

Most multi-generational family fishing operations are a result of the desire to spend quality time with one another hunting for big game, both on the water and on land.

BY JASON PIM

BIG-GAME KINSHIP

THREE FAMILIES SHAPE
THEIR FISHING LEGACIES

JESSICA HAYDAHL RICHARDSON

A

bright-eyed child admiring a perfectly crafted new reel. Grandpa patiently teaching the kids knots. Learning to steer from Dad's lap while his rugged hands guide the wheel. These are some of the special memories that can shape a youngster. History shows that if we splash enough salt and scales on our kids over the years, they're likely to grow into avid fishermen. Stick with it long enough, and maybe they'll even become world-class anglers, captains or mates. We recently caught up with three accomplished marlin fishing families — the Richardsons, the Huddles and the Ingrams — to see what makes them tick and how their fishing legacies have evolved.

Even these most accomplished families started out humbly. "My dad, Jack Huddle, was from West Virginia and had never fished in the ocean until he went to The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina," Harris Huddle explains. Like many of us, patriarchs such as Jack were introduced to the sport of fishing from shore. As time progressed, they simply found themselves wanting more and worked hard to achieve it.

Gray Ingram, owner of the 63-foot Scarborough, *Big Oh*, happened across his first billfish by chance too. "When I was about 35, a neighbor and I were mahi fishing, and we accidentally caught a blue marlin," Ingram recalls. "I've been hooked ever since."

As these men worked their way up the food chain of life, business, boat ownership and fishing pursuits, they brought their families along for the ride. The result are three teams who, no matter the tournament, are competitors to be reckoned with.

THE RICHARDSONS

Whoo Dat, Jarrett Bay 58
Grand Isle, Louisiana

One common thread between these families is a voracious appetite for travel in the pursuit of marlin and big-game fish. This means arranging fishing trips not only on their own boats, but also making opportunities to visit far-flung fisheries around the world. As one might expect, many of these excursions are planned around their children's school and extracurricular schedules.

Keith Richardson, his son Kaleb, and the *Whoo Dat* team have enjoyed many accomplishments in their home waters of the northern Gulf of Mexico. But after several years of overnight trips and summer tournaments, they sought to extend their fishing season by adding travel to the Caribbean in the winter. That has meant not only owning a modern sport-fisher capable of putting a lot of water under its own hull, but at times owning multiple boats in different regions, chartering other boats or a combination of all the above.

Whoo Dat has spent several years wintering in the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, running the boat back through Florida to Louisiana each summer. In 2018, they decided to stay in the Caribbean all year.

Based out of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, with Capt. Chris Mowad at the helm, they released more than 150 blue marlin. Good move.

"Kaleb fishes all summer and every holiday with us," Keith explains. He points out that in Cajun country, Mardi Gras provides another extended break that the rest of us might not get each winter. "Any time he has off from school, we're either at our duck camp or headed to the boat."

The family also has the luxury of joining Kaleb's grandfather, Glenn Richardson, aboard his 65-foot sport-fisher, *Expedition*, which is based in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, and together they've regularly chased after Pacific marlin for the past 15 years.

While most family fishing starts out casual and evolves in sophistication with practice, Keith and the *Whoo Dat* crew have taken Kaleb's training relatively seriously.

Early on, the family set several youth-angler goals for Kaleb, including the pursuit of a bluefin tuna record. Preparing for his first fishing trip to Nova Scotia as a child involved fastening a fighting chair to the floor of Keith's shop in the offseason. Testing the drag with a four-wheeler, father and son worked on

COURTESY CAPT. CHRIS MOWAD (2)



With Capt. Chris Mowad at the helm of *Whoo Dat* (above), the family has managed a successful travel itinerary that revolves around Kaleb Richardson's school and track team schedules. Kaleb (left) with his record 833-pound bluefin caught in his home waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

a lot to me, and we have all these pictures and GoPro videos to look back on," he says. Over the years, Kaleb has earned a slew of awards from The Billfish Foundation and is now competing against adults. It's an impressive trajectory that is not lost on his father.

"We have video of the first marlin Kaleb ever caught at 7 or 8 years old." He adds, "It's been very rewarding sharing my passion for fishing with him and watching him grow and get really good at it."

THE HUDDLES

Builder's Choice, Jarrett Bay 64
New Bern, North Carolina

The story of the Huddle family's marlin adventures begins with "Big Jack" Huddle coming to the Carolina coast. A stout man, originally hailing from the woods of West Virginia, Huddle was an avid outdoorsman, but quickly got into fishing too. Fishing was a means to stock the family pantry, but as his children grew, so did a hankering to spend more time together.

As the thirst for catching big billfish took hold, tournaments

improving Kaleb's fish-fighting mechanics in the chair before going offshore. All that hard work and preparation paid off tenfold with Kaleb landing his record tuna, but it didn't happen in the frigid waters of eastern Canada. He nabbed his 833-pound bluefin back home in the Gulf of Mexico, at just 14 years old.

