



Fishing Post - January 2012

Atlanta Saltwater Sportsman's Club

www.aswsc.org

West Palm Beach 2012



SAILFISH! That was the yell only 30 minutes after we had our first live goggle eye in the water on the first day of fishing down in south Florida. You've got to love the chaos that ensues after someone on the boat eyes a tail, or a dorsal, or the whole damn fish jumping out of the water. Nothing like it, except when someone yells Marlin! But that didn't happen, so we'll stay focused on our prey for this club trip to West Palm Beach (WPB). The *Where to Next?* crew: Keith Mozena, Bill Hesketh, Ben Lazar, and Dan Haggerty, made it happen this January with some savvy planning and lucky timing of weather. The weekend before we headed down to WPB, the Silver Sailfish Derby had 1174 Sailfish caught and released by 46 boats. That's a 3 day average of over 8 fish per boat. The boat that won, *Get Lit* out of Coral Gables had 58 sailfish releases in 3 days. *Get Lit* had the top angler with 24 sailfish released and had the top day on day one with 36 sailfish caught and released. Now I'd love to tell you that the *Where to Next?* team came close to that but we didn't. However, we did make a milestone of one of the crew, Bill Hesketh. Bill caught his first and second sailfish of his life on this trip! Needless to say, Bill was pretty darn happy to be fishing rather than working and catching a new species to add to his personal list. He's caught other billfish, but has not had the luck to get one to the boat. I will add that we had lots of shots and missed many hooksets. Heck, we had many fish hooked-up but they jumped off before we could get them to the boat. These acrobats of the sea are impressive to watch and fun to catch. From my vantage point at the helm, one looked like it jumped right over the motors it was so close to the back of the boat. If you haven't tried sailfishing, the southern Florida Atlantic waters in the winter are a great time to try it and the odds are typically really good, especially after a cold front moves through. Unfortunately, our timing relative to cold fronts wasn't perfect. Our first day was slow after that first fish I spoke of at the beginning of this article. The sun was hot and the winds were calm, so we laid out 4 flat lines to see what we could stir up. Nobody was flying kites that didn't have a helium tank on board. *(continued Page 2)*

Here's a photo of one of the pro-teams practicing with just one kite up on this very calm day.



These guys were the Scales clothing brand team, running a nice 34 ft Sea Vee with a full logo wrap around the hull. You can see the water and how calm it was. This looked like a summer day on the lake it was so calm. Definitely not what we had expected, but was a nice break from the cooler temperatures up north. After giving up the helm to work in the "pit" and help my crew lay out a tasty spread of goggle-eyes on the first morning, I happened to be standing right next to the rod which our first sailfish hit. Lucky me. After letting the fish run for a good 8 seconds, I pushed the drag to strike and let the circle hook do its work. He gave a bit of a show, but the little Penn Torque 100 reel I had on this particular rod had this fish covered (note: Penn is not making these reels any more but you can still find them in good shape and for decent prices if you hunt around). I think these little Penns do very well for sailfishing as they are small, high speed, but can push up a good smooth drag. The ones I have are star drags with the casting control so you have to be careful not to dial it down too much or one of those crazy sailfish reverse flip jumps is sure to break a leader. In case you're curious, we used mainly 50 lb leaders during our trip.



On day two we woke up to another beautiful morning but with a forecast for a 10+ mph wind by midday. Things were looking up weather wise. We followed the fleet up north to the Stuart area, as that was where the "hot bite" was reported by boats who had fished the area on Thursday. Interestingly, the "word" was the fish were shallow, in 60-80 foot of water. We got our kites up and saw lots of boats catching sailfish. However, we had "mall walkers" and outright "thieves" swimming around us. We missed every sailfish we saw that day, but everyone of them was in 60 to 80 feet. As another side comment, I use sled kites instead of the "classic" square kites which have cross spars and such. I find the sleds easy to fly, have no assembly required, easy to store, and they are lower cost at approximately \$50 a kite. They come in different sizes: small, medium, and maxi to address different wind conditions.



