



(Photograph contributed by Curt Whitaker)

STUART SAILFISH CLUB LIGHT TACKLE TOURNAMENT HISTORY

(Contributed by Cindy Mumford & Char Griggs)

1955 – 1st Annual Light Tackle Tournament, Winner – Mrs. Jean Stark, on the **“Hobo”**, with Capt. Jack Whiticar. There were 31 anglers on 10 boats. Awards were Fin-Nor reels. The daily awards were custom-made light tackle sailfish rods. The weather forced the anglers to come in early on the third day of the tournament. This was a contest between individual anglers – not teams. The **“Striper”**, with Capt. Joe Eldredge was awarded a special plaque for being the Capt. from whose boat the most number of sails were released. Capt. Jack Whiticar won an award for being the Capt. from whose boat the highest number of points was scored during the 3-day tournament. Ernest Lyon’s column in the Stuart news said “ The Stuart Sailfish Club deserves praise for its first annual Light Tackle Tournament. Stuart has set the pace for other South Florida communities in the release of sailfish alive. Now, our town, through its long-established angling club, is promoting the capture of this great game fish on lighter and more sportsmanlike tackle.” The awards banquet was broadcast on WSTU.

1956 – 2nd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, Winner – George W. Anderson, on the **“June II”**, with Capt. Van Dell. The tournament was so successful that it established itself as an annual sporting affair. Each angler was allowed two lines – maximum of 4 lines per boat. Boundaries were established: North – from St. Lucie inlet in sight of buoy 12A and South – from St. Lucie inlet in sight of buoy 14A. An alternate day was established as a “weather” day. The tournament received national publicity from Bob Becker of the Chicago Tribune, Nelson Benedict of the Newark Star Ledger. Ed Louys of Salt Water Sportsman, and Rube Allyn of the St. Petersburg Times.

1957 – 3rd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, Winner – Frank C. Neff, on the **“Amigo III”**. All awards were on display in the window of FPL two weeks prior to the tournament.

1958 – 4th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, Winner – G. Newell Hurd, on the **“Miss Jeanne”**, with Capt. John Whitmer.

1959 – 5th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – John B. Dolan, on the **“Teepee”**, with Capt. Dink Anderson. The slogan for the 5th annual tournament was “ Release them alive to live and fight again.

1960 – 6th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – J. French Baldwin, on the **“Marlina II”**, with Capt. Jack Pierpont and Russell V. Boom, on the **“Windy II”**, with Capt. Al Nathan.

Observers were used for the first time. Observers were required to be members of the club. The observer on the **“Volador II,”** with Capt. Fred Voss, Jr. was so seasick he had to be brought back to the docks. The boat lost 2 hrs. of fishing but did not file a formal protest with the protest committee. On the Press boat were Duncan Barnes for the St. Petersburg Times and Sports Illustrated, Bill Burton from the Baltimore Sun, Bill Mosier from the Miami Herald and Ed Block (Baltimore Colts trainer) who shot footage for TV. George Schmidt from CBS was on the *“Hobo”* and shot footage for TV.

1961 – 7th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – G. Newell Hurd, on the **“Miss Jeanne”**, with Capt. John Whitmer, Mrs. Gustave Schirmer, on the **“Sail Ahoy”**, with Capt. Frank Ardine, and Russell V. Boom, on the **“Windy II”**, with Capt. Al Nathan. It was a three-way tie. The tournament was actually fished on January 14th, 1962 as the “1961 day”. There were 18 boats competing that day. All four days of the original 7th annual tournament were cancelled due to bad weather. The last day of the 7th annual tournament was to be fished as a “do-it-yourself” day. This concept was originated by Jack Whiticar. The rules were as follows:

1. When fish is hooked, throw engines out of gear.
2. No maneuvering except that which is required to put boat in reasonable position to fight fish.
3. No backing down on fish.

The rules were considered the “velvet glove on the hand of iron”. It was to separate the men from the boys. The “do-it yourself” concept places the entire fishing job on the angler. The idea had never been tried before in a major tournament. The angling skill was to be the yardstick of victory. Frank C. Neff, winner of the 1957 (3rd) tournament had died in 1960 and the 2nd day of the tournament was to be the Frank C. Neff day in his honor. The directors of the SSC made this decision. Mrs. Neff donated a Paul Revere Bowl to be awarded to the top angler that day. It was awarded to G. Newell Hurd, on the *“Miss Jeanne”*, with Capt. John Whitmer. The awards banquet for the 7th annual was held due to the fact that several barrels of Maine Lobster were flown in. The trophies were wrapped up and held until next year. Capt. Joe Bossard’s (Pam Pat II) wife gave birth that week to a baby girl which they named “Gale.”