The fiery *Whoo Dat* team has notched many impressive feats, including Kaleb winning the 2015 Bisbee's Los Cabos Offshore Catch and Release division. Now 16, and with hundreds of release flags flown, Keith says Kaleb's high-school track career keeps him as fit as he needs to be for fighting giant fish.

It's evident that Keith treasures the success of a fishing program that has revolved around his son for years. "It means



Jack Huddle (above) was a strong, generous man whose qualities led to an enduring legacy with his family. Huddle on the bridge of his 55-foot *Builder's Choice* with grandsons (left to right) Ward Smith, Jack C. Huddle and Battle Smith.



became a frequent part of the mix, but placing in one was icing on the cake, since fishing, according to the Huddles, was mostly about spending time with family and friends.

As Huddle's passion for the sport grew, he was one of the first people to hire up-and-coming sport-boat builder Randy Ramsey with a handshake contract for "one of those boats." Huddle commissioned Jarrett Bay Hull No. 5 in 1988, later playing a vital role in the development of the company's facilities.

"My brother Carl and I grew up fishing and hunting with Dad," explains Harris Huddle, who often visited the boatyard with his family, eventually thinking of Ramsey as another sibling.

Harris learned to fish by working the *Builder's Choice* cockpit while his father manned the helm. "By the time we had the 55, I was running the boat every trip," he says. And Harris finally caught his first big tournament fish, a 545-pound blue marlin, in the Pirate's Cove Billfish Tournament.

"The smile on his face unloading that fish is something I'll never forget," Harris recalls, and one can only imagine the feeling of gratitude and pride he felt after putting his father on a big fish like that, then bumping back the throttles into that crowded weigh station in Manteo, North Carolina.

Throughout the Huddle family legacy, four custom boats have

been commissioned with Jarrett Bay. And the Beaufort, North Carolina, builder's facility is where they met the Gaskill family. Joy Gaskill was a kind, capable Harkers Island woman, who ran the front office at Jarrett Bay for years before being killed by a drunk driver. Her son, Brent, grew up mating in the local fleet before eventually becoming the full-time captain for the Huddles on *Builder's Choice*.

Akin to Harris's own experience, his nephew, Jack, learned to fish with his grandfather and run the cockpit on the succession of *Builder's Choice* boats. Fishing with family and friends aboard their 55-footer certainly left an impression on the young man — to the point that the boat felt like part of the family too. Soon it was time to say goodbye to the 55 and move up to a new 64.

"I think Jack was a little upset that the boat he grew up on would soon be gone," explains Harris, but it quickly became evident that the *Builder's Choice* team could soldier on in style.

In August 2018, with Brent at the helm of the new 64 and nephew Jack in the pit, Harris caught a beastly 911-pound blue marlin that won Pirate's Cove Billfish Tournament.

COURTESY HUDDLE FAMILY (2)



The Huddles' *Builder's Choice* (above) has become as close to their hearts as any family member. Not only is she a critical tool, but a living, breathing entity — a companion to care for and rely on.

"It's still a blur, honestly," Harris says. "I never dreamed I'd catch a fish that size; I still can't believe it. Knowing Brent since he was a teenager, it was very special for him to be on board too.

"I'll never forget him getting the first look at the fish as it surfaced and yelling out, 'Get the gaff!'" he adds. Though the Huddle family always dreamed of winning their hometown tournament — the Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament — they were elated to hit it big at Pirate's Cove.

Based on the Crystal Coast of North Carolina, *Builder's Choice* has been fishing many of the local and major mid-Atlantic tournaments as of late, and has been wintering in Florida, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic. In 2018, the team won the Casa de Campo Open in the Dominican Republic and placed in the Custom Boat Shootout in the Abacos, Bahamas — quite a travel log since those early days of Big Jack fishing from Charleston's shores.

"The reason we fish is to have fun, laugh and have a good time. If we win a tournament, hey, that's a plus," Harris says. "The biggest thing is, growing up, Dad taught me to fish. Carl and I have been able to pass that passion down to my nieces and nephews, and Brent and Randy [Ramsey] are a big part of that family too."

In talking with Harris and Randy, there's no doubt that Jack Huddle and Joy Gaskill live on in the accomplishments of Jarrett Bay and *Builder's Choice*.

THE INGRAMS

Big Oh, Scarborough Boatworks 63
Jupiter, Florida

Not only is a good captain important for a team's success, but he often plays a role in family life too. After 15 years of fishing together, Gray Ingram, owner of *Big Oh*, has similar praise for his captain: "Ronnie [Fields] is like another son to me." In fact, all the Fields brothers have worked for the Ingrams over the

years. As Ingram puts it, "It's hard to catch a fish if the captain doesn't put you on them."

