



Press Release.
Thursday, 21st July 2011

The ORIS National Big Game Tournament 2011
In aid of The Puttinu Cares Foundation

On the 26th June, the Malta Fishing Forum successfully conducted its 3rd offshore boat fishing tournament with 80 participating boats from around Malta and Gozo including eight large dedicated support vessels.

The tournament was organised and run by the Malta Fishing Forum (MFF) in collaboration with the Malta Federation of Amateur Fishermen (Federation), and just like previous tournaments, this year the MFF has continued to enhance the level of professionalism and unique aspects. This was Malta's first National boat fishing tournament, held under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. George Abela, President of the Republic of Malta and the first boat fishing tournament to be conducted exclusively on a philanthropic basis. All proceeds from the event were donated to the Puttinu Cares Foundation. This year, the tournament had the largest number of vessels ever taking part in a local offshore fishing tournament, was filmed from the sea and the air, was open to the general public and all members of local fishing clubs, and had the best prizes ever offered to date in a fishing tournament with a total value of over €8000.

Malta's Fisheries Control Department dedicated exclusively to the tournament a special Bluefin Tuna quota of 300kgs, and provided a temporary authorised landing point at the weigh in location for both Bluefin Tuna and Swordfish.

The event organisation committee was headed by Chairman Mr. Joe Baldacchino and Mr Colin Borg Cardona, who commenced work on the tournament back in January 2011, meeting with sponsors and working on the production of Malta's first ever official tournament commemorative magazine. Over three thousand copies were printed and distributed via the various sponsors, including direct distribution to the main marinas around the island. The MFF together with a team from the Federation then worked on the logistics related to the tournament, including the press briefing, the registration and safety briefing and the tournament rules. This year's Tournament Director was Dr. Joe Carabott Damato, secretary of the Federation, and he was assisted by a team of over twenty inspectors, judges and safety boat personnel.

Eighty boats were inspected in the early hours of Sunday morning, before being escorted in groups by support vessels to the starting position just outside of the Malta Freeport. With the support boats in position ahead of each group following a designated bearing, the tournament safety officer on board support boat 'Puttinu 3' commenced a rolling start. At 06:10, with the tournament support aircraft flown by Mr Mark De Marco filming from above, the official start signal was given over the VHF. With the sun just starting to rise from the east, all participating boats accelerated from the rolling start speed of ten knots up to their cruising speed and sped off towards the fishing grounds.

Whilst the prevailing winds on the day were within tournament regulations, it was a challenging day for the participating boats on the West coast of Malta, as they battled 2-3m swells trolling the fishing grounds at six to seven knots. Several crew members experienced nausea and sea sickness, although no calls for assistance were received by the tournament medic who was on board a support vessel.

All vessels were required to either return to the weigh in station at St. George's Jetty, Birzebuggia by 15:00, or notify the tournament directorate of their intention to retire. The competition was won by Mr. Joseph Cassar and his team, who landed a total of ten fish cumulatively weighing 80.38kgs, including a beautiful Mediterranean Spearfish (Pastardella). The biggest fish was a Bluefin Tuna measuring 120cm in length that was landed by Mr. Yanes Desira, and the biggest Alonga was won by Mr. Alexander Fenech whose biggest fish weighed in at an impressive 16.68kgs.

The official awards ceremony was held on the 14th July in Pretty Bay on the beachfront, and was attended by over 160 people who enjoyed a live band, food and drinks kindly provided by Joe "Whippy" Carabott, the presentation of the trophies and prizes from 1st to 10th place. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a €15,000 cheque by the Organising Chairman Mr Joseph Baldacchino to the Director of the Puttinu Cares Foundation, Dr Victor Calvagna.



The Malta Fishing Forum would like to thank the official tournament partners: Jos. Debono Jewellers, Misterfish and 'Misterfisherman', RLR Yachting, Caruana Marine Centre, Buona Pesca Trading, Pirotta Fishing Centre, The Creative Partners and Guttenburg Press; the Organising Chairman and committee, Tournament Director, Tournament Safety Officer, Tournament Medical Officer, judges and officials, and the owners of the support vessels.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the tournament corporate sponsors, Medcomms Ltd and Camilleri Marine, the Malta Federation of Amateur Fishermen, the Birzebuggia Local Council and local Police, the Fisheries Control Department, Transport Malta (Maritime Division) and all the other tournament sponsors and advertisers who helped support this philanthropic event.

Nick Palmer-Morewood
Director - Malta Fishing Forum