



TAG FLAG

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE **T**OURNAMENT **A**NGLERS **A**SSOCIATION **R**EVIEW OF 2006

IXTAPA SAILFISH TOURNAMENT MAN OF THE YEAR

For Rocky Franich 2006 started out with a BANG! Just prior to the Tournament, Rocky was selected as the "2006 Man Of The Year", for Watsonville, Calif., for his many good deeds in his community.

Rocky also took top honors for the 2006 Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament, held January 23 to 27, 2006.

The 2006 Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament started off with the anglers meeting and welcome reception, Sunday, January 22nd. The Sunday night get together also included the annual membership meeting and election of the Board of Directors.

Bright and early Monday morning, 46 anglers, on 23 pangas started the 2006 Tournament. At 8:05 AM the first sailfish was caught and tipped by Bill Evans.

Rocky's tournament notoriety began at 9:26 AM when he tipped his first sailfish. He never relinquished the lead from then on. His totals for day 1 were 3 releases and 450 points. The sailfish in the area must have been looking for baits with Franich stamped on them. Judy Franich also caught and released 3 sails on day 1 and scored 430 points.

Steve Lynch tipped the day's last fish at 2:15 PM.

Tuesday, day 2, began with the first fish tipped at 8:37 AM by Jack Holeman. Rocky caught one stripped marlin and one sailfish for 300 additional points for a total of 750 points.

Thursday, day 3's first sailfish was released by non other then Rocky, at 7:59 AM. However, a different angler captured the daily high point accolades. John Jacobi caught and released 2 sails and one blue marlin. John's big blue was estimated to weigh approximately 220 pounds. Quite an accomplishment on 20 pound test line and fight time of 39 minutes. He scored 500 points for the day. However, Rocky continued his streak with another 2 sailfish and 300 points, for a total of 1,250 for the Tournament.

The last fish caught and released by Dale Miles at 2:49 PM.

On Friday, the last day of the Tournament, the discussion centered on who would finish in second, third and fourth place and secure a place on the 2007 Rolex/IGFA Offshore Championships, representing the Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament Team.

The day started with Jerry Yahiro releasing a sailfish at 8:08 AM.

Dale Miles responded to the challenge by scoring 700 points with 4 sailfish releases. He captured the

daily high point angler spot and with his previous 450 points took second place for the Tournament.

Third place finisher was Ken Ponichtera with 5 sailfish releases and one dorado for 760 points.

Fourth place ended in a total point tie with 750 points each between Smokey Molle (5 sailfish releases, one dorado) and Kelly Schulzke (5 sailfish releases). However, Smokey edged out Kelly to capture fourth place, based on time. Smokey accrued his 750 points by 9:29 AM, on Friday, and Kelly finished at 2:44 PM.

Kelly caught the last fish of the 2006 Tournament.

The top four finishers, Rocky, Dale, Ken and Smokey will represent the Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament Team at the 2007 Rolex/IGFA Offshore Championship. Kelly will be the first alternate.

The 2006 Tournament was co-chaired by Dave Holland and Mike Hopley. Unfortunately, due to illness, Mike could not attend the Tournament. Jerliue, Mike's wife, took up where Mike left off and superbly assisted Dave in putting on a GREAT Tournament. Thanks to Dave and Adrienne Holland and Mike and Jerliue Hopley. Job well done. Forty-six anglers caught 108 sailfish, 5 marlin (4 stripe and 1 blue marlin) and 10 dorado.



Top four finishers of the 2006 Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament: 1 to r, Rocky Franich, Dale Miles, Smokey Mole, Ken Ponichtera. They will be the TAA's Ixtapa Team to the 2007 Rolex/IGFA Offshore Championship, in Cabo San Lucas.



Dave Holland, chairman of the 2006 Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament, introduces the 2007 chairman/woman Jerilu Hopley (Mike Hopley) and cochairman Brian Hill.

2007 TOURNAMENT DATE

Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament: Jan. 13 to 20, 2007.

EASTCAPE TEAM PLACES THIRD IN 2006 ROLEX/IGFA OFFSHORE TOURNAMENT

By Keith Leimbach

Planning started mid-year 2005 for the Eastcape Rolex Team and the effort paid off in a third place finish.

The 2006 team included Captain Keith "Yavolt Kommandant" Leimbach, Bill "The Stock Pusher" Evans, John "Nipple Puller" Jacobi, and the infamous Dale "Milo" Miles.

