



Blank Check

worked for Allen too, but the line tangled in the rigger baits, so he ran the line from a Calcutta pole, perfecting the technique and creating the center outrigger.”

For two decades, the Merritt brothers were the separte Kings of Cat Cay. Buddy gained notoriety from captains and guides when he arrived in Tuna Alley with *Miss Belair*, the Merritt’s first sport-fisher. He went on to win both the Cat Cay and Bimini tuna tournaments in 1963 and won the Bimini tournament again in 1968.

Allen fished with Bill Carpenter at the 1951 Cat Cay tuna tournament and won it eight times, more than any captain in history. The Merritts introduced new techniques, wrote the record books and piled on tournament wins. Even though they were captains on different boats and working for other people, they started as a team. They set the example of what a dream team could be — family at its finest.

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- Allen/Carpenter caught 400 bluefin tuna over 10 years
- Allen caught 15 bluefin in one day, 1968
- Buddy caught 16 bluefin in one day, 1969 (a little brother rivalry doesn’t hurt)

Angler Dan Doyle Sr. in the fighting chair aboard Blank Check.



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Dan Doyle Sr. and Jr., Danny Hearn and Jake “Jinxey” Gaylord

[1996-Present] *Blank Check*; Palm Beach, Florida

Danny Hearn started out as a mate for the Doyle family in the mid ’90s, and he is now the captain of their 77-foot Jarrett Bay *Blank Check*. Hearn grew up with the father-son duo of the Doyles, and since he was a similar age with Dan Doyle Jr., he felt like this was more than just a crew. “Senior treats me like a son, and Junior is more like a brother,” Hearn says. “I’ve known them for more than 20 years.”

Hearn says that the Doyles are all about high-pressure situations in tournaments — no fun fishing required for this team. Even on lay days, they are out raring to go and practicing. “We are



always on the run, always fishing — even on the off days. And I love it that way,” Hearn says. “They immediately return home to work and families to allow more time away for the next tournament. The Doyles provide me with the best tools and vessels. It’s a dream job, a job for life.”

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- Won the Blue Marlin World Cup with a 668-pound blue marlin, 2013
- First place at the Billfish Release Cup, 2013

Gray Ingram and Ronnie Fields

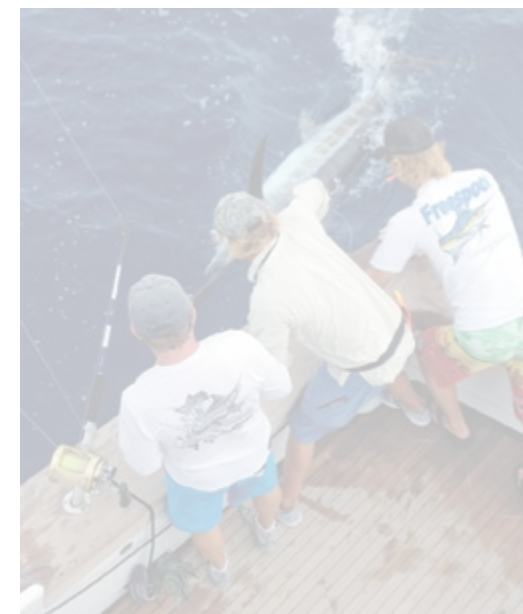
[2007-Present] *Big Oh*; Jupiter, Florida

There’s a good chance this crew is out on the ocean as you read this. In fact, they recently broke the record for most blue marlin caught in a year in the Dominican Republic. The record is 329. This team caught 291 blue marlin from March to July, and as this story went to press, they were sitting pretty at 331.



This relationship has run for almost 20 years, but it manifested into a true team when *Big Oh* hit the water in 2007. Ronnie Fields started out as one of the mates, while his father, legendary Capt. Allen Fields, fished with Gray Ingram. Now, Ronnie Fields is captain and looking forward to catching some blues to beat the record along with owner/angler Ingram.

“I’m on my way right now to the D.R.,” Fields says over the phone as he heads to the airport. “Last time we were down there, we caught around 25; all we need is to hit that 329 mark.” Traveling from place to place keeps Fields on the run but in a good way. “We’ve sent our boat everywhere from Cape Verde to Venezuela to Costa Rica,” he says.



“One of the reasons I love working on this team is we’re always out in great places.”

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- Won first place overall in back-to-back Venezuelan Fishing Shootout and International Super Slam tournaments
- One of the only teams that has won on multiple boats in the Los Suenos Signature Billfish Series, 2010 (*Big Oh*), 2011 (*Bandolera* on first leg of series; *Contenderess* on the second leg)
- Caught 291 blue marlin during a four month period, 2013

Peter B. Wright, Stewart Campbell, Gary Stuve, Charles Perry, Charlie Hayden

[One day in 1995] *Raptor*

That’s right. A one-day dream team. Much like an all-star baseball game, these players came together from across the country for a one-day game. It was a full boat of IGFA legends: Capt. Peter B. Wright behind the wheel, Capt. Gary Stuve and Charles Perry wiring, Charlie Hayden as the photographer (also a legend when it comes to rigging baits) and Stewart Campbell as the angler. Before the sun was out of its slumber, this crew was already catching in the early morning.

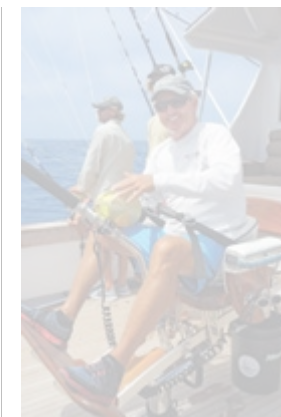
“We were headed to a wreck off Ocracoke Island, [North Carolina], that was in 20 fathoms [120 feet] of water that had been the hot spot for the bluefins for a couple of weeks,” Perry says. “Stewart got in the chair around daylight and had caught at least four before the sun came over the horizon.” It was nonstop action for the crew and keeping up was part of the challenge.

“We were soon catching double-headers with just Stewart angling,” Perry says. “As soon as one of us would get a double wrap on the leader, the other wireman would unsnap that leader and the next leader would be snapped on and the bait thrown. Stewart said a few times, ‘Boys, we are catching them faster than we can string them.’”

And that was correct. The results of that day make other fishing crews scratch their heads. Campbell and the crew caught 73 bluefin, and he was in that chair for almost half a day. With those stats, he caught a bluefin every 9½ minutes. The average size was 350 pounds, with a couple of 500-pounders.

NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

- All team members honored in either the IGFA Legendary Captains and Crew or Hall of Fame



Above: Owner Gray Ingram in the fighting chair on Big Oh. Below left: The Big Oh team bringing one in.



(From left) Charlie Hayden, Jon Rafter (guest), Stewart Campbell, Gary Stuve, Peter B. Wright, and Charles Perry.