1962 – 8th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Miss Lois Henry, on the **“Volador II,”** with Capt. Fred Voss. She was the second woman to win the LTT. Two days were cancelled due to weather. One of those days was to be the “do-it-yourself” day. Sometime between this tournament and the 9th there was an article in the Stuart News by Ernest Lyons.

“St. Augustine has its “Bridge of the Lions” – and if I had my way, there would be a bronze statue of a sailfish rising in a leap at the entrance to the new southbound bridge over the St. Lucie River which the State Dept. is going to build at Stuart on its U.S. 1, 4-lane project.”

1962 – 9th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Mrs. Dorothea Lincoln Dean, on the *“Caliban”*, with Capt. George Staros. She caught 8 fish on 10-lb. Test. This year the directors of the club decided to permanently switch the tournament to the 10th-13th of December because the Nov. – Dec. run of sails was heavy and the weather was better. A cold front moving in on the 2nd day of the tournament caused “sea smoke” (fog), which caused visibility to be limited to 50 yards. Francis Lankford fished this tournament on the Fran L, with Capt. Pete Robertson. The Cuban situation almost caused the directors of the club to cancel the tournament. William O. Simpkin, club President said, “we’ll hold the tournament unless the foreign situation makes it absolutely impossible.” Once again the “do-it-yourself” day was cancelled due to bad weather. Mrs. Dean was featured in the Saturday Evening Post for her saltwater angling accomplishments.

1963 – 10th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Mrs. Uzelle Ellis, on the **“Uzelle”**, with Capt. Fred Voss. Mrs. Dorothea Lincoln Dean, winner of the 9th tournament was the first angler to register for the tenth. This year she fished on her own boat, the **“Finest Kind”**, with Capt. George Staros. 20 lb. line was the standard for everyone. Since all previous attempts to have a “do-it-yourself” day had failed, the directors of the club decided to make the 10th LTT ALL “Do-it-yourself.” There was only

one mate/boat allowed, and jerking the hook out of the mouth of a sailfish to speed releases was prohibited. Scoring became a flat 100 points for each release. Boats from which fish are being played had to hoist a red square fighting flag and any boats in the area had to honor it by making all reasonable effort to give the boat adequate space to fight the fish. The Mayor of Stuart, William P. Todt, fishing on the **“Striper II,”** with Capt. Joe Eldridge. He taped a “gone fishing” note on his office door while he fished in the tournament.

1964 – 11th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Dr. Rudolph Steinhauser, on the **“Schizo”**, with Capt. Judson Hall. He was a 30-year-old dentist from Jupiter and his boat was a 27’ single screw with 280-HP Chrysler marine engine. Two days of the tournament were cancelled and a 40’ Coast Guard Utility boat was stationed at the St. Lucie Inlet because of inlet conditions.

1965 – 12th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Staff Sgt. Donald Reid, on the **“Howdee”**, with Capt. Bill Burdge. Harry Snavely, observer from Port Sewall was elected “jinx of the year” by 4 contestants. Any boat he was observing on released no sails.

1967 – 13th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the **“Sandra D”**, with Capt. William Dorfner. On November 19, 1966 William O. Simpkin, club president sent a letter to all anglers canceling the tournament in the interest of safety. Two weeks of heavy northeast winds created a sandbar across the mouth of the St. Lucie inlet. The tournament was re-scheduled and fished on Jan. 23rd-26th, 1967.

1967 – 14th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Frederick Patterson, on the **“Pepper”**, with Capt. Fred Hastings. The 2nd day of tournament was cancelled due to weather. The 3rd day of the tournament produced 2 sails only. That set a record low for the history of the tournament.

1968 – 15th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the **“Sandra D”**, with Capt. William Dorfner. 1st day of fishing was delayed 30 min. due to high winds. The inlet was being dredged and not complete. Some boats braved the inlet while others took a safer route and went south inside the reef and out the “hole”. The “hole” was a cut in the reef off Pecks Lake. All boats returning that day came thru the “hole” due to a heavy ground swell. All boats were given an extra 30 minutes to get to the fishing grounds and were allowed to fish until 4:00 P.M. that day. Gina Watters of Ft. Lauderdale, fishing on the **“Gina”**, with Capt. John Monahan was in the head that day when her boat went over a pod of sails. One hit the flat line, one hit the outrigger and both hooked themselves. She quickly buttoned up and ran up on deck and pulled both to the boat for official releases. Then another sail suddenly hit the half-cut bait on the flat line, lying in the water after the release. The 3rd fish hooked itself. The observer on the boat told this story that day.

