 tournament series! We held the Awards Reception at Founders Hall and had a wonderful evening celebrating our award recipients. We thank Ryan Collins for catering an exceptional spread of hors d'oeuvres, Marshland Mixers for keeping our drinks topped off, and DJ Trevor with D&M Productions for keeping us entertained.

Congratulations to the *Claytime*, the 2026 Series champions! We've included photos and speeches from the event in this issue so those of you who weren't able to attend can feel as if you were there with us. We were honored to name Mr. Foster McKissick, Jr., as this year's Carroll A. Campbell Award recipient. Our 2026 Mate of the Year Award went to a very deserving man, Robby Killey, for his impressive skills and hard work aboard the *Claytime*.

We are excited for the 2027 Series and hope to see a great bite and even more participants! We will be welcoming back the Charleston Billfish Invitational, the 59th 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 2027 Series!

2026 Platinum Sponsors:



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39th Annual SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series 2027 Tournament Schedule

May 12 - 15

Charleston Billfish Invitational

[Charleston Billfish Invitational](#)

Contact: Katie Harriss and Claudia Holcombe
49 Immigration Street Charleston, SC 29403
(843) 708-7366
billfish@seabreezemarina.com

May 26 - 29

59th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament

[58th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament](#)

Contact: David Black
P. O. Box 1704 Georgetown, SC 29442
(843) 546-1776
dblack@georgetownlandingmarina.com

June 2 - 5

HMY Lowcountry Cup

[HMY Lowcountry Cup](#)

Contact: Desiree Freeman
7 Lockwood Drive, SC 29401
(561) 972-0564
LCC@HMY.com

June 23 - 26

Carolina Billfish Classic

[Carolina Billfish Classic](#)

Contact: Loyd Weston
20 Patriots Point Road Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
(843) 568-5230
td@fishcbc.com

July 14 - 17

Edisto Invitational Billfish Tournament

[Edisto Invitational Billfish Tournament](#)

Contact: Charles Yeomans
P. O. Box 598 Edisto Beach, SC 29438
(843) 631-5055
themarinaeb@gmail.com

For more information, please visit:

GovCup@dnr.sc.gov • govcup.dnr.sc.gov

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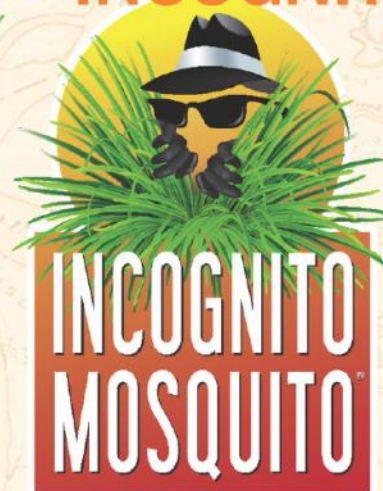
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2026 Governor's Cup Series Winners

Thompson Turner Construction Top Billfish Boat

Outstanding Billfish Boat - 1st Place

Claytime

Owner: Jon Clay

Captain: Phillip Fender

6 blue marlin, 1 white marlin

and 24 sailfish released

Points: 8,675



Thank you to our Top Billfish Boat Platinum Sponsor:



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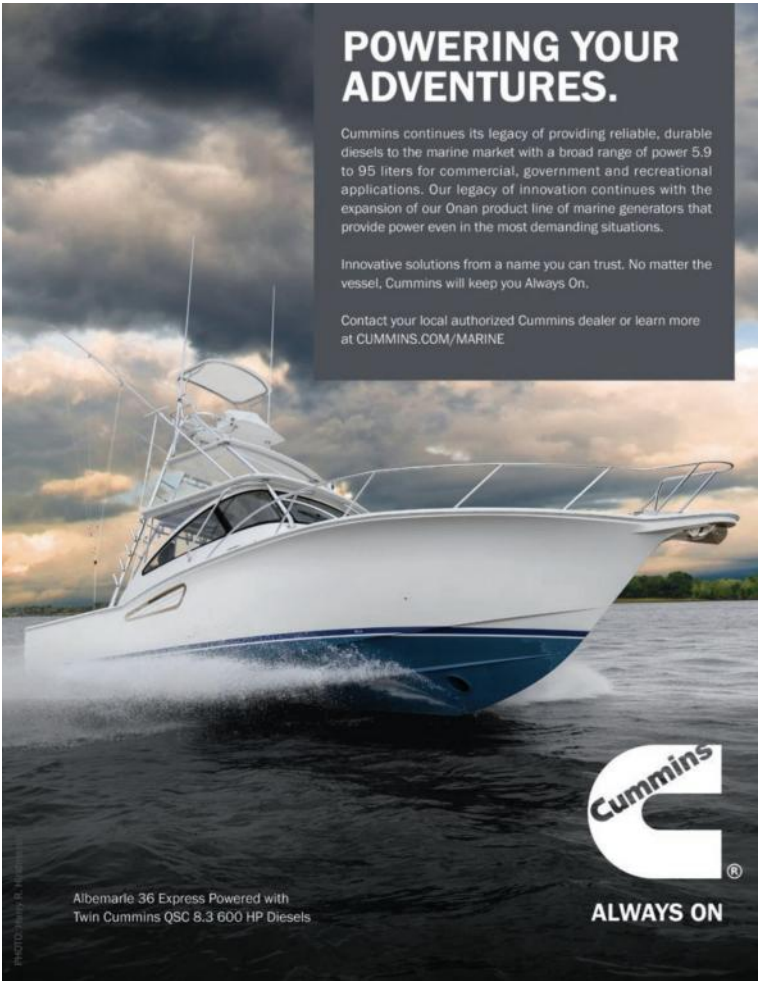
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2026 Governor's Cup Series Winners

