



50 YEARS AND COUNTING FOR WHITE MARLIN INVITATIONAL

Beach Haven sits tucked away in a corner of New Jersey that's quiet most of the year. It doesn't have the glittery lights of Atlantic City, or the party reputation of Seaside Heights, or the music legacy of Asbury Park.

Beach Haven has, however, earned its own claim to fame as the home of the oldest white marlin tournament in the United States. The White Marlin Invitational, hosted by the Beach Haven Marlin & Tuna Club, prepares to mark its 50th annual contest this summer, from July 23-27, 2019.

The tournament has evolved over the years since the first event held in 1970. When it first started, anglers could keep multiple marlin, and the top prize was awarded to the one who caught the most fish. Now, of course, it's all about the weight of the fish.

Dave Ridley, director of the WMIT, shared the words of Karl Anderson, a Beach Haven Marlin & Tuna Club member and sports-writer, who wrote about the tournament's early days.

"In 1970, the club held its first White Marlin Invitational Tournament. Club member and Captain Joe Bossard, who ran Bob Gaskill's Bee Dee, was the moving force behind starting the event. With a

nice clubhouse, good fishing, excellent hospitality, good meals each night and camaraderie among participants, it soon became a popular event. The tournament flourished with visiting boats coming from up and down the coast to fish alongside the formidable fleet of club members. In the early days, most doubted it could succeed, but with the early members' dedication, the boats continued to show up each year to regale in the class of the event and enjoy great fishing and great camaraderie."

Soon, the annual WMIT was a date that was circled on offshore enthusiasts' calendars, not only from NJ but with boats coming from as far as the Carolinas and even Florida, and it enjoyed a loyal following for many years. It was that loyalty that kept the tournament going even after Hurricane Sandy destroyed the clubhouse in 2012. The 2013 event was held under tents, and in 2014 the club christened its new clubhouse with the 45th WMIT.

What makes the WMIT special is the sense of family you get from the commitment of the Beach Haven Marlin & Tuna Club members and past participants, who infuse the event with energy every year.

Ridley, who took over as tournament director for the 2017 event, said he wanted to tap into that sense of family history to help move the

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tournament forward. The decision was made to expand the tournament to allow participants to pick two fishable days out of four, instead of just three. They also lowered the registration fee and added a category for boats 29 feet or smaller, and brought back the blue marlin calcutta.

They also added a weigh station, at Hoffman's Marina in Brielle, because shoaling in Little Egg Inlet had become so challenging that in 2017 the U.S. Coast Guard warned boaters it was unsafe. That shoaling has since been addressed, with dredging that took place in 2018.

The 50th WMIT will bring a return to all activities being at the Beach Haven Marlin & Tuna Club, Ridley said.

"We'll see what happens in future years, and while Hoffman's has provided great support and a great partnership, the 50th is a special year and we want to return some of the excitement to boats docking at Morrison's Marina and surrounding marinas and so tournament participants are part of the fishing and events at the club during tournament week," he said.

The 50th also is bringing renewed focus on the tournament namesake – the white marlin.

"There is a skill and touch to catching marlin that is special and we want further challenge participants to target marlin. To be clear, you can still win a lot of money

and awards with all allowed species – and tuna may be the biggest payout as it all depends on the calcuttas – but marlin will be elevated above all others for awards and certain calcutta categories," Ridley said.

"In many ways, what we are aiming to do is to bring back some of the beautiful simplicity of tournament fishing and get back to the roots of the White Marlin Invitational," Ridley said. "Something special was created in 1970 and we want to honor that as we celebrate our 50th annual event."

For more information, visit www.wmit.com.

STAR ISLAND SHARK TOURNAMENT

Montauk beckons during the second week of June. Not for stripers but for the Star Island Shark Tournament. Anglers will compete for their share of \$60,000 in cash prizes and trophies. The angler who brings in the heaviest shark will win \$30,000. Cash prizes will also be awarded for heaviest shark of the day, the top three heaviest makos, the top three heaviest blue sharks, and the top three heaviest other species.

The tournament opens with the captains meeting on Thursday, June 13 and has two days of fishing that are capped by the awards dinner on Saturday, June 15.

The entry fee is \$1,250.00 per

boat. As Star Island and nearby marinas often fill up quickly for the holiday weekend, anglers are encouraged to reserve dockage early. Dockage for the tournament is a three-night minimum stay, and is available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Thousands of spectators flock to the Shark Tournament each year. If you want to check out the action, it is strongly recommended that you make hotel reservations as soon as possible. These rooms will fill up fast!

For anglers who would like to get in on the competition but do not own a boat, the Star Island Yacht Club is home to Montauk's finest and most accomplished charter captains. Each of Star Island's charter boats can accommodate up to six anglers for one or both days of the tournament.

All anglers can contribute to the study of sharks by tagging and releasing sharks that do not meet strict weight requirements. Last year, more than 250 sharks were tagged and released alive.

For more information on Star Island Yacht Club & Marina, or to register, visit www.starislandyc.com/shark-tournament.