1969 – 16th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the **“Sandra D”**, with Capt. Robert Litchfield. One day of the tournament was cancelled due to tornado warnings, 6-8’ seas and heavy rains. The last day of the tournament was also cancelled due to weather. The Press boat that year was a 58’ boat called **“Harms Way.”**

1970 – 17th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the **“Sandra D”**, with Capt. Kenny Collins. Two students from Martin County High School were invited to be observers. They had completed the Oceanography course taught by Ray Roberts (head of the Science Dept.). They took and received 100% on the U.S. Coast Guard safe boating course. The course consisted of 8 lessons (20 hrs.). Palm Beach Times outdoor writer Bill McClinchy caught a sail. It was the first time in 17 years that a member of the news media released a sail.

1971 – 18th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the “**Sandra D**”, with Capt. Kenny Collins. Dr. Edgar Ernst, club president offered observer jobs to 6 Martin County High School students who scored in the high 90’s on the U. S. Coast Guard safe boating course. The following students were observers: Jeff Jensen, William E. Owens, Jr., Bert Ammons, Jr., Mark Schoemaker, Mark Stancil and Mark Winans. This tournament was an all release tournament and the club no longer awarded a trophy for the longest sailfish kept, as a conservation move. This year there were 8 back-to-back tournaments fished before the LTT. Bud Miller of Miller Yacht Sales, Ft. Lauderdale provided a new type boat for the tournament. A 48’ Pacemaker made its debut. It was powered by 2 of the new 450-HP diesel turbines. Mrs. Gina Watters of Ft. Lauderdale fished the boat with Capt. Jack Whitarcar (“**Hobo**”). There were two new prizes this year. The Martin County boat with highest points received a replica of an immature sailfish donated by Fin N Fur. The SSC member with the highest points received a silver plate donated by the Yacht and Country Club of Stuart.

1972 – 19th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Sam Evert, on the “**Sandra D**”, with Capt. Kenny Collins. Reels were given as prizes. 1st Place – Engraved Fin Nor 2 ½ /0 reel, 2nd Place – Engraved Penn International 20 2 ½ /0 reel, 3rd Place – Engraved Fin Nor Golden Regal 20 reel. Daily Awards that year were Penn Special Senator Reels. This was the first year that boats checked out of Sailfish Marina. Sam Evert was the only angler in LTT history to win the tournament 6 times.

1973 – 20th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Amateur Division, Thomas Green, on the “*Incentive*”, with Capt. Ken Sharp; Pro Division, Miss Eleanor Bartlett, on the “**Valor**”, with Capt. Bill Burdge. She and Sam Evert each had 9 releases but she won on a time-of-catch basis. She landed her 9th sail 53 minutes before he got his. Sometime after the tournament she married Staff Sgt. Donald Reid who won the LTT in 1965. This was the first time there was a “pro” and “amateur” division in the tournament. “Professional” – those who fish a great deal and/or normally fish tournaments and/or have won a fishing tournament. “Amateur” – those who just want to have some fun, get their feet wet in competition, but not have to compete with the “Big Boys.” May fish from their own boat, acting as their own crew, or from charter boats with professional crews or fish on their own boats and hire professional crews. By the rule... the only amateurs are the anglers. Duplicate prizes were awarded with an additional prize awarded for high overall angler. The name of the Sunrise Club was changed to the Bay Harbor Club and it was now a private club. Fishing was cut from 4 to 3 days to conserve fuel. Directors of the club pledged themselves to use no fuel in their own boats for one week to help make fuel available for tournament boats. The club’s members were also asked to do this. The fishing area prior to 1973 had been unrestricted. This year they cut to an area bounded on the North by Marker 12-A and on the south by Marker 16 (Hobe Sound wreck buoy).

1974 – 21st Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Amateur Division, R.L. Wentz, on the “**Growler**”, with Capt. Bud Eppinger; Pro Division, Floyd Wideman, on the “**Frisky Lady**”, with Capt. Ben DeGutis. This year there was a special award. The high overall winner also had his name engraved on the Capt. William Todt Memorial Trophy. Permanent possession went to the angler winning the award three times. There was an experiment to determine if sailfish survive release procedures. T.L. Monz, on the “**Ragin Cajun III**”, with Capt. Lee Nadorf attached a sonar transmitter (first radio tagging of a sailfish) to the fish and released it. Lt. John Jolly of the State Dept. of natural Resources on “**Valient Lady**” tracked the sail for three hours. The fish swam 5 miles north of the point it had been caught. This was proof that released fish do thrive after release. Care in the release of the fish was a big factor. Floyd Wideman, winner of the pro division was known as the “mystery” angler. He was late to the pre-tourney conference and was the last to register. For 2 days no one even knew his home address. When he won the tournament, spectators and committee people gathered at the dock to greet him and at first no one recognized him. As the boat backed up to the dock a well-tanned man dressed in a suit and carrying a brown attaché case got off. He told spectators he had to catch a plane back north as his boss expected him to work the next morning. He was unable to attend the awards banquet. He was an

executive with Hoffman LaRoche Pharmaceuticals. This was the year they changed the dates so that the tournament ended on a Sunday.

