



Reel Tight wins 45th July Open Billfish Tournery

By CAROL BAREUTHER
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ST. THOMAS — Top Boat honors in the 45th annual July Open Billfish Tournament went to Reel Tight, and you could call it by divine intervention.

Just weeks ago, owner, avid Virgin Islands sports fisherman and Hillsboro Beach, Fla.-based angler Jim Lambert passed away after a long fight with cancer.

"It was always his idea that we would continue. We all have a shared love of fishing," said Reel Tight mate Robert "Fly" Navarro.

Tournament fishing started out slow for the 16-boat fleet and Reel Tight went fishless on the first day.

"It was one of those 'awww man' type of days," said Reel Tight captain Eddie Herbert.

Luck on the 82-foot Merrit changed the next day.

"It was about 11 a.m. when we rigged Jim's special Reel Tight lure and put it in the water," says mate, Joe Figiel. "We didn't catch anything on it, but just putting it in the water changed our luck."

Reel Tight released three fish on both the second and third days of this three-day tournament to end with 6 releases and the Top

Boat prize.

"We've never won this tournament before," said Lambert's son, Jimmy Lambert, who was one of the anglers. "I think you could say my dad was with us in spirit."

Big Oh, a 63-foot Scarborough, finished second in the Top Boat rankings with five blue marlin releases, all by owner-angler Gray Ingram. Ingram was awarded Top Angler and gets his name engraved on the prestigious "Give 'm Line" Trophy.

"We've never fished the Virgin Islands before, but we've heard how good the fishing was," said Ingram, who makes his home port out of Jupiter Beach, Fla. "The first day was slow, but it picked up after that. We'll be here for fishing for the summer."

Black Gold, an ACY 65' owned by Boca Raton, Fla.'s Harry Sargeant, finished third in the Top Boat rankings with the release of five blue marlin.

"Fishing kept getting better and better every day," said Sargeant.

The Virgin Islands' Gamefishing Club hosted July Open Billfish Tournament benefits the Boys & Girls Club.

For full results, visit www.vigfc.com



The crew of Reel Tight celebrates at the V.I. Game Fishing Club on Thursday.

Photo courtesy of DEAN BAUMES