Thompson Turner Construction Top Billfish Boat

Outstanding Billfish Boat - 2nd Place

Rascal

Owner: Foster McKissick

Captain: Mark Rogers

5 blue marlin, 1 white marlin

and 24 sailfish released

Points: 8,075



Outstanding Billfish Boat - 3rd Place

Game On

Owner: VOR Sportfishing LLC

Captain: Bubba Roof

7 blue marlin and 15 sailfish released

Points: 7,275





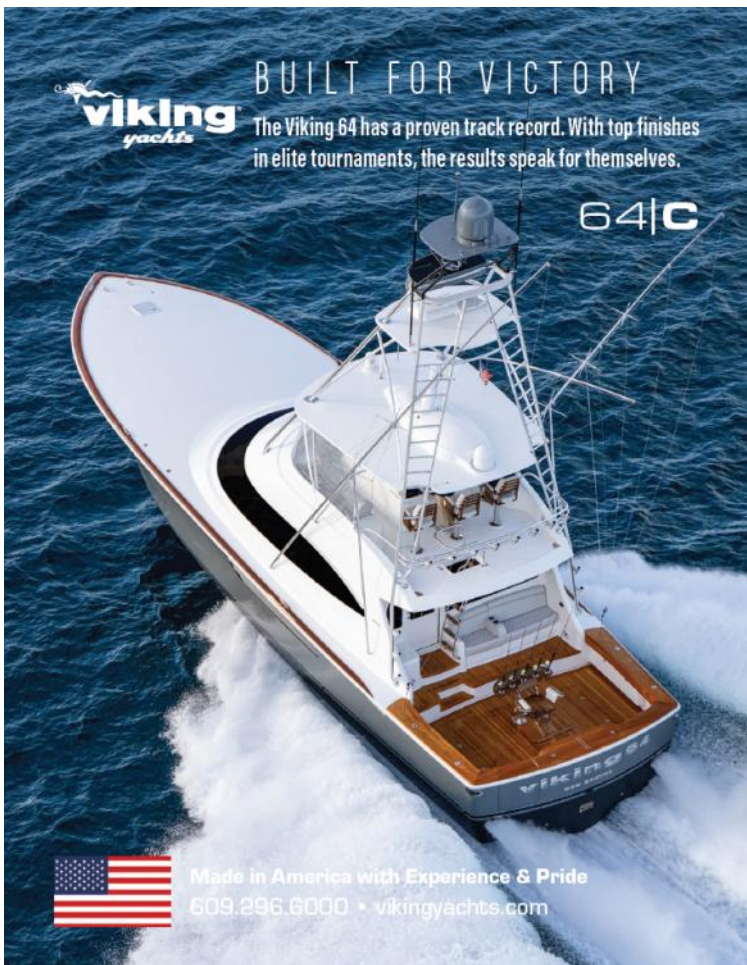
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Mate of the Year Award

Robby Killey, *Claytime*

By: Cameron Rhodes, The Buckskin Billfish

The Mate of the Year Award recognizes exceptional mates who leave a lasting impression on their peers, as well as captains, owners, and tournament staff. The hardworking men and women in the cockpit are critical cornerstones in our sport fishing community. Their preparation and skills serve as the bedrock of any stellar fishing performance.