1975 – 22nd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Amateur Division, Steve Miller, on the “**Tempress**”, with Capt. Chip Schaefer; Pro Division, R.J. Miller, on the “**Lady Margaret**”, with Capt. Carlton Williams; Team Division, L. Goins, Ralph Norland, D. Lovett, and Pete Lund, on the “**Joanna II**”, with Capt. Jack Reid. For the first time, two, three, or four anglers could fish together as a team under ALL rules and NOT for individual prizes. The fourth day of the tournament was cancelled due to weather. The 22nd annual tournament was dedicated to the memory of veteran charter boat captain Johnson (Johnsie) Whiticar, who died at the age of 61 on June 7, 1975. Johnsie owned his first charter boat in 1937. His father was A.A. (Ad) Whiticar or better known as “Pappy.” Andrew Johnson Whiticar was born October 17, 1913 in Fairton, N.J. He moved to Stuart with his parents and two brothers Curt and Jack in 1917. Capt. Ad started commercial fishing. When Johnson turned 23, he and his brother Jack jointly bought a boat named “**Baby Orca**” and began charter fishing out of the present Whiticar Boat Works. From 1937-1942 Johnson fished winter months in Stuart and spent the summer with his father and brother in N.J. and Fishers Island, N.Y. From 1942-1945 he served as a Boson’s Mate 1st Class in the U.S. Coast Guard. After the war, he ran one of Pappy’s boats in the winter and Jack’s “**Hobo**” in the summer up North. He acquired several boats himself, but his last boat was the one people remembered so well. In December 1957, the “**Skipper II**” was christened at Whiticar Boat Works. It was built by Curt and was to cruise up and down the Florida coast from the keys to Jacksonville and throughout the Bahamas. Johnson was part of the scene here all his life. The Capts. and Mates who knew him revered him for his ability to find fish. The people who chartered him once never forgot him, and some of his clientele were the greatest sports people of America. His voice over the radiotelephone was loved by all...”W.J. 5354 the Skipper II clear”

1976 – 23rd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Amateur Division, Blaine Rhodes, on the “**Sabre**” with Capt. Sally Rhodes; Pro Division, Steve Rea, on the “**Suzie Q**”, with Capt. Ron Lane; Team Division, Larry Gouns, Jack Barron, Bill Woldt, on the “**JoAnna II**”, with Capt. Jack Reid. There were only 1 ½ fishing days due to 25-knot winds and 6-10 ft. seas.

1977 – 24th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Amateur Division, Dick Madsen, on the “**TOPAZ GAL**” with Capt. Kidd Crawford; Pro Division, Charlie Rhodes on the “**LISA ANN**” with Capt. Steve Rea; winning Team Division was Eleanor and Don Reed on the **CHAPIN**” with Capt. Bill Burge. The seas were so rough that 54 boats started out in this tournament and only 39 on the last day due to bad weather. This did not bother the fish, it was reported that they were all over the ocean.

1978 – 25th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner - Amateur Individual Division, James A. Park on the “**BLUE MOON**” with Capt. Bob Gernhauser; Amateur Team Division, A. J. Pegler II and Buzz Billue on the “**FIREBALL**” with Capt. Bruce Sessions; Professional Team Division, John F. Willits and Floyd Wideman on the “**FRISKY LADY**” with Capt. Ben DeGutis; Professional Individual, Hank Manley on the **SHAMROCK III** with Capt. Rusty Nextdorf. Bill Todt won overall angler award for high point angler. This tournament started off with perfect weather, not conducive to good fishing. Some of the captains said “Do you suppose we should call this tournament for lack of weather”. Seventeen boats were disqualified on Sunday for returning to the docks past the 5:00 pm deadline time. Capt. Ray Parker fishing on the “**SEA BIRD**” as an angler with John Payson as the Capt. The club honored Capt & Alyce Whiticar for their efforts for the past 25 years of club and tournament service. (*Publix was still handing out green stamps*)

1979 – 26th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner - Amateur Individual Division, Kay Young fishing on the “IMP” with husband/Capt. Jim Young Sr. This was Kay’s 1st year to fish this tournament on a borrowed boat. The team division was Robin Hickey and her father Walt fishing on the “MARILEE” with Capt. Chuck Reed. The first day of the event Robin had one fish to her credit and the 2nd day she released three more and Walt released one, which moved them into a 3-way tie for 1st place. That is when Robin decided not to change clothes until the end of the tournament and they came in first place. This tournament the women came on strong.