Our third day broke with a stiff north wind forecast to push 20 mph all day and 2-4 footers with small craft warnings called out. Now that's more like it - nasty, winds, frothy Atlantic Winter Sailfishing weather! We got our bait in the livewell and headed north earlier than the fleet, since the trip was going to take longer in these conditions. Let me tell you, I only wish it was calm enough to take a decent photo of more than a dozen 50+ foot sportfishers roaring up behind you as they gallop along at 35-40mph. It is an im-

pressive sight to see that many sportfishers running in rough seas.

(continued Page 3)



Here's one photo I grabbed which kind of came into focus. We were pushing along at 25mph and these guys were just cruising by, twin turbo diesels at full song. Cool shot of a 60 + footer running hard at sunrise to get up north to the fish.

The fishing was off and on during the day. We'd have several hits and then an hour of waiting. Bill caught both of his sailfish this day (here's another photo) and had a blast.

My friend and new ASWSC member, Ben Lazar, worked hard all day and was able to bring a big Cobia to the boat in a surprise catch. Sucker weighed in just over 26 lbs and was 40 inches long. We had a chance to cook up some of it just a week later and it was delicious. What an awesome fish to enjoy with friends. This fish was big enough to feed 20 people.

For those who could not make the trip, start making plans to do so next year. It is a lot of fun and your odds of landing one of the most fun fish to watch jump out of the water is very good.



Until next time, Tight Lines,
Capt Keith

Venice Scouting Trip

(Pass the “Cajun” Salt Please)

Member Fishing Report by Jim Mason

The date is December 27th and who in their right mind decides to go fishing two days after Christmas? If you know me and my crew, you already know the answer! Destination: Venice LA, and the window of opportunity was open. We filled out our crew and the weather forecast seemed compliant, so we said, “Let’s do it!”

Our adventure began Tuesday night around 8:00 pm with our typical overnight drive, arriving in Venice around 6:00am CST. Yeah, that’s 11 hours and 600 miles from Monroe GA, but who cares? We’re going fishing! Our final destination was the Venice Marina, and for those who’ve been there, you know this place ain’t the Ritz, but it’s got everything you need for fishing and hunting.

We had heard that this was the height of the Wahoo and Tuna season off shore, but we quickly discovered that there were far more duck hunters than fishermen down there. After checking in, we launched the boat at their nice triple ramp and set up the gear. Push-off was around 9:00am and we headed down that ribbon of chocolate milk known as the Mississippi River. I have to tell you, that when we stopped to get our fishing licenses, one of the locals told us that, since we had never been there before, we should hire a local Captain to guide us out of the River. I guess they didn’t think much of us Yankees from Georgia but, with the exception of a constant string of large merchant vessels, this river looks and navigates like a Florida canal. That being said – we followed the Southwest Pass, the Primary ship channel, out to sea with no sweat. We started exploring around a few of the closer rigs and set up a trolling spread at the first large structure. The first action we got was something I’ve never had, which was a four-way hookup. Unfortunately, they were



four large sharks, and they chewed through all my steel leaders, taking two Stretch 30s and two large Bally Rigs. After a complete re-rig, we reaped our revenge by landing and boarding two Atlantic Sharpnosed Sharks, about 50lbs each. Don’t mess with us, we will eat you!! This may have taken the stink off the boat but, except for all that shark meat, this was a low yield day. We stayed out a little too long and had to navigate back up the river in the dark, approximately 27 miles. It’s easy, though; watch the lighted markers and you’re ok. Oh yeah, don’t forget those large ships about every three miles apart. Back at the dock we started the set-up for the next two days of fishing, followed by some nice steaks and a welcome night of sleep.

