

Priceless Pulls Off Derby Victory Right Out Front

Fishing in the historic *Silver Sailfish Derby* is more than just another day offshore. The 2-day tournament off the Palm Beaches is where crews experience sailfishing nostalgia. A sold out 50 boat fleet celebrated this crown jewel of sportfishing in early January, competing offshore with the same passion that so many past participants before them brought to the fishery throughout the tournament's storied history. Anglers have to capitalize on every bite to win the *Derby*. Having ample live baits and the kite fishing "know-how" doesn't guarantee crews will record releases. They have to find the fish. When the *Derby* started in 1935, the fleet didn't go far to start fishing and would set up soon after clearing Palm Beach Inlet; that's exactly where the *Priceless* won the 86th running of *The World's Oldest Sailfish Tournament*.

A total of 223 Atlantic sailfish were released over the duration of the 2023 *Derby* and 5 sails were tagged. Calm conditions offshore on the first day weren't ideally suited to spark a productive bite, but when some of the finest sailfishing captains and crews take to the water at the same time, sailfish will be caught. The tournament was headquartered out of Sailfish Marina in Palm Beach Shores where Captain Andrew Dotterweich and the 48' Viking, *Fish On*, have docked seasonally for some time. This naturally had local patrons and marina staff members excited to see the *Fish On* off to a hot start. Capt. Andrew and crew had 4 sailfish releases soon after the 8am lines-in start of fishing Day 1. They would ultimately finish 3rd Place Overall recording 3 additional releases on Day 2, bringing their tournament total to 7 releases. Captain Bryan Boyle and the *ADHD/Dedicated*, a 62' Viking, also finished with 7 releases for a 4th Place Overall Finish, beat out by *Fish On* based on the "time of release" of their last fish.

Captain John Galvin and the *El Diablo*, a 72' Viking, made a splash among the competitive sailfishing crowd taking Top Daily Boat honors with 5 releases Day 1 of the *Derby*. While the captain certainly deserves credit running the boat, having exceptional anglers is a must to successfully hook and land multiple sailfish. All 5 of *El Diablo's* fish were caught by angler Dylan Torey of Jupiter, and he would earn the title of Top Angler Overall in the 2023 *Derby*. This honor is awarded with the Mrs. Henry R. Rea trophy, a magnificent silver sailfish sculpture that dates back to the event's origin in 1935 and is sponsored by Elizabeth Richebourg Rea of Connecticut.

The second and final day of the *Derby* would produce 21 more fish than the previous day. A cold front pushed through that night, and the wind picked up blowing out of the north. It just felt like sailfish season. When the weather makes drastic changes from one day to the next, there's opportunity for teams to go from zero to hero adapting to new conditions offshore. Captain Nick Carullo and the *Goombay Smash*, a 39' Front Runner, had just one fish the first day. Their goal for Day 2 was to close the gap and make a comeback; they would do just that. The *Goombay Smash* didn't win it all, but 7 releases on the final day of fishing was enough to take 2nd Place Overall with 8 total sailfish releases.

So much has changed in the world of fishing since the *Derby's* inception. High-speed reels make getting the 15-foot leader in hand a bit easier, and bigger faster boats create more accessibility to where teams can fish in their 8-hour window each day. But it doesn't always take a big move

to the boundary lines to find sailfish, anyone who has spent time fishing off the Palm Beaches knows there's plenty of opportunity "right out front." The *Priceless*, a 48' Viking, is no stranger to the *Silver Sailfish Derby*. Hailing from Coral Gables, Florida, Captain Jorge Sanchez and crew have frequented this historic 4-line tournament in recent years. *Priceless* was off to a cold start Day 1 but ended with a hard push releasing 4 fish that afternoon. This was a huge momentum swing for the crew. Despite the condition changes blown in by the northern wind, the *Priceless* picked up right where they left off firing on all cylinders to start the second and final day of fishing. They landed 10 fish that morning and would tally 2 more in the afternoon before the 4pm lines-out call. Working the sailfish sector of the gulfstream, Captain Jorge and the *Priceless* claimed their spot in the sailfishing history books with a total of 16 releases as the winners of the 86th annual *Silver Sailfish Derby*.

Captain Brian Komer and the *BeachKomer* took Top Small Boat honors with 6 releases aboard their 29' SeaVee center console. This was the smallest boat in the fleet making this achievement that much more impressive fishing against vessels measuring up to 92 feet in length.

The Top Lady Angler trophy is sponsored by the Hampp Family of New Jersey in memory of Rose Hampp, who won the honor in the 1957 *Derby* along with many other awards throughout her accomplished angling career. Tatiana Usova of Singer Island was awarded the trophy releasing 4 sails aboard a 46' Release Boatworks the *Charlie*. This award is always highly coveted. Many of these lady anglers have proven they're just as skilled tangling with sailfish on 20 pound test line as any other crew member who might grab the rod.

Another lady angler, fourteen-year-old Myla Alligood of North Palm Beach, was named Top Junior Angler. She released 3 sailfish aboard the 76' Viking, *Just Chillin*. Myla earned this honor for the second year in row, now showing a pattern of competitive skilled angling in the *Derby*. The award was special once again because Myla's father Matt was captaining the boat.

The *Silver Sailfish Derby*, is produced by the West Palm Beach Fishing Club and continues to be the organization's marquee event. The WPBFC is proud to host this tournament that represents an important part of its region's unique identity.