

Fishing Reports/Photos

Tuesday, January 27, 2009
off to the Osa

Anna and I are taking a road trip for a couple of days to the Osa Pennisula in search of some new adventures and overnight fishing trip possibilities. I will be bringing a spinning rod.....

Here are smoe pics from the tournament blast off.





posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 9:16 AM

Monday, January 26, 2009

.....and the results are:

We just couldn't get that marlin bite. The guys(Wayne, Pat and Scott) did great, catching 27 out of about 50 sails, a 50% average with some very finicky fish. Team Dragin Fly caught as many sails as the top boats, but we just couldn't get one of the 500 point marlin bites.

All in all, we did a good job, everyone worked well together and we should be proud. We'll be ready for Leg 2 in February.

We ended up finishing 12th out of 43 boats. Congratulations go to the Clean Sweep for winning the tournament with 35 sailfish and 4 marlin, followed by Da Bait in 2nd place, who tied the Super Fly each with 26 sailfish and 3 marlin. Da Bait broke the tie by catching their last fish 15 minutes earlier than the Super Fly.

Also congratulations to The Spanish Fly 5th place. The Bite(8th place) and The Hook(6th place) won two of the daily awards.

Anna and I are hitting the road for a couple of days to check out the Osa Penninsula and will give a report. I don't have many fish pics, but will post some boat-porn. Should be good. The tournament was a lot of fun and we look forward to the next one.

posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 11:48 AM

Friday, January 23, 2009
Los Suenos Tournament Leg 1

...and a delayed report. After Day 2 we are still in striking distance of a top finish, we just can't seem to get a marlin bite. Maybe tomorrow. Scott, Wayne and Pat are doing a pretty good job with 20 sailfish releases in two days, good for 9th place, gaining a couple of places from yesterday's 12th place.

Hopefully a quick report tomorrow night telling you all how many marlin we caught tomorrow and a detailed report on Sunday.

Wish us luck!!!

posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 10:25 PM

Monday, January 19, 2009

Capt. Mo proudly wearing the Dragin Fly shirt and living up to it's name, also a few pics. Still lots of bait around, but things are improving. We caught another marlin yesterday, a couple sails and 6 nice tuna.





posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 11:53 AM

Wednesday, January 14, 2009
1st Week in Costa Rica

There are times that I read fishing stories in magazine articles that are just too good to be true. This is one of them. In search of a target species, you can go to the best place in the world and at the best time to catch "them". The unfortunate fact is that it all boils down to fishing. Whether it's giant red drum in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound in August, fall runs of albies at Harkers, black marlin on The Great Barrier Reef or Pacific sails in Costa Rica, sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. Perhaps the weather, the migration, water too hot, water too cold, moon too full, too much wind, too little wind, we've heard all the excuses and I've used them all. Sometimes the fishing really was better yesterday...or you really should've been here last week. This "blog" is about what happened last week.

Jimmy and Scot Wiggins arrived with me and their friend Tony in Costa Rica last Sunday. They had chartered the Dragin Fly for 5 days and I was fortunate enough to ride along for a few days before the majority of our groups started arriving. They had come for Pacific sails, but the marlin bite had been cranking up, so we headed a little further offshore, looking for the big bite.

Scott had caught Atlantic blue and white marlin and plenty of sails from both oceans, but he had never caught the Pacific's striped or black marlin. With a lot of stripes around, he was ready to get that checked off the list. Last year, Scott and Jimmy fished the Dragin Fly on her maiden offshore trip. The first two fish that we raised/caught were nice blue marlin. Today started a little slower, but with similar results. After a couple of hours of dragging baits, the first fish comes in the spread.

Having sailfish in the spread is cool and coordinated, but when a marlin comes on the scene, the intensity gets cranked up a couple of notches. Things were pretty intense for about 3 hours.

Berto makes the perfect pitch and drop back to a nice striped marlin on stand up tackle which gives Tony all he wants. After a quick picture and release we're back in the game.



striped marlin

Scott was up next and it didn't take long for another fish to get in the baits, this time a nice blue marlin which Scott makes quick work of on the Tyrnos 50. Although Scott was looking for a stripe, the surprise blue marlin gives us a good start towards a grand slam which Jimmy completes a few minutes later with a sailfish.

The mid day bite was on, with only a few minutes after getting the spread back out another marlin in the baits. I grabbed the 50 with an oversized ballyhoo and fed him off of the right short teaser. Everything came tight and the fish was on, but nobody would take the rod. They knew that I had personally never caught a marlin and I very much appreciated the opportunity to land a giant striped marlin. I felt a little guilty for taking Scott's stripey, but the bite was on and they had 4 more days.