(continued Page 5)

Venice Scouting Trip (continued from Page 4)

Day 2 started way too early thanks to those duck hunters, but neither Mark nor myself could sleep anyway. We pushed off around 9:00am with a full belly of fuel and an additional 20 gallons. The route today was the South Pass, which was much calmer without all the ship traffic, but a little noisy with all the shooting – just like home in Monroe! The South Pass is an easy ride but (beware) take caution at the mouth due to a lot of pilings and partially submerged jetties you have to thread your way through. The channel is, however, well marked. The first target was a double platform within the sight of the mouth of the Pass, approximately 5 miles out. This structure sits in about 200 feet of water and is linked together by a bridge walkway. We began examining the bottom and found a lot of fish around the rig, so we started working it with large butterfly jigs, only to pull up Red Snapper – one after the other, after the other, after the other, and so on. This is just



wrong! None of these fish was less than 10 lbs. And so, with tears in our eyes, we had to motor away from those poor endangered fish. Our next stop was a platform about a mile south, and we did the same jig drop to get a totally different bite. I got the first hook-up, which gave me one heck of a fight, only to produce a 30 lb Crevalle Jack. Great fun to catch, but not good for anything else. We were looking for Amberjack but all we could haul up was the Crevalles.



After the first two stops, we decided to head toward our overnight destination – The Devil's Tower – some 50 miles south. The seas were 1-2 feet, so the ride was pleasant, and we arrived on schedule, right at sunset. The Devil's Tower is a large floating platform in 5500 feet of water with a brightly lit presence at night. This is exactly what we were looking for! We worked our jigs for a while with a good bite, but decided to go exploring. It was early and the next rig was only about a mile or so away.

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Venice Scouting Trip (continued from Page 5)

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The second rig was unusual, in that it is a stationary ship. The vessel is “Deepwater Pathfinder” and is part of the BP Oil fleet and is sitting in the same oil lease plot as The Deepwater Horizon. The Pathfinder is approximately 600 feet long with a tall derrick rising from the center and drilling out the bottom of the ship.



The night time profile is quite impressive due to all of the lighting on both sides. A baitfish and tuna magnet if I ever saw one! After a good look around, we stopped about 200 yards out near mid-ship, and started dropping jigs. Now what I’m going to describe is something that I’m sure none of you have ever seen: at least 5 acres of boiling water with tuna jumping right next to the boat. This continued for the entire night, and within 2-½ hours we had no space left for any more fish on board. To quote Mark Mleczo, “This is just stupid fishing – you could tie a brick on the line and pull back a tuna!” Since the holds were bulging and the night was young, Mark and Simon just kept on fishing and releasing to relieve the boredom. After a couple of hours in this angler’s dream, the crew finally cashed in their chips for a couple of zzzz’s. I motored away about ½ mile and shut down the engines, setting the boat adrift to enjoy the night sky. It was a crystal clear night with no moon, and the complete darkness all around was dream-like. A single passing vessel in the distance seemed surreal as I enjoyed the peaceful serenity of the night. As the first grey light came, I started the engine and headed back toward the platforms while the crew came to life. At sunrise we re-set the trolling spread and started working for yellow fins as I made breakfast – a nice egg scramble, but we ate in peace without a bite. With sunlight we laid in the course back to Venice trolling the blue without a bite. Seas had picked up to solid 5’s with a west wind as we made our way back to port, but our journey was done after logging 218 miles on the GPS for the day’s fishing. Our first trip to Venice is now a sweet memory, but if you don’t mind – would you pass the salt again, please?

Captain Jim Mason, *The Last Bastian*

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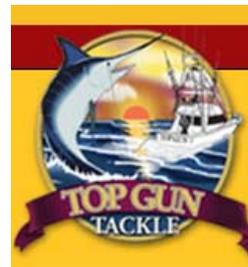
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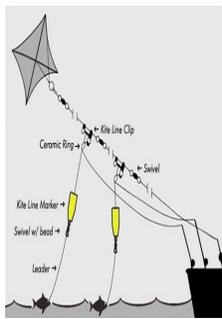
2012 Tournament Schedule