Every person who has fished with this year's recipient, whether here in South Carolina or other sportfishing destinations around the world, is certainly better for it.

While he has decades of experience as a professional mate, his greatest value doesn't come from his exceptional skills as an angler. He is most importantly a coach and a teacher. He takes the time to not only show anglers and other developing mates how to do things, but he'll also explain why they're necessary.

So many highlights from his team's season can be traced back to him. It's the bait that was carefully rigged, the piece of tackle that was meticulously reviewed, the younger mate that was shown the right way to do something, or the suggestion offered to an angler right before the bite.

His captain describes him as setting the standard for what it means to be a reliable mate. And when you have a leader like him on board, that you've already given yourself a leg up come tournament time.

He's the healthiest mix of fun and serious, encouraging and instructive, cautious and bold, experienced and open-minded, and sportsmanlike and competitive.

He's faced and overcome tremendous hardships in his personal life and still approaches the world with inspiring candor.

Importantly, this man gets along with everybody. He loves a good, goofy t-shirt, slinging the nation's highest quality split tails, and being a brand-new dad.

The old saying goes that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. And where this guy goes, luck surely follows. He now has two back-to-back Series wins to prove it.

We are thrilled to announce that the 2026 Mate of the Year is *Claytime's* Robby Killey.





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2026 Governor's Cup Series Winners Meatfish

Outstanding Dolphin

Bad Becky

Owner: Bad Becky LLC

Captain: Thomas Adkins

Angler: Ricky Anderson

64.4 pounds



Outstanding Tuna

Sea Tiger

Owner: Jerry Smith

Captain: Edward Bryant

Angler: George Dunlap

25.1-pound blackfin

Outstanding Wahoo

On The Hook

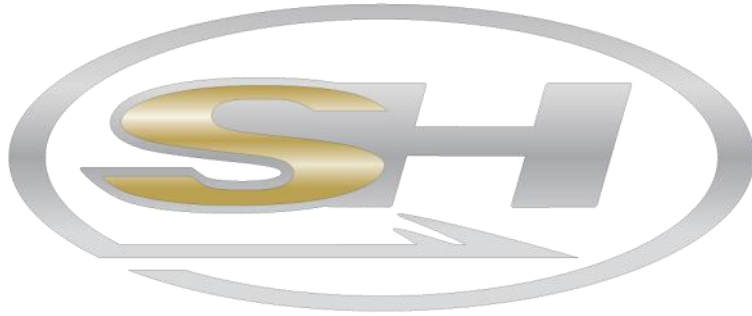
Owner & Captain: James Bass

Angler: Stratton Pollitzer

58.3 pounds



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2026 Governor's Cup Series Winners

Top Lady Angler

Outstanding Lady Angler - 1st Place

Cynthia Starosta

Boat: *Star Fish*

Owner: Star Fish LLC

Captain: Randy Estes

3 blue marlin and 10 sailfish

released Points: 3,800



Outstanding Lady Angler - 2nd Place

Kelly Kirkpatrick

Boat: *Showtime!*

Owner: Fred Hardwick

Captain: Jon Meade

1 blue marlin and 3 sailfish released

Points: 1,200

Outstanding Lady Angler - 3rd Place

Kirsten Jennings

Boat: *Micabe*

Owner: Mike Larrow

Captain: Chris Jennings

1 white marlin and 3 sailfish released

Points: 800





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Thank you to our Youth Angler Platinum Sponsor:



GRESCON DEVELOPMENT LLC

Governor Carroll A. Campbell Jr. Award

Mr. Foster McKissick

By: Cameron Rhodes, The Buckskin Billfish

The Carroll A. Campbell Award was created to honor individuals and families who have been an integral part of billfish conservation in our state and who embody Mr. Campbell's principles and passions. This award is one of the Series' most prestigious honors, recognition of a lifetime of commitment and service to everyone here today, as well as every angler who enjoys blue water fishing off our state's coast.

This year's recipient has been involved with the Series nearly since its inception. Over several decades, he has contributed to the Gov Cup as a committed boat owner, a generous sponsor, and a trusted board member. He served on the Gov Cup's board for 6 years in the mid-2000s and spent a year leading important discussions as its chairman.

Afterward, he went on to serve on DNR's Law Enforcement Advisory Committee, providing critical guidance in the state's efforts to protect and manage South Carolina's natural resources, as well as hunters and anglers.

He's a familiar face, a giant, friendly figure with a Santa-like beard often seen walking the docks and greeting friends. He gives a famously firm handshake, one that might even take you to the ground if you're not prepared for the impending grip and pull.