After about 2 o'clock, things slowed a bit and we start trolling towards Los Suenos, but not before another striped marlin is in the spread that Tony lands his second marlin of the day.

After that release, we pick up and start running home, only to come across a small school of spinner dolphins. In no time at all we landed four 30-40 pound yellowfins, 3 on cedar plugs and one on spinning tackle that I hooked by casting a popper from the bow. Not a bad way to start off the week with a Grand Slam and plenty of sushi for dinner.

On day 2, I had some catching up to do in the "office: (The Costa Rica office consists of a lap top with decent wireless signal next to the pool.) Meanwhile, Scott, Jimmy and Tony were back in the action, catching several sails and ending up with 2 more striped marlin, one of them Scott was able to check of his list.



Day 3 was another office day for me and a good day of sailfishing for Scott, Jimmy and Tony. The marlin bite was waning, but I had some plans for day 4/5. Last year we ran a couple of overnight trips to the Furuno Reef, but with 4 customers on the boat, it's a little tight for me to have ridden along. Tony was ready for a couple of days off the water and relaxing by the pool, but Scott and Jimmy were still fired up and jumped at the opportunity to go hunt for a black marlin.

The Furuno Reef lies off of Quepos about 35 miles and about 60 miles from Los Suenos, way too far to run for a day trip, but just right for an overnighter. The water around the reef is several thousand feet deep, but rises dramatically to a 400 foot shelf, then up to around 100 feet with good hard bottom. It is a magnate for sea life, everything from sailfish and marlin to plenty of dolphin and big yellowfin tuna. The bottom fishing can be excellent for a variety of snapper, including the big cubera snapper, amberjacks and a few grouper. But we were coming to the reef for Scott's black marlin, which are very territorial and much more structure oriented than the more "pelagic" blues and striped marlin.

With the boat loaded down with ice, food and plenty of bait we set off for "26", a reef about 18 miles from Los Suenos that once yielded excellent bottom fishing. That all changed when the very accessible reef was highlighted on a very popular television program which featured it as a spear-fishing destination. Once large schools of mullet snapper and amberjacks hovered over the reef and would come to the surface for great

topwater action. Although neither are really good eating, they are very slow and curious which made them easy targets for the gringo spearfishermen which quickly decimated their populations. Although some good days can be made fishing the 26, it's only a shadow of what it used to be. We stopped by to pick up some live bonito, hoping to feed them to some giant of the deep, ideally one of those 200+ pound sickle-fin yellowfin tuna or Scott's black marlin.

After loading the tuna tubes with bonito, we headed offshore, stopping just short of the Quepos sailfish fleet. Alberto and Chela deploy our spread of 4 Mold Craft Wide Ranges and 5 swimming ballyhoo, rigged with 8/0 circle hooks. The ocean is greasy, not even a ripple of wind on top of a slow, long swell. James spots a lazy fin cutting the slick calm waters and makes a move that direction.

As we pass beside what we were expecting to be a sailfish, the fish sees our spread and "lights up" it's pectoral and tail fins to dramatic neon blue. That intensity level I was talking about earlier explodes when the fish piles on the left long teaser, identifying itself now to everyone as a marlin.

The 150+ striped marlin went from the left long to the right short, then looked at the swimming ballyhoo, then popping up behind the dead bonito that Berto had prepared as a marlin pitch bait. It was obvious that this fish wasn't hungry, so Chela and I quickly bridled up one of the live bonitos in the tuna tubes, pitching it over the side of the boat and out of the white water. As soon as the line came tight the marlin couldn't resist the "livey" and Scott was connected to his second striped marlin of the week .

After starting things off with the marlin release, we joined the Quepos fleet and enjoyed a decent day of sailfishing and lots of hands-on instruction. When the rest of the fleet started to head home, we picked up and ran the other direction, cutting the distance to Furuno. Just short of the break, James pulls the throttles back and we put the same spread, this time with the live bonitos already rigged and ready for Scott's black marlin.

With the lazy striped marlin and plenty of sailfish, a bite from a blue or black marlin would end the trip just as it began, with a Grand Slam. A black marlin release for Scott, added to his blue on the first day would give him a Super Slam for the week.

As soon as the bottom started to significantly rise, a huge splash enveloped the water where the right short teaser used to be. This was obviously a marlin, but a much different animal than the smaller stripes that we've been catching all week, more than likely a nice blue or Scott's black.