Ronnie worked as a mate on Jerry and Deborah Dunaway's legendary *The Madam* and *The Hooker* operation and oversaw *Big Oh* through the construction process. He's been captaining the boat for the Ingrams since 2007.

In many ways, running a boat isn't as simple as it used to be. For those running elite-level sport-fishing excursions such as the *Big Oh* program, captains are responsible for managing multiple boats, guests, parts and sundries in foreign ports — all on top of the day-to-day grind of keeping the boat running and the crew working in harmony.

According to Ingram, a family who fishes together has a leg up on their competitors. "Without a doubt, we've fished together for so long, we really have it down; all of us are terrific stand-up anglers." Undoubtedly, the family has learned lots since that fateful day Ingram first crossed paths with a blue marlin off Morehead City, North Carolina.

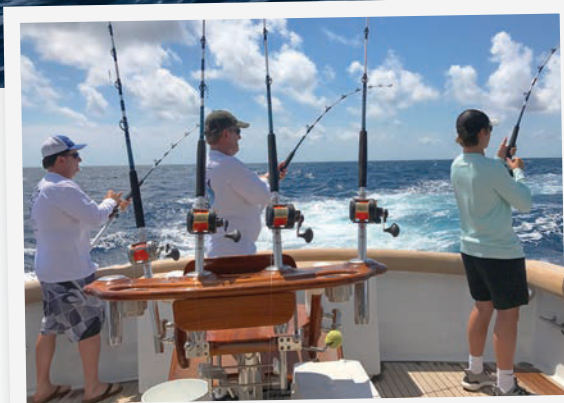
He has now guided two generations of his family through world-class fishing experiences. Son Rodney, and grandchildren Bo and Olivia have won major tournaments, and collected several lifetimes of awards from The Billfish Foundation. They all started fishing offshore at around 6 or 7 years of age, so "it comes naturally to them," Gray explains, starting each of them on stand-up fishing. The result: They all "get around the cockpit great" when pursuing their passion of catching blue marlin on light tackle, he says.

Each of the young Ingrams learned to be good bait-riggers, and Rodney worked as a mate in the summers when he was growing up. At 16, he won Pirate's Cove with an 865-pound monster that his father proudly sank the gaff into.

Also avid hunters — a trait shared by all three families — Gray loves watching his family's proficiency and skill evolve. "It's been enjoyable and rewarding for us to watch what great anglers Rodney and the kids have become, with [my wife] Camila, and [Rodney's wife] Mary and me there cheering them on."

Much like the Huddles, the Ingrams have stepped through multiple boats, including keeping *Big Oh* in Cape Verde for

CHARLES HARRIS



Big Oh patriarch Gray Ingram (above) has managed to fuel the big-game fishing fire for his family (left), leading two generations of Ingrams to stand-up prowess and tournament success. Starting them young was key, he says, to ensure the sport came naturally to his progeny.

three years. It was in the shadow of that dramatic and craggy landscape that they checked off one of the family's bucket-list items: a member of each generation releasing a blue marlin during a simultaneous triple-header. "It was the last day Rodney and the family would be there for that trip. We caught the first set at 9 a.m., and wouldn't you know it, we did it again at 11 a.m.!" Ingram says. "We were 13 for 18 on blues by noon," he recounts, clearly a content angler.

Big Oh is now quartered in Los Sueños Resort and Marina in Costa Rica, where the family appreciates the beautiful surroundings and flat-calm runs to the fishing grounds on most days.

For many years, Ingram also kept a second boat, *Trophy Box*, at home in Florida. And like the *Whoo Dat* crew, they've also targeted summer bluefin in Canada. The family enjoys fishing and hunting together anytime Bo's and Olivia's schedules allow.

In winter, you can find Gray hopping aboard a friend's boat in Jupiter, Florida, for a blustery South Florida sailfish tournament. He estimates they are fishing aboard *Big Oh* 60 to 80 days

per year, and perhaps fished as many as 120 days per year when they had *Trophy Box*, which has since been sold.

Aside from all the achievements, the Ingrams make it clear that camaraderie and having fun is paramount. "We really enjoy ourselves whether we're competing or fun fishing," Gray says. "We like to kid around a lot and even fight over the rod sometimes. It's such a fun sport, and with family it doesn't matter who catches the fish. It's also a good way to keep the smartphones out of everyone's hands," he jokes.

Whether passing the time on a pristine cockpit mezzanine or tucked away in a duck blind, these are the types of bonding experiences that modern outdoor families value most. While the methods and means of our sport evolve, some things seem to never change: A group of folks patiently stalking prey and overcoming obstacles together — and giving each other a good razzing along the way — can be a more meaningful journey when experienced with family. 🐟

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jason Pim is the creative director and writer for *Stealth Marketing*, where he has worked for more than 15 years. A South Florida native, his childhood passion for fishing and boating continues to drive his career in the sport-fishing industry.

HARRY HINDMARSH (TOP), COURTESY INGRAM FAMILY (INSET)