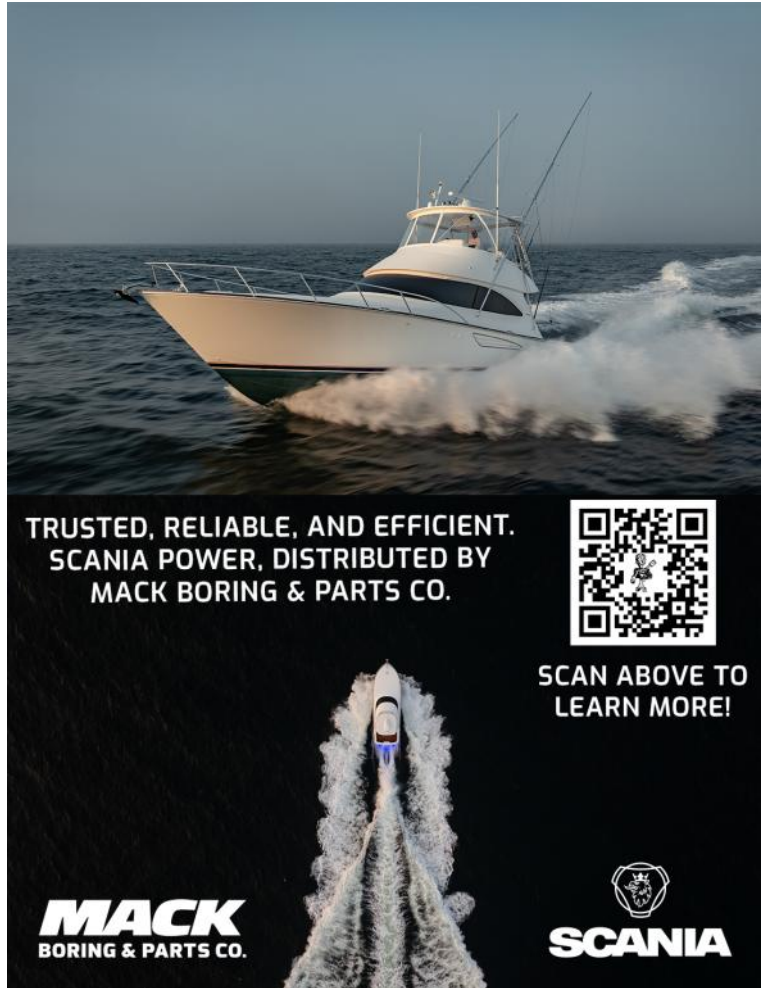
He's a constant source of support for his team, or really, his family. Time together isn't just spent on the water. It's spent on the lake or in the field too. His crew looks to him as their coach, the man keeping them straight in the cockpit from the comfort of the mezzanine. And he's something of a lucky horseshoe too.

He only fished four days this summer – two days during the Georgetown tournament and two days during Edisto. His team would go on to win both events.

He's been involved in countless podium finishes, first aboard his boat, Overspray, then for many years with Norman Pulliam and the Rascal program, and now as the proud owner of the Rascal. A man of great character and inspiring generosity, he's known for regularly inviting guests aboard the Rascal, exposing people of various backgrounds and interests to offshore sportfishing for the very first time. Understandably, he's been credited for creating numerous blue water anglers, a feat that would certainly make Governor Campbell very proud.

So, with that, it is our great privilege and honor to announce that this year's Carroll A Campbell Award goes to Mr. Foster McKissick.





2026 Governor's Cup Series Winners

Grescon Development Youth Angler

Outstanding Youth Angler - 1st Place

Ford Schlicksup, 12

Boat: *Undue Risk*

Owner & Captain: Michael Schlicksup

1 blue marlin and 6 sailfish released

Points: 1,800



Outstanding Youth Angler - 2nd Place

Julia Gressette, 16

Boat: *Man Cave*

Owner: MCF Family Holdings

Captain: Chase Merriman

1 blue marlin and 6 sailfish released

Points: 1,200

Outstanding Youth Angler - 3rd Place

Isla Wyatt, 14

Boat: *Sola Fide*

Owner & Captain: Gary Wyatt

5 sailfish released

Points: 1,000





2026 TOURNAMENTS



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Youth Angler

Top Billfish Boat



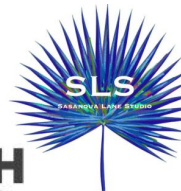
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The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, gender, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, PO Box 167, Columbia, South Carolina,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