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Records Fall at Tournament Anglers Association East Cape Event

East Cape, Mexico: Since 1984, members of the Tournament Anglers Association have ventured south of the border for the East Cape Billfish Tournament, but even the longtime veterans of this event were pleasantly surprised by the outstanding fishing that awaited them at this year's 28th anniversary event. Twenty-three participating anglers released a total of 142 billfish: 137 striped marlin, two blue marlin and three sailfish. At 6.17 billfish per angler, this is the highest per-angler release statistic in the history of the tournament (the previous record was set back in 1987 when 33 anglers released 163 billfish). Every participating angler was able to release at least one billfish during the three-day event and one Grand Slam was recorded by angler Dale Miles, who let go a blue marlin, two striped marlin and a sailfish on the tournament's first day. The striped marlin were found in good numbers less than 30 minutes' run by boat from the tournament's host resort, Palmas de Cortez, and were attacking live and dead bait as well as lures with great abandon during the event. The first day of fishing saw the fleet releasing 71 billfish, with another 39 coming on Wednesday and 31 on Thursday.

When the spray cleared and the final scores tallied, it would be Sam White who would repeat as this year's Top Angler. White scored six striped marlin releases along with one sailfish release on Day One and followed up with another four on the second day of fishing for a slim lead going into the third and final day. He was only able to score an additional two striped marlin releases while others were able to make up considerable ground but in the end he would emerge victorious with 12 striped marlin and one sailfish for the three-day tournament. All but one of his billfish were caught on rigged ballyhoo, the one exception being a striped marlin that fell for a lure only after the team had run out of their allotted amount of dead bait on Day One. Dale Miles would finish a very close second with 11 striped marlin and one sailfish, all released, while Jim Gill landed in third place with 10 striped marlin released. Gill was able to let go five striped marlin on the third day alone for a very strong finish in this tournament.

The team of White and Joel Bartlett finished first in the Top Team standings as well with a total of 4,400 points. They were followed by the team of Dick Wallace and Will Evans in second and Jim Gill and Michael Sparco in third. In the TAA event, anglers are randomly assigned a teammate; anglers fish two per boat each day and rotate boats and fishing partners each day. This gives everyone a chance to meet new anglers throughout the tournament.

"We had an incredible bite this year!" exclaimed Tournament Director Will Evans. "Normally at East Cape if you can release a stripey or two then that's a terrific day but this year we had anglers with four and five releases each day—in previous years that would have been enough to win the entire tournament but not this year. It was just amazing!" He went on to thank the staff and management of Palmas de Cortez for their assistance with the event throughout the year.

The Tournament Anglers Association was created with the mission of fostering both national and international competition and conservation for saltwater gamefish throughout the Eastern Pacific region. TAA was incorporated in February, 1983 as a California non-profit corporation and is tax exempt under both Federal and California law as a recreational club. For more information please visit www.fishtaa.com.