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KONA GAME FISHING CLUB – BELLHOPE FROM JAPAN WINS 50th HAWAIIAN INTERNATIONAL BILLFISH TOURNAMENT

Kona, HAWAII (July 24, 2009) – Last week the Emperor and Empress of Japan paid an official visit to Kona. This week, **Kona Game Fishing Club-Bellhope** of Japan captured the prestigious Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament (HIBT) championship, beating out **Old South Marlin Club #4** by 93 points. Third place honors went to **Malibu Marlin Club**.

Skunked for the first two of five tournament fishing days, the father-son team Kona Game Fishing Club-Bellhope from Japan roared back mid-week. When the final fish count was tallied, angler **Kihachiro Suzuki's** week-long catch of five Pacific blue marlin and one ahi (Yellowfin tuna) put them on top of the scoreboard. On Wednesday, Suzuki tagged two Pacific blue marlin. On Thursday, Suzuki tagged another Pacific Blue marlin plus he boated a Pacific blue marlin that weighed in on Kailua Pier at 332 pounds. By the end of HIBT fishing on Friday, Kona Game Fishing Club-Bellhope tagged its final Pacific blue marlin estimated at 150 pounds.

His complete joy transcended language. Speaking through an interpreter Suzuki said, "This is my second time here at the HIBT. It is so enjoyable. I came to Kona with a feeling that I would win and I am so happy!"

Team Old South Marlin Club #4 of North Carolina rallied today with another tagged Pacific blue marlin, propelling them from fourth to second place. **Malibu Marlin Club**, the team that had held the top spot for three of the five days, finished in third place.

"We want to extend a heartfelt mahalo to the entire Kona community for the warmth and aloha shared these past fifty years," stated HIBT founder Peter Fithian.

Top Captain

David Bertuleit, captain of the 41-foot *Kona Seafari*, reeled in the Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament's coveted Henry Chee Award. The perpetual Henry Chee Award was established in 1965 to honor the charter boat captain upon whose vessel the most number of billfish points have been scored at HIBT. The award's namesake, a pioneer marlin fisherman who set an unprecedented number of gamefish catch records, helped establish the Kona coast as a world-famous fishing destination. This is Bertuleit's first Henry Chee Award.

Anyone who knows Kona fishing knows the Parker name. Bertuleit started fishing for the late George Parker more than 20 years ago and more recently he fished with George's sons – Randy and Marlin Parker. About 10 years ago, Bertuleit earned his captain's license, took the *Kona Seafari* out of service for a year and rebuilt it. Since then, Bertuleit has fished nearly every HIBT. This year, he asked another legendary Kona captain, Tioni Judd, to come out of retirement to crew. "This was a great tournament because nearly every boat caught fish! But having Tioni fish with me was even better," said Bertuleit. "It was all about teamwork."

About HIBT

The Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament welcomes teams to its 50th golden anniversary along side the State of Hawaii as it celebrates 50 years of statehood! Once again, the world meets here in Kona as enthusiastic anglers gather from around the world to fish these famous waters including Australia, Bermuda, British Isles, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Tahiti and representing teams from around the US including California, Florida, Hawaii and North Carolina.

The Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament is underwritten by the generosity of the County of Hawaii and sponsored in part by Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Hawaii, Oceanic Time Warner, KWXX Radio and numerous corporate and community donors.

For more information on the golden anniversary of the Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament, log onto www.hibtffishing.com.

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HIBT Final Team Standings

| Place | Team | Points |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Kona Game Fishing Club-Bellhope | 1643 |
| 2 | Old South Marlin Club #4 | 1550 |
| 3 | Mailbu Marlin Club | 1467 |
| 4 | Alii Brothers Marlin Hui | 1350 |
| 5 | South Africa Protea Team | 1300 |
| 6 | Team Lantana | 1257 |
| 7 | Old South Marlin Club #3 | 1250 |
| 8 | Pajaro Valley Game Fishing Club #2 | 1250 |
| 9 | Team Malaka | 1200 |
| 10 | Tica Game Fishing Club-Japan | 1200 |

*Note: In the event of point ties, place standings are determined by the time the fish is boated

HIBT Final Captain Standings

| Place | Captain | Boat | Points |
|-------|-----------------|--------------|--------|
| 1 | David Bertuleit | Kona Seafari | 2391 |
| 2 | Dennis Cintas | Tropical Sun | 2050 |
| 3 | Neal Isaacs | Anxious | 1903 |
| 4 | Mike DeRego | Maggie Joe | 1708 |
| 5 | Jason Holtz | Marlin Magic | 1643 |

SIDEBAR

Countries and US States Represented at the 50th HIBT

Australia
 Bermuda
 British Isles
 Japan
 New Zealand
 Papua New Guinea
 South Africa
 Tahiti
 California
 Florida
 Hawaii
 North Carolina

HIBT Total Catch

| | |
|----|--|
| 7 | Pacific blue marlin boated |
| 98 | Pacific blue marlin tagged and released |
| 1 | Striped Marlin boated |
| 30 | Short nose spearfish tagged and released |
| 1 | Sailfish |
| 5 | Ahi boated |