https://www.floridasportfishing.com/press-releases/team-killbox-claims-victory-at-the-4th-annual-marathon-premier-sailfish-tournament/article_95bbbf4c-ed58-4c16-8fd5-b23279c82a0d.html

Team Killbox Claims Victory at the 4th Annual Marathon Premier Sailfish Tournament

May 2, 2025

1st Place Killbox

MARATHON, FL [April 27, 2025] – The Fourth Annual Marathon Premier Sailfish Tournament wrapped up on Saturday, April 26, after two exhilarating days of offshore angling in the Florida Keys. The tournament, which commenced with a fun kickoff event outdoors under a large Tikki Hut behind the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott on April 24, saw 17 boats and 94 anglers vying for top honors. The exciting competition culminated in an exciting awards banquet and fundraising benefit held at Aquarium Encounters in Marathon.

The kickoff event at the Fairfield Inn & Suites set the stage for the tournament despite a gusty 25 mph east wind that challenged the setup under the large Tiki hut – it reminded the event staff of the inaugural event's weather challenges four years prior. Teams eagerly collected their team buckets, brimming with promotional items, including shirts, lures, and hats. The 20-liter Everglades Fishing Co dry bags provided to each registered angler this year were a big hit.

Reports from the captains indicated that sailfish were concentrated further west that day. Fortunately, recognizing Marathon's strategic position in the middle Keys, the tournament had already expanded the fishing area this year, allowing fishing from Key West to Islamorada.

DAY ONE

Day one presented anglers with sporty conditions, featuring east winds around 20 mph. Thanks to the expanded fishing boundaries, the bite remained consistent for participating teams, many of whom found themselves fishing near the Sand Key Lighthouse boundary off Key West. The first sailfish of the tournament was caught at 8:18 am on April 25 by Luca Picariello of team Silent Hunter, who would also end up releasing the final sailfish of the tournament earning him the Top Junior Angler award.

Top Junior Angler - Luca Picariello

Top Female Angler - Jill Paglia

By 11:00 am on the same day, Jill Paglia of team Executive Decision had already secured two releases, unknowingly putting her on the path to winning the Top Female Angler trophy. The steady fishing action kept the committee boat busy throughout the day, with a total of 34 sailfish released by day's end.

DAY TWO

Day two began with 7 sailfish being released in the first hour and fifteen minutes. Among these early releases was Mark Busch of Team Main One, catching his third sailfish of the tournament. This ultimately earned him the Top Male Angler Trophy.

However, the fishing slowed for the participants as the day progressed, with cloud cover, rain, and hungry schools of tuna working against them. By noon, the competition was incredibly tight. Five boats each had three sailfish releases, and another five boats, including the eventual second and third-place teams, each had four releases. Team Killbox held a narrow lead with six releases, leaving the door open for any of these top contenders.

2nd Place Main One

Despite the slower bite on day two there was still plenty of excitement. Team Executive Decision released a blue marlin, although it did not count towards the sailfish-only competition.

A remarkable moment occurred that same afternoon when a group of divers contacted Tournament Director Katie Lewis to express their sincere gratitude for the crew of the participating boat Salt Shaker. The Salt Shaker team had spotted and rescued a group of divers participating in a local lionfish derby who had been swept out to sea. Their quick thinking and heroic actions added an inspiring element to the tournament.

Throughout the afternoon, most boats fished around Stock Island in a steady 18mph east wind. Anglers Joe Marino and Clint "Digger" Rodamer played pivotal roles that afternoon in securing the coveted 1st place victory for Team Killbox with two and one sailfish releases respectively. At 1:19 pm, JW Drott of Main One released a crucial sailfish, propelling his team into 2nd place overall, where they would ultimately finish. Team Rhumline responded just 17 minutes later with a release by angler Chris Thommes, but they would finish in 3rd place, just one fish shy of reclaiming second.

The top teams were honored with stunning sailfish trophies crafted by Grays Taxidermy and unique sailfish artwork designed by artist Eddie Forbes. The Tournament was able to pay out over $100,000 in cash prizes to the winners in an effort to increase participation in future years to take their fundraising abilities to the next level.

THE CAUSE

The 4th Annual Marathon Premier Sailfish Tournament is more than just a competition; it is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds for Mission Fishin', local schools, and the local youth Special Olympics teams. The awards banquet that was held that same day at Aquarium Encounters was a resounding success in supporting these vital causes.

A large raffle featuring an array of Florida Keys and fishing-themed items generously donated by local businesses and individuals further contributed to the fundraising efforts. The proceeds will be distributed in the coming months, consistent with the nonprofit's annual tradition, often at a Mission Fishin' outing providing cost-free on-the-water experiences for families.

Over the past four years, donated funds have supported excursions for families with children who have disabilities or special needs, as well as foster families. These funds have also contributed to building children's parks, including one at local Stanley Switlik Elementary School, and to purchasing uniforms and covering travel expenses for the local Special Olympics teams.

WINNERS

1st Place Killbox

1st Place Trophy sponsored by The Busch Family goes to team Killbox. The team consisted of Captain Cody Darbie, Mate Clint "Digger" Rodamer, and anglers Tyler Kelley, Joe Marino, Corbin Buckley, Phillip Bryan, Chad Ritch, Jose Boza, and KC Spalding. This year's members are from Marathon, Islamorada, and Auburndale, Florida.

2nd Place Main One

2nd Place Trophy sponsored by Sotheby's International Realty goes to team Main One. Their team members were Captain Marty Lewis, Mate Mike Cangemi, and anglers Mark Busch, JW Drott, Ben Zdan, and Danny Lombardo. This year's team members represented Westlake Ohio, Marathon, Fort Meyers, Jupiter, and Tavernier Florida.

3rd Place Rhumline

3rd Place Overall Trophy sponsored by The Dedinsky Family goes to team Rhumline – Land and Sea Market placed third overall. Members of the team were Captain Andrew Hunt, Mate Matthew Sexton and anglers Todd Picariello, Chris Thommes, Mikey Shander, and Andrew Hunt. This year's team members all hail from Marathon, Florida.

Top Male angler trophy sponsored by Eddie Forbes Art went to team Main One's Mark Busch from Westlake Ohio.

Top Female Angler trophy sponsored by Grassy Flats Resort & Beach Club went to team Executive Decision's Jill Paglia from Ocala, Florida.

Top Junior Angler trophy sponsored by Lower Keys Bait & Tackle went to team Silent Hunter's Luca Picariello from Marathon, Florida.

Most Tagged trophy sponsored by Gray Taxidermy went to team Yeti Or Knot from Naples and Marathon, Florida.

NEXT YEAR

Marathon Premier Sailfish Tournament April 16-18, 2026

Contact:

Katie Lewis

Tournament Director

Katie@marathonsailfish.com

+1 (305) 783 8313

Website and Social Media:

marathonsailfish.com

instagram.com/marathonsailfish

facebook.com/MarathonSailfish

Tags Marathon Premier Sailfish Tournament | Everglades Fishing Co Dry Bags | Jill Paglia Of Team Executive Decision | Team Main One | Team Killbox