1980 – 27th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Individual Warren Klawins on the “TOPAZ 36” with Capt. Lucien Miner. Charlie Rhodes on the “LISA ANN” with Capt. Ronnie Griggs posted the identical scores as the “TOPAZ 36” through out the tournament but the “TOPAZ #^” edge out on time. This was the year the original painting of the Gannet II in “Running the Bar” was presented as a perpetual trophy in honor of the late A.J. Whitar. *This was the year John Lennon died.*

1981- 28th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner-Individual division-Charles Robinson, Jr., on the “POOR BOY” with Capt. Henley Sandidge. The team division on the “TEMPTRESS” with Capt. Chip Shafer were Monte Howell, Larry Greene, Waldo Roberts and Ray Temple. The team division cleaned up the tournament winning over all crown taking all major awards. This tournament was only fished two out of the four days due to rough weather.

1982 – 29th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Individual was Zachary Wilson fishing on the “FAZ”, and the team division was Ned McManus & Lea Waring fishing on the “THE HUNTRESS”. The weather was warm which made for fewer sails.

1983 – 30th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Individual was an 87 year old Charles Johnson from Port St. Lucie fishing on the “CHEVY J”. Lawrence Greene on the “TEMPTRESS” with Capt. Chip Shafer. Billy Powell on the “J-Z” got the “Bad Luck” award for catching a sail after the 3:30 deadline and then getting hooked in the arm.

1984 – 31st Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Individual was John Weigert fishing on the “LADY and the team division was Frank Creasy, Waldo Roberts, Larry Greene and Monte Howell fishing on the “TEMPTRESS” with Capt. Chip Shafer. This year there was an overwhelming response by observers. Over 200 showed up which made committee have two observer meetings since all of them would not fit into one room.

1985 – 32nd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, winner – Individual was Bob Bell, fishing on the “SHAMROCK” with Capt. Rusty Nixdorf and the team divisions was Charles Campbell Sr. and Charles Campbell Jr. fishing on the “ESCAPDE” with Capt. Dennis Steele. This was a year of controversy. The individual that was leading the division at the time was DQ’d because of intimidating his observers, he lost 7 catches. Bob Bell ended up winning that division.

1986- 33rd Annual Light Tackle Tournament, talk about bad luck. Jack Goodspeed on “Hobo” lost a sail less than twenty feet from the boat that would have allowed him to win the individual title and Charlie Schammel on the “Critter Gitter” had to bring his fish in twice to win the tournament. Charlie hooked three sails on the last day to take the lead, but his last one had to be reeled in twice because the first time the swivel hit the rod tip the observer didn’t see it. There were 85 releases from the 61 boats entered. Temptress took the team trophy.

1987-34th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Black Sheep Productions filmed the tournament from the Captain’s Meeting to the Awards Presentation, hoping to sell a thirty-minute show to

ESPN for a series on billfishing tournaments. Weatherwise there were five good days, however the sailfishing was only average. The five day total was 84, with Bill Ponsoldt on the "BP" winning the individual title with five releases and "Ambush", fishing their first tournament, taking the team title.

1988-35th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Day one of this tournament netted the best day in two decades with 50 releases. The following day 48 were recorded. The five day total of 161 almost doubled the previous year's total. "Temptress" took their fifth team title with 8 releases and Bob Pelosi released 10 for the individual title.

1989-36th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-The first two fishing days of the tournament saw 58 and 50 releases, but the fishing slowed down considerably the next three days. Keith Carroll on "Motivation" released 12 sailfish to take the individual award. "It's nice that some local boys could take home the trophy" said Captain Dave Kenny. Both Dave and Keith are Martin County High School graduates. Despite a fuel leak in an engine that took away from their fishing time, "Glass Machine" took the team award.

1990-37th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-49 boats and 98 anglers released a total of 214 sails in five days of fishing. Ted Snipes, fishing his first SSC tournament, took a lay day on day 1 and then had to work on day 2, which only allowed him three days of fishing. "We wanted a handicap" joked crew member David Haynes. On each of his three days of fishing Ted released 4 sails, enough to net him the individual title.

