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EDITOR'S LETTER

## SAILS, SANCOCHOS AND WATER BALLOONS

**I**t's a rare occurrence nowadays to fish a billfish tournament where the focus isn't about big-money checks or perennial accolades. Long gone are the events where good times and camaraderie are the goal; going to fish a fun event with both angler and boat rotations is more or less extinct. However, the No Sancocho Sailfish Shootout at Casa Vieja Lodge is the exception to the current trend and still has the primary focus of having a good time, with the sole objective to raise money for one of the local schools nearby. The negativity of missing a billfish bite and the dreaded experience of reeling back in only a ballyhoo head after a miss — a sancocho — is actually turned into a positive because anglers must then donate \$20. And much to their dismay, they have to pony up even if they pull the hook on a fish during the fight.

David and Kristen Salazar resurrected the event in 2015, and I attended this year to see what additional funds we could raise for the good cause. With the \$8,800 raised from the anglers' sancochos as well as the generosity of Cummins Marine in 2015, Bob Smith heard about the effort to improve the Santa Cecilia Primary School near the lodge in Guatemala from our article in *Marlin* and brought down enough guys to fill out three teams.

The fishing was pretty darn good, and the 10 teams fishing this year's event released 