



THE FISHIN' INSIDER

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All I can say is that was one hell of a tournament last weekend. Over fifteen hundred total entries, 136 boats in the Offshore Challenge and close to 200 anglers in the Bay Challenge had the jackpots pushing a half a million bucks; at least that was the rumor floating around the Convention Center Sunday afternoon.

And the real good news was that the fish showed up to play. With 91 billfish caught and 87 released the 67th Texas International Fishing Tournament was a record breaker and a probable record breaker for a Gulf of Mexico tournament. The 47 blue marlin caught with 45 released was huge but the record is still held by the Boy Scouts Tournament fished off St. Thomas with 124 blues released by 28 boats in three days of fishing.

The only downer was NOAA Fisheries Enforcement, they boarded

49 boats and found 10 without a Highly Migratory Species permit, those ten will be fined \$500 a pop for not taking the time to go online and buy the 22 dollar permit. This permit has been required for years to fish for billfish, tunas and shark and I can just imagine the embarrassment of the folks that hung up that 158 pound yellowfin only to have it and their boat DQ'd from the tournament. I understand the folks aboard the Wet-N-Wild took close to 20 grand in tuna pots for a 141-pound beast they hung up on Saturday.

Weirdest story I heard on the radio was the boat that lost their only object of the day. Apparently these guys had fought a blue to the side of the boat and slipped the blaze orange garter on to the bill to take its picture. The fish slapped 'um and took off on a short run. When they got it back to the side

of the boat for the release, the garter was gone. Bizarre is all I can say cuz they were on the radio pleading for someone to loan them another one cuz they'd left the rest at the dock. Congrats to Goin' South. Rumor has it their 463 pound blue marlin was worth close to 200 grand. Good show to all 'cept those without an HMS permit; there is no excuse.

Next up is the Ladles Kingfish Tournament and here's a reminder to those fishin' the offshore division. You better have an HMS permit cuz if ya don't you and your fish will be DQ'd and you'll be fined 500 bucks by Uncle Sugar's minions. Murry the Mullet and his pals said to say hi. They're lookin' forward to this year's edition moons over the Laguna Madre. Be careful out there and please obey the rules.



Though it ain't a record Mr. Nick's 35.2-pound African pompano does qualify for TP&W's junior angler distinguished catch program. Nick Bomarito fished with the Murphy clan and won the most unusual fish of the 67th TIFT. I can only wonder whether Larry Haines is clairvoyant or if he got up seriously early Sunday morning to paint the trophy cuz it was a perfect rendition when awarded to Nick.

We welcome your fishin' photos. Drop them by 2600 Padre Boulevard on the Island, or mail them to I.B. Hooked, c/o Coastal Current Weekly, P.O. Box 2428, South Padre Island, Texas 78597. Be sure to include the name of the angler, weight and type of fish, where caught, and name of boat if applicable. Photos with SASE will be returned.