1991-38th Annual Light Tackle Tournament, Winner-Individual Division-Keith Carroll, on the MOTIVATION, with Capt. Dave Berard; Winner-Team Division-William Moscatello, Mike Barbato, Salvatore Merola & Richard Miele, on the LADY ANN, with Capt. Ben Suraci.

1992-39th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-In the team division Chip Shafer's "Temptress" caught 6 sails on the last day to win top honors with an incredible 17 releases over 4 days that tied the record for the most releases. This was the sixth win for the "Temptress". The individual award went to Charles Nichols on the "Liquidator" who admits that "catching sailfish is 90% luck and 10% skill".

1993-40th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-After the first three days of fishing, only 33 sails had been released. Garland Duke on the "Gar-Lyn" took the individual title with 4 releases. And the "Katie-M" won the team award with 5 releases.

1994-41st Annual Light Tackle Tournament-A record-breaking tournament! With only 38 boats and 80 anglers, records were broken for the total sailfish releases, the total team releases, and the total individual releases. This despite some weather that wasn't particularly "sailfishy". On the first day one of the captains noted that "the desk you're sitting at is probably rougher than it was out there today". Yet there were 67 releases recorded on day one. On day two, Gabrielle Knapp on "Post Haste" reported that "we didn't have enough release flags, so I had to cut a triangle out of a red umbrella I had on board."

Keith Carroll on his boat, "Motivation", set the new individual release record with 18, to win the tournament. And "Pursuer", captained by Dennis Steele, took the team title with a record 24 releases. 304 total sails were released over five days of fishing. The entries were down due to the shape the St. Lucie Inlet was in back in October, and the Board of Directors had even considered canceling or postponing the tournament due to potential problems navigating the inlet. Combined with the Pirates Cove Classic and the Pelican Yacht Club Invitational, ten total days of fishing competition resulted in 548 sailfish releases in local waters.

1995-42nd Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Keith Carroll on Motivation took his fourth individual title with 11 releases and Escapade, captained by Rob Moore won the team title in only his second Light Tackle Tournament. Only three of the 38 boats entered failed to release a sailfish in a tournament that resulted in 161 total releases.

1996-43rd Annual Light Tackle Tournament-The 43rd annual tournament boasted a first – the first time in tournament history that a transfer of crew, angler and observer had been conducted at sea. On Friday the 13th, Joe Lehner's "Boneshaker" experienced a major catastrophe twelve minutes before lines in when they slung a wheel, the shaft broke, then the transmission broke. After obtaining permission from the tournament rules committee, they arranged for another boat, the "Phyllis C" to be delivered to them at sea and Boneshaker to be towed back to dock. And the day didn't get much better for Joe, as he was unable to raise a sailfish the rest of the day. Arthur Cox took the top individual award with 14 releases, fishing on the smallest boat entered, the "Mistress" a 36' Topaz. NuCo2 and Lucky Punch both had four-day totals of 19 releases, with Lucky Punch winning the team championship by the time of last release. The tournament saw 289 total releases over the five days of fishing by 44 boats.

1997-44th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Starting off with "Tremendous Tuesday", this was a tournament that will be talked about for many, many years. The first day of fishing saw 382 releases – 100 more than the 5-day total of the previous year's tournament. Only 38 of the 45 boats entered fished that day, making that total even more remarkable. "Unreal", "unbelievable", world-class" were just some of the adjectives used to describe this day. For Ronnie Griggs, filling in for Bonnie Powell working the radio and recording the releases, "exhausting" must have been the appropriate description. Joe Lehner on "Boneshaker" recorded 22 on Tuesday and "Sight-Sea-Er" released 21 to lead the individual and team categories for day one. On day 4 of the tournament, John Hundley fishing on "K-J" released the tournament's 500th fish, and the 5-day total of 539 set a Florida record for a dead-bait tournament. Joe Lehner won the individual title on the 13th one year after his Friday the 13th fiasco in last year's tournament. This was his first Light Tackle Tournament win and he did it in a big way – 35 total releases and won all four of the daily awards for the days he fished. The team title went to Tuna Tango/NuCo2 captained by Jimmy Lund and anglers Suzan & Ed Sellian releasing 33 sails.

1998-45th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-With the outstanding action of the prior year's tournament, a fleet of 54 boats entered the 45th annual Light Tackle Tournament. But this one started off just the opposite of 1997 – only 15 releases on day 1. But the action picked up considerably the next four days and the competition was tight throughout the tournament. A total of 275 sails were released, the 5th highest in tournament history. John Hundley took the individual title on his 10th try in this tournament. Fishing on the "K-J", he totaled 9 sailfish, but never once won the daily award. Chip Shafer's "Temptress" won the team title. And "Over Easy" angler Blair Bynum went overboard for one of his catches. After partner Grace Canfield brought in her half of a double-header, Blair suspected that they had backed over his line wrapping it around the rudder shaft "but I wasn't sure". So he put the rod on the holder, jumped overboard and swam under the boat. Just as he suspected, the line was wrapped. So he came back up, grabbed the rod, swam under the boat and unwrapped the line off the rudder. The result – he did record the release. This was the first year the tournament was broadcast "live" via the internet.