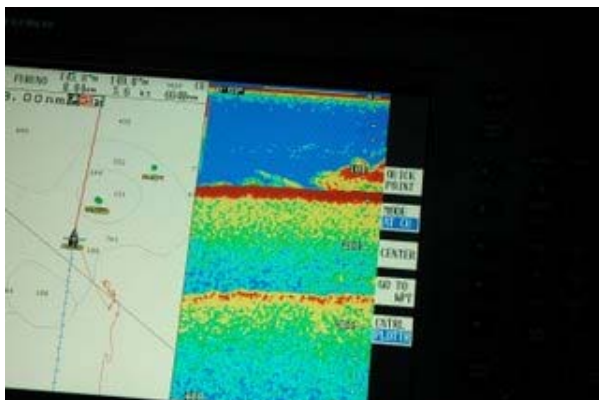
Chela and Berto simultaneously pitch a pair of live bonitos over each side of the boat and it doesn't take long for the big marlin to find them. Chela gets the bite and hands Scott the rod in freespool so that he can set the hook, which he does. After a decent run the fish jumps for the first time, identifying itself as a nice black marlin in the 300 pound range.

I was really surprised at how differently that this black marlin fought compared to the other marlin of the week. Instead of staying on top and putting on a show, this fish was all business. Down and dirty, only giving us two aerial displays of several jumps at the beginning and the very end of the fight. The stubborn down and dirty tactics reminded me of the way the big "yellowbelly" tarpon fight on the Carribbean side of Costa Rica.

With the help of a harness and chair, Scott never let the fish rest, which finally came to the side of the boat just before sunset. We removed the circle hook and got her swimming in good shape just in time for us to run to the reef. There was just enough daylight for us to refill our tuna tubes with live bonito., which quit biting at dark.



It only took a couple of drifts across the rocks with the fresh baits to know where we wanted to spend the night, indicated by a depth finder lit up with balls of red just off the bottom. On the first drop, Jimmy gave us a demonstration on how to hook and land giant cubera snapper. We anchored on the reef and started the night off with some decent bottom fishing, using the remaining live baits and butterfly jigs.



I had brought along some glow sticks and attached one with rubber bands a few feet in front of a live bonito, then suspended it about 15 feet off the bottom. I know just enough about swordfish to know that they are fished for at night and with the aide of glow sticks. I doubted that they would be in such shallow water, but you never know, Right?

About twenty minutes after dropping down the lighted bonito, line began peeling off the reel and coming to the surface. We couldn't help but to imagine that we could be that lucky to find a swordfish. Regardless of what we had on the line, it was a good fish and it was jumping in the dark. After a strong fight against the current, the beam of the spotlight reveals a very nice bull dolphin. I didn't know they would bite at night.

The crew started on dinner and the bottom fishing faded a bit. Blue-runners and small mackerel-like fish began making appearances around the boat lights and I started catching a few with sabiki rigs, replacing the dead baits on the bottom with fresh live ones. We had a few more bites, and landed a couple of smaller snapper, but things were settling down. Jimmy, Scott and the crew spread out on the bunks and floor for a few hours sleep.

I stayed up fishing with the sabiki rod, periodically changing old baits for fresh live ones and accumulating a few in the live well. About 1 am, I was fading fast when James wakes up and explains why we weren't catching anything. Sometime in the night the current shifted and the anchor began to drag very slowly, just slow enough that we had moved 1/2 mile away from the structure, but not fast enough that I could tell that we had moved at all. In fact, the few commercial boats that spend the night anchored in the shallow water were also drifting at the same speed as us. When they picked up to re-anchor before drifting into the deep, the engine noise woke James.

He rousess up the crew and we lift the anchor, getting back into position for the daylight bite. I was completely exhausted and after the anchor line again became tight a little after 2 in the morning, I curled up for a couple hours sleep, leaving the crew with a livewell full of my late night efforts.

From time to time I was lifted out of deep sleep by the sound of clicking reels and tight lines, despite all that was going on around me, I never completely awoke. After a couple of hours and approaching dawn, reality was more easily separated from the fish dreams and I awoke to find Scott with a bent rod, James with a gaff in hand and a deck full of snapper at their feet/



The live baits were long gone, but the butterfly jig bite was pretty good until it got light.