- January 11 - 14** **West Palm Beach Sailfish Tournament (3-Day)**
(Tournament Director: **Bob Michael**)
- May 2 - 5** **Venice, LA Tournament (3-Day)**
(Tournament Director: **Mark Mleczko**)
- June 7 - 9** **Apalachicola, FL Tournament**
(Tournament Director: **Dan Reese**)
- July 8 - 14** **Orange Beach, AL Tournament (Week Long)**
(Tournament Director: **Mike Springer, Mark Mleczko**)
- Aug 30 - Sep 2** **Destin, FL Tournament (Best 2 out of 3-Day)**
(Tournament Director: **Steve Fritz**)
- October 18 - 20** **Fort Morgan, AL Tournament**
(Tournament Director: **Marty Miller**)

Tony Vazquez is working on a potential overnight charter out of Panama City Beach, FL. Dates TBD.

Note: Tournament Schedule is Subject to Change Without Notice.
Check website for updates or e-mail for more information: info@aswsc.org

January 2012 Member Profile: Dan Reese & February 16th ASWSC Meeting Guest Speaker



Dan was born and raised in the fishy town of Fort Lauderdale, FL. Before he could tie a knot he was holding a pole and fishing with his family. There are lots of great spots to fish in south Florida but Dan's first favorites were the inshore reefs of the nearby Florida Keys and then the famous Islamorada Hump. Dan's skills developed and when he was 7 he successfully set the hook, caught and released his first sailfish. That was a great demonstration in patience for a 7 year old, but Dan quickly proved he had little patience and proved that he needed to keep on the move.

Once he became a teenager, Dan was volunteering at various tournaments in south Florida doing anything he could to be around the energy, excitement, boats, and people (mates and captains). He learned all the tournament rules and began volunteering as a tournament observer when he was 15 around about the same time he learned from a mentor how to fish live baits from kites. Starting with a simple setup of 1 kite and 2 release clips, Dan developed a love for this style of fishing and has used it successfully on several species other than Sailfish. Yellowfin tuna has been one species which Dan loves to go after with the kites and has successfully "filled the fish boxes" from the Bahamas to the Gulf of Mexico using his kite fishing tactics. His first Yellowfin weighed in at 78lbs which was the summer of 2003.

Dan had the "saltwater fishin' bug" so bad he had to start tournament fishing just to stroke his competitive nature. He fished his first tournament in 1997 at the Islamorada Sailfish tournament. Dan and his team finished 7th out of 125 boats. Not bad for a rookie joining a new team. Dan has kept his tournament fishing going even through college and now that he is working full time in Atlanta. He used to fish a lot, 100+ days per year, but with full time work having pulled him to Atlanta, it has slowed a bit. However, he still gets in 3-5 tournaments a year. He has fished in 51 competitive tournaments: 21 focused on sailfish alone with another 30 covering different "funfish" or "weighted fish" tournaments. A majority of these tournaments Dan's entered are serious money events with significant prizes and more significant Calcutta's. It is common that the boat count exceeds 75 for the tournaments Dan has competed in. One of his favorite series is the 3 leg summer tournament series run by BlueWater Movements: Saltwater Slam, Saltwater Shootout, and the Saltwater Showdown. He also has a warm place in his heart for the classic Miami Billfish tournament. He just finished competing in the SKA tournament in Key West where he and his buddies on the Hark Rock team (they've been fishing together since 2003 on a sponsored 34 SeaVee) placed 8th out of 158 boats. Needless to say, Dan has lots of stories and experience to share.

Looking at other billfish Dan has caught: sailfish, swordfish, white & blue marlin. Dan caught his first Blue Marlin on his birthday (12/31) in 2001 and was fortunate enough to catch & release a second Blue that same day. What a great birthday present for an avid fisherman. In his first Blue Marlin tournament, over in Chubb Cay in the Berry Islands of the Bahamas, Dan and team placed 2nd out of 38 boats. Dan's been successful catching Swordfish night and day. His first Swordfish success happened at night with a 2-fer for the trip, but he's also had success catching Swordfish on the daytime drift in the gulf stream. He's caught and released 100 sailfish using multiple tactics and always enjoys the show these great billfish put on.