1999-46th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Bluewater crewmen and anglers who grew up on the Treasure Coast have always held the Light Tackle Sailfish Tournament in high esteem. To

them, winning the Light Tackle as a captain is the ultimate achievement announcing one's ascension into the ranks of the elite.

Such was the case in 1999. Despite a relatively slow tournament with respect to the numbers of sailfish caught and released - 142 by 49 boats - the 46th annual affair was as closely fished as any. Heading into its final day, as many as eight boats had a shot at the win in either of the divisions. A pod of hungry sailfish in one boat's bait spread would swing the outcome and could lift an also-ran to champion status in a matter of minutes.

One boat that was not on the water the final day was Team Division competitors Summer Girl led by Capt. Mike Everly. However, it would be Everly's lay day actions that would ripple loudest through the fleet and set a standard for all future Light Tackles.

During the day, Everly phoned the Light Tackle rules committee to report an error in his team's 13-catch total. According to Everly, a fish caught on the first day may actually have been a white marlin - and not a sailfish. Only sailfish count in this tournament. Although it is the observer's opinion that ultimately counts on the boat's final score, Everly requested the rules committee subtract one fish from his team's total because he believed it to be of the wrong species.

The rules committee honored the unprecedented request, reducing Summer Girl's final catch to 12, making it easier for the trailing teams to catch them in the standings. But good karma was smiling on Everly sportsmanship, and the total held up to win the Team Division.

The Individual Division was a dogfight as usual, eventually won by John Santarsiero aboard Quest with Capt. Gar Womer and six releases. It was first Light Tackle victory for Everly, Santarsiero, and Womer - all longtime local competitors.

Everly was named the event's top captain - and rightfully so - and received a standing ovation at the awards ceremony. According to him, it was the only choice to make, because, "The real tournament never ends."

2000-47th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-A total of 209 sailfish were released by the fleet of 41 boats, but the real race was among the two captains who were at the helms of the respective division champions. The Captain A.A. Whiticar Trophy honors the event's best skipper each year, but it can only be awarded to one of the two division winning captains competing in the Individual and Team categories.

The Team Division was won by Stuart's Cindy and Mac Allen aboard the Cindy K with Capt. Mike Brady while the Individual Division was won by Fort Pierce's Hans Kraaz with Capt. Jimmy Grant. Although the two boats weren't necessarily fishing head-to-head, each set of anglers was fishing hard to get its respective captain the tournament's highest distinction. In the end it was Grant with Kraaz in the cockpit that edged out Brady and the Allens 14 to 13 thanks to a spectacular final day flurry that saw Kraaz catch more than one multiple hook-up of sails. Kraaz' Northside Luhrs boat also garnered the top mate award for Tiffany Sisolak, the first woman to be so honored.

2001-48th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-The 2001 season saw Everly and crew return Summer Girl to the winner's circle in another slow-fished event - 144 sails by 42 boats. Everly guided the husband and wife team of Molly and Kelly Kite to 10 releases. In the Individual division, Capt. Don Cartwright led angler Barry Small to the duo's first tournament victory with nine releases aboard Small Endeavor.

2002-49th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-Bad weather, a small fleet, few sailfish, and the Light Tackle flu all left indelible marks on this Light Tackle. The forecasted seas were so bad on the tournament's first day that only one of the tournament's 28 boats ventured forth, but the Silky did catch three sailfish to win the daily award.

By week's end only 100 sailfish were caught and released, but that was a pretty good feat considering what angling teams had to overcome. Despite unfavorable seas for the week, a virus

plagued over half the crews and anglers keeping many off the water a day or two in addition to the team's lay day.

Surviving the mystery illness was New Jersey angler Joe Recuperero and Capt. Joe Nolan of Princess Gennavive. With seven sailfish releases, Recuperero celebrated victory even though Nolan spent most of one day in the cabin unable to man his post. In the Team Division, it was Fishin Machine's seven sails that lifted Margie Adams, Gwen Hahn, Susan McCarthy, and Capt. Doyle Hogan to the win. Nolan was the Top Captain catching his team's seventh sail earlier than Fishin Machine's.