James gave us the option of deep dropping for big grouper in 350 feet of water, something I regret not trying. But with a hold full of snapper, and the black marlin checked off the list, we were ready to start trolling back towards home. Before leaving the reef, we filled the tubes with live bonita and started the return trip. No more bites on the Furuno break, but after several miles we encountered a massive school of spinner dolphins with hundreds of birds and large red bait balls pushed to the surface.

Tuna of all sizes are usually with the spinner dolphins which work together to corral bait and push it to the surface. The little tuna will hit about anything, my favorite is casting poppers on spinning rods. The favorite bait of the big tuna is live bonito which we just happened to have. We got in front of the stampede of dolphins and put the live baits out, I was up on the bow casting the popper and fortunately missed about an 100 pound yellowfin. From the back of the boat there is a lot of yelling in Spanish and I peak around the corner to see everyone scrambling. Apparently a huge yellowfin crashed the live baits, but didn't get the hook. I asked James how big it was and he said that he had never seen one that big, easily over 300 pounds.

The school of dolphins/tuna was enormous and moving fast. It was hard to stay in front of them and get into the best of the action. After several attempts our live baits were in pretty sad shape, but we did manage to land a 40 pounder on spinning tackle.

The continued troll home yielded 6 more sailfish, then we came across something really special, 1 giant tree in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. This tree had been there a while, floating around for months, if not more than a year. An entire ecosystem had developed around it. Leaves and bark had long been washed away and replaced with barnacles. A cloud of life enveloped the entire area.

We had a double header of something before the Dragin Fly reached the tree, which was surrounded by hundreds of pan-sized triggerfish and triple tails, lazily drifting along beside their refuge.

The double header ended up being a wahoo and a dolphin. More wahoo cut off the mono leaders of the circle-hook rigged ballyhoo as we cleared lines. The wahoo arrived at the transom first, a littly guy, maybe 10 pounds, followed by 6 of his buddies. A quick grab for the jigging spoons and our perpetual double header began. After 4 "wahoo in the box" and a pair of dolphin, the Quepos fleet was on the scene and we left them snapping. Our day(s) were done.

Running home from Furuno and with no plans on stopping, we found a 10 mile stretch of sailfish. Any direction you chose to look, there were free-jumping sailfish and sailfish sunning on the surface with sails out of the water. We had big expectations for an awesome sailfish bite this week.....but this week is a little different.

The big sailfish bite that we were anticipating didn't materialize for us. The last several days have been tough. We started out catching 5, then 8 sails, then just 3 today.

Reporting from the tropics,
George Beckwith
posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 12:22 AM

Wednesday, January 07, 2009
few sailfish shots

While I was in the "office" yesterday, the guys were working on the sailfish and dolphin.....and another marlin. We went looking for a black marlin today to finish a Pacific Super Grand Slam (striped marlin, blue marlin, black marlin, sailfish). No bites, but we're going to try tomorrow, making an overnight trip to Furuno Reef. If no black marlin, I'm sure that we'll find some other big animals to play with.





posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 7:57 PM

Tuesday, January 06, 2009
Day 1 Grand Slam And

And I finally got MY marlin. Those of you who regularly visit this post know that I've been trying for a long time.....only to have Anna steal my glory. Thanks to Jimmy Wiggins and crew for making me wind him in. No one would take the rod after I hooked him.

Great first day on the Dragin Fly, although we didn't see many sails, 1 for 3, we did raise 6 marlin, releasing 4 of them. 3 stripes, 1 blue and 1 sail for an official grand slam. On the ride home, Mauricio saw a distant school of spinner dolphins and we stopped by to catch 4 30-50 pound yellowfins for sushi/dinner/lunch.

Here are some pics:
Tony with a nice striped marlin



Scott's blue



Jimmy's sailfish. Although we weren't marking a lot of bait, there were a lot of flying fish around. This sail was hooked in the corner of the mouth with a circle hook, but when trying to throw the hook, he also gave up it's lunch.



My first marlin, a "huge" striped marlin. I'm glad that it wasn't any bigger, it was all that I wanted on stand up tackle, one of the new Tyrnos 50's that we're using as marlin pitch bait reels on the Dragin Fly this year.



Tony's second marlin of the day



posted by Capt. George Beckwith at 12:29 PM

decoying pintails and bluebills

I had forgotten how pretty pintails are when they work the decoys. Thanks to Buddy for letting me see it again before I left for Costa Rica.

Here's a pic of some decoying bluebills from Capt. Ray which look pretty good also. There is a pretty good shot of bluebills, limit is now 2/person. Also, the bluefins have showed up in better numbers. Ray had a great day with the American Snapper, sea bass and groupers last week.