Dan currently lives in the Duluth area and works for Nationwide Southeast, a specialty auto finance company, who he started with down in South Florida. He moved to Atlanta in 2008 and joined the Atlanta Saltwater Sportsman's Club in 2010. If you haven't had a chance to meet Dan, come to the February ASWSC meeting where Dan will be sharing his extensive knowledge on the tactics and techniques for successful kite fishing. It is NOT just for Sailfish! I for one believe we all can learn something from each other, and after going through Dan's background with him, I am highly confident everyone in Atlanta who loves to fish saltwater could gain some valuable insight.

Mark your calendars, Thursday Feb 16th, 7pm is the first meeting for the ASWSC in 2012. Dan will kick off the new year of education sessions. We hope y'all can make it.

Tight Lines, Keith Mozena

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT NEWS

Gulf Council to Convene Red Snapper Advisory Panel

http://gulfcouncil.org/news_resources/Press%20Releases/RedSnapperAP112.pdf

Gulf Council Announces Public Hearings for Reef Fish Amendment 35 for Greater Amberjack

http://gulfcouncil.org/news_resources/Press%20Releases/RF35_Spiny11_PH2012.pdf

NOAA Reminds Fishermen of "THE EDGES" Area Closure Prohibiting Fishing from January 1 through April 30 and Other Area Closures

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/bulletins/pdfs/2011/FB11-100_TheEdges_Closure_Reminder.pdf

More Amberjack Restrictions Heading Our Way - see page 1

Red Snapper Update - see page 4

(Gulf Fisheries News - Volume 33, No. 5; November - December, 2011)

http://www.gulfcouncil.org/news_resources/Newsletters/NEWSLTR-12-2011.pdf

Gag and Red Grouper Regulations in Place for 2012 - see page 4

(Gulf Fisheries News - Volume 33, No. 4; August-Sept, 2011)

http://www.gulfcouncil.org/news_resources/Newsletters/NEWSLTR08-2011.pdf

Visit www.aswsc.org for links to State and Federal Fisheries Management Agencies websites.

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Upcoming Club Events, Reminders and Deadlines

NEXT CLUB MEETING:

***Date Change* Thursday, Feb 16, 2012 / 7PM**

Holiday Inn Gwinnett Place / 1948 Day Drive, Duluth / 770-814-2800

See website for directions: www.aswsc.org

Scheduled Speaker: Dan Reese, Sail Fishing Techniques.

BOAT SHOW SUPPORT:

Thanks to Everyone who supported our Atlanta Boat Show Booth:

Lenny Pisarski, Lois Urich, Bo Dunn, Steve Anglin, Ron Reynolds, Richard Watkins, Rob Alexander, Robert Waters, Vladimir Melnik, Tom Mauldin, Ken Barnhart, Pat Thai, Jim Argo, Darrin Maietta, Bill Pate, Mike Springer, Tony Vazquez, and Kerry Browning.



NEXT EVENT: Miami Boat Show / Feb 16-20, 2012

MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER
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<http://www.miamiboatshow.com/>

NEXT SOCIAL EVENT:

Swap Meet and Chili Cook Off
March 17, 2012

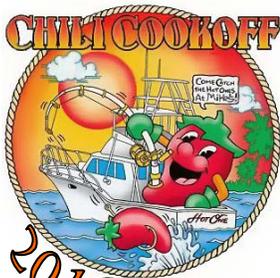
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NEXT TOURNAMENT:

Venice, LA Tournament (3-Day): May 2 - 5, 2012

(Tournament Application Coming Soon)

Something Missing?

We welcome your input, photos, news items, and suggestions about the content of the ASWSC Fishing Post Newsletters. Forward your information or digital photos to: info@aswsc.org

For latest club information, check out www.aswsc.org