For those who have won a qualifying tournament and have had the pleasure of organizing a team of amateur anglers, for the Tournament, can testify that you would rather take second place in the qualifying tournament!

Registration begins with a package from IGFA followed by a series of check writing and paperwork exercises. Planning for and arranging team shirts and shorts is the next step followed by organizing the team fishing format and standardizing gear set-up. The Rolex/IGFA Offshore Championship would not be complete without many trips to see Hippo, Hi's Tackle, San Francisco, for those surefire marlin and latest gadgets.

The Eastcape Team "agreed" with the "Kommandant" to a standard gear set-up for lures and bait rods. The rotation of anglers fishing position changed every 30 minutes.

The standard gear approach worked pretty well since it allowed the team to share tackle without concerns over IGFA violations to rules such as leader lengths.

Rotating anglers on a regular schedule kept things active throughout the day. This also eliminated confusion about each individual's role once the fish arrived. Bill will also attest to the value of the rotation since, much to John's dismay, fish frequently got interested in the position John had left and Bill filled – perhaps it was the Copenhagen.

Bill was the top angler for the team.

Teams fish in many different formats. The winning team never put a lure in the water and trolled dead ballyhoo exclusively. Their approach was well organized, and functioned as a systematic machine, that had all team members busy throughout the day.

Other teams fished a more casual approach and each angler worked their own rods.

The Eastcape Team fished a researched pattern of 4-5 lures including the much guarded secret of the Pakula Shrek Coackroach in the long rigger.

The most unique was the Vanuatu Team. Their method was to fish with any teammate/s who had made it home from the bar or jail by the time the boats left the dock.

Regardless of the approach, everyone had a great time.

Day One got off to a wild start fishing the Bad Market. The Eastcape Team was raising fish at a phenomenal rate with 14 lure strikes throughout the day. Eleven strikes on the cockroach. All 14 strikes were hard and the fish were stuck long enough to start the fight. Unfortunately, only one of them made it to the boat, tipped and released. This was obviously a huge disappointment for the team, however,

something was really working in the set-up.

Drags were reset, hooks sharpened, and 2-hook rigs re-tied.

The team was able to hook release an additional four marlin, using bait.

As their boat arrived the docks, the place was a buzz. Television crews and local reporters were waiting for the team to arrive. Based on radio chatter throughout the day the team was tied for first place!

Day two was hot fishing as well. The Eastcape Team, fishing with a certified observer, had mixed action between lures and bait. Lures worked great to raise the fish and bait was the way to close the deal. The team landed another five marlin.

Milo also picked up a large bull dorado.

At one point during the day, the team had a triple hook up although one fish was lost within a few minutes.

Boats began to swarm to the action and nearly drove through the team's lines.

The two remaining fish were pursued one from the bow by John and the other from the stern by Bill. Both fish had Bill and John spooled at different points during the fight and were in complete opposite directions, over 800 yards of line separated the two fish! The captain of the Yahoo! did a fantastic job of managing both fish. Finally both were eventually caught and scored.

Day two ended with the Eastcape Team alone in first place.

Day three began to slow down, with only two marlin caught by the Eastcape Team. The active waters

from the prior two days were now under a lot of fishing pressure from the rest of the fleet. This may have caused the fish to go down and the total number of fish caught across the tournament was slightly lower.

The Eastcape Team fished hard all day and managed to hook up a large striper with six minutes left in the day's fishing. The team was stunned into silence as they watched the fish come unbuttoned, well into the fight. Jacobi almost jumped overboard thinking he had made an error. As the gear was reeled in at the end of the day the team learned that the shackle rig holding the 2-hook rig had come undone, a painful lesson to check gear regularly throughout the day.

Only the Bermuda Team was able to consistently land fish catching a total of seven for the day. Their performance put them into first place and the Eastcape Team moved to second by less than a single marlin (Dale's dorado pushed the scores to within 200 points).

Day four was a pressure cooker for the Eastcape Team. The team knew they needed to make the most of all opportunities on the last day and they were well prepared.

The team was joined for the third day in a row by a certified observer (all top 10 teams fished with an observer) and the film crew for The Outdoor Channel. This would have been the day for a bigger boat.

Two marlin were caught and released using bait, early in the day, by Keith and Bill followed by a large wahoo for Keith.

Then the fishing slowed as quickly as it got hot and the team decided to give dead bait a slow troll. The results were the same and although many fish were spotted, nothing would strike the bait. Milo

bounced bait off the heads of several marlin with his precision casting but nothing was interested.

The team finished the day with two marlin and a wahoo.

