

# The Blue Marlin Masters

by Sam White

Photos courtesy Camila Sanchez



Blue marlin release number 330 for the team.



*Big Oh* owner Gray Ingram keeps a watchful eye on the spread off Cape Verde.

In 2013, Gray Ingram set his sights on the annual release record for blue marlin. He had a goal, a plan and a deadline plus the drive to make it happen. Here's how it all came together.



A nice blue on the leader became a common sight from the cockpit of the *Big Oh*.

After an impressive string of tournament victories throughout the Caribbean and Pacific and a slew of tagging awards from The Billfish Foundation (and an *InTheBite Captain of the Year* win for Capt. Ronnie Fields) Gray Ingram decided to shift his team's focus. They would target only blue marlin, foregoing tournaments and anything else that got in the way. Blue marlin or bust. The previous one-season release record was held by Capt. Zak Conde, fishing exclusively in Cape Verde and the Azores. Conde's mark of 329 blue marlin releases was set in 2012. Would it be possible to catch more in a year? Ingram and Fields would find out.

The first move was a game plan. Cape Verde was the first choice. This string of islands situated in the deep Atlantic off the west coast of Africa has proven to be one of the most reliable blue marlin fisheries anywhere in the world, but it's not for the faint of heart (or

wallet). It's a long way from anywhere, requiring a lengthy voyage by ship for the 63-foot Scarborough *Big Oh*. And because of their position in the trades, the Cape Verdes are always windy.

The team of Ingram, Fields and mates Ben Horning and Thomas Garmany started fishing in April and it wasn't long before they hit their stride. By the time they left Cape Verde in July, the team racked up an incredible 291 blue marlin (during the trip Horning and Garmany had returned to the States and mates Bourke Cannon and Brendon Day took over cockpit duties). The best day for the team was also one for the books, going 14 for 16 on blues plus one white marlin and one spearfish for a Grand Slam. Gray Ingram's personal best day was 11 and in just five consecutive days of fishing at the end of April the team let go 51 blue marlin. And perhaps even more impressive, this was considered to be a slow year by Cape



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1. Getting there is half the battle. The *Big Oh* is offloaded halfway across the Atlantic in Cape Verde, ready to fish.

2. In one stretch in late April the team released 51 blue marlin in just five days.

3. Mate Ben Horning wires another blue for Gray Ingram.

4. Not all fights end successfully. The team straightened the hook on this one.

5. Gray Ingram heads upstairs to eyeball the *Big Oh's* spread.

Verde standards. Conde, who held the previous record of 329 in 2012, released 140 blues in 2013 fishing roughly the same number of days. Who knows what the final numbers could have been had the fishing been just a little better.

So after what would have been a record season for just about anyone else in the world, the team now shifted their efforts to the Caribbean, specifically the Dominican Republic. The DR, as it's become known in the sportfishing world, is also known for its rough seas and good numbers of blue marlin. The *Big Oh* team hit the water and fished from August through October where they tallied another 80 blue marlin releases. Their best day off the DR: six blues and one white. Gray's best day there was six blues in a day.

Do the math: that's an incredible 371 blue marlin releases for the



1. The team made a concerted effort to tag as many of their marlin as possible.
2. The final tally: 371 blue marlin for the season and 300 for Gray Ingram.
3. Along the way the team also caught a few other species including this spearfish.

team, fishing from April through October. Gray Ingram finished the season with 300 personal blue marlin releases. It's unknown if this is the highest single-season total by an individual angler but we'd be willing to bet that it is.

So there you have it—the bar has now been set. An amazing 371 blue marlin releases by one team and 300 by a single angler. And while records were made to be broken, this one may be around for a while.

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