2003-50th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-The Stuart Sailfish Club celebrates the golden anniversary of the Light Tackle Tournament. "A Generation of Conservation". Sam Evert was a Light Tackle champion from 1967-1972. He has won the tournament the most times. Tournament organizers changed the format back to a four day event, fishing three out of four days. The winner in the Individual Division was Hans Kraaz, 10 releases aboard the Floridian with Captain Glenn Cameron. The winners in the Team Division were Smyth McKissick & Rob Shores, 10 releases aboard the Boneshaker with Captain V.J. Bell.

2004-51st Annual light Tackle Tournament- The top two boats, Boneshaker and Chasin, each with nine releases had to take the last day of the tournament as a lay day. Sweet Thing's David Fields came close. Starting the day with three releases, Fields steered over a double header for anglers Keith Beaty and Punch Martyn at 10:00 AM. They added another at 11:12 AM and a fourth shortly after noon, which gave them seven fish. They needed two more before 2:30 PM or 3 before 3:30 PM to win. They never caught another but came from behind to finish 3rd in the Team Division. The winners in the Team Division were Joe Lehner & Paul Mears, 9 releases aboard the Boneshaker with Capt. V.J. Bell. The winner in the individual Division was Brian Schmidt, 6 releases aboard the Finest Kind with Capt. Scott Fawcett.

2005-52nd Annual Light Tackle Tournament – Jason Revels and John Grant fishing aboard the Floridian had a rare catch: a sailfish triple header. This was the year of boat mishaps. One blew an engine and two ran aground. The third day of the tournament saw the "force of nature" – winds 30 knots with gale force gusts and mountainous seas. All fishing was shut down. One boat ventured out the inlet only to take a wave over the bow and crashed against the front windshield with enough force to break out the eisenglass. No injuries were reported. The winners in the Team Division were Jason Revels, John Grant, 11 releases aboard the Floridian with Captain Glenn Cameron. The winner in the Individual Division was Bob Higgins, 2 releases aboard the Holy Mackerel with Captain Dennis Steele.

2006-53rd Annual Light Tackle Tournament – This was a tournament of "firsts". It was the first time in tournament history that anglers were required to use Circle Hooks. It was the first time in a long time that there was no Individual Division and it was the first time teams were allowed to substitute anglers. This tournament saw the "youngest" anglers in tournament history. Ian Wichers, fifteen and his brother Skyler Wichers, thirteen were anglers aboard the Boneshaker. The inlet conditions were treacherous and forced many boats to use the Ft. Pierce Inlet. The winners in the Team Division were Joe Lehner, Paul Mears, Ian Wichers, and Skyler Wichers, 11 releases aboard the Boneshaker with Captain Scott Fawcett.

2007-54th Annual Light Tackle Tournament - Mother Nature unleashed an unseasonal tropical disturbance that deluged anglers and crew on the final day of fishing. It shut down

the feeding pattern that had been steady all week. This tournament would be the second straight year the Boneshaker won the tournament. The winners were Joe Lehner, Paul Mears, Ian Wichers and Skyler Wichers, 16 releases aboard the Boneshaker with Captain Scott Fawcett and Mates Kyle Francis and Brandon Walton. Scott Fawcett was named top Captain for the second straight year – a feat accomplished by a handful of captains.

2008-55th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-This year's tournament only had 20 boats due to the economy. It was a year for "locals." Capt. James Ewing led Hotty Toddy anglers, all from Stuart, to a come-from-behind win. The winners were Mark MacDonald, Steve Butcher and Brian Schmidt, 12 releases aboard the Hotty Toddy with Captain James Ewing and Mates John Mumford and Newt Cagle.

2009-56th Annual Light Tackle Tournament-The fleet of 21 boats managed to release 348 sailfish in this year's tournament. This was the second highest total in the history of the Light Tackle Tournament. The winners were Bob Anderson, Marshall Busha, Brian Schmidt, and Tom Wichers, 27 releases aboard the Outlaw with Capt. Neil Subin and Mates, Jerry Owens, John Mumford, and Matt Santarsiero. This was the first Light Tackle Tournament win for Neil and his crew and anglers tossed him off the dock to celebrate his first win.

2010 – 57th Annual Light Tackle Tournament. This was one of the smallest fleets to fish the Light Tackle Tournament. The fleet of 17 boats released 295 fish. The tournament format changed this year to include more events held under the tent at Sailfish/Finest Kind Marina. There was a pirate themed Kick-Off, followed by a Country Western Night and a docktail party held on the docks on Saturday evening. All events were open to the public this year. The winners, were Cruiser Crews, Chester Chambers, and Greg Jones, 28 releases aboard the Cow Poke, with Capt. Mike Brady.