The boat ride back to the dock was exciting. The scoresheets were tallied to guesstimate what final position could have been possible. John flavored Bill's beverages with a sacrificial ballyhoo while Keith and Milo told lies on camera to The Outdoor Channel crew.

As the team arrived at the dock and reviewed their gear with the official inspectors, it sounded like fishing had been slow for all teams and their chances of placing looked hopeful.

The last boat to return to the docks ended up being the winning team, fishing many miles away from the fleet at their captain's direction, they landed ten striped marlin for the day and were securely in first place.

The Eastcape Team managed to finish in third place. They were less than one marlin out of second place and less than one marlin out of fourth place.

Each team member collected a bronze Bodo Muche marlin sculpture, a \$1000 gift certificate from Penn, a million stories of the Shrek Cockroach, and memories for a lifetime.

PONICHTERA RUNS AWAY WITH EASTCAPE

By Neal McNamara

The 19th Eastcape Billfish Tournament was all over after day one. Ken Ponichtera of The Dalles, Oregon led from wire to wire. Ken's performance bested the second place angler, Dale Miles, by 750 points, or three billfish releases.

A total of 56 billfish were released in three days of fishing by 33 TAA anglers. Records show that this was the 6th most productive event in all the years since the tournament started in 1983. One of the 56 billfish was a Pacific blue marlin, caught and released by Rick Bothmer. The other fish were 54 Striped Marlin and one Sailfish. In addition, the group caught 5 dorado and a single wahoo.

Most of the fish were hooked either in the Punta Pescadero region or just a few miles offshore from La Ribiera. It is very interesting to note that almost exactly half of the billfish were hooked on lures and the other half hooked on dead ballyhoo. Circle hooks were mandatory when using bait.

This year, live bait was not available at all for reasons that were never explained.

Ken was high point for day 1 followed by new TAA member Mark Rogers, who released two marlin. The second day proved to be the best with 23 billfish released. Ed Day led the field followed closely by Rick Bothmer. On the last day, Richard Kersten quietly released two stripers to take the daily prize, followed by Richard Schwager.

High boat for the tournament was a new one, Billfighter, with 8 re-

leases or 2000 points, followed by Cutty Sark and Julissa.

Daily high went to Billfighter twice and then to Cutty Sark on day 3.

The 2006 Eastcape was chaired by Neal McNamara and co-chaired by Dale Mile. In 2007, Dale will chair the tournament, and the co-chair will be Jim Severson.

The 2007 dates are June 14 to June 18 and we have booked rooms and boats for 40 anglers in anticipation of a good turnout.

The 2007 Eastcape Tournament will celebrate its 20th Anniversary.

Mark your calendars now!

The official results follow:

Overall Champion Ken Ponichtera
1500

Champions Division

1 st Dale Miles	750
2 nd Smokey Molle	510
3 rd Neal McNamara	500
4 th Andy Jacobi	500

Challenge Division

1 st Ken Ponichtera	1500
2 nd Dave Ogle	750
3 rd Richard Kersten	750
4 th Mark Rogers	750

Teams

1 st Ponichtera/Ramsey	1750
2 nd Ogle Hafeman	1250
3 rd Bothmer/McNamara	1225

In a new competition this year, the Challenge Division outgunned the Champions by a significant margin and each of the 19 challengers received a new offshore lure courtesy of Island Lure Company.

We wish to thank all of our other sponsors for their very generous contributions: Penn Reel Company, Hook & Tackle, and Costa Del Mar.

Our explanation of the team to represent the 2006 Eastcape at the 2007 Rolex/IGFA Offshore Championship is a bit complicated.

Ordinarily, the top four overall anglers comprise the team. Those were, Ponichtera, Miles, Ogle and Kersten. However, Ponichtera and Miles had already qualified for the Rolex at the 2006 Ixtapa Sailfish Tournament so the next two anglers moved up, Mark Rogers and Bill Evans. But Mark will be on a sailboat to his new home in New Zealand so he had to decline. This moved Rick Bothmer into the fourth and final team spot.

Dale Miles accomplished another milestone in his fishing career. He also qualified for the Rolex by finishing in the top four at the 40th Annual Roosterfish Tournament. This "trifecta" may never be achieved again.



Top four anglers for the 2006 Eastcape Tournament: 1 to r, Ken Ponichtera, Dale Miles, Richard Kersted and Dave Ogle.



Neal McNamara, chairman for the 2006 Eastcape Billfish Tournament, reviews the rules, ONE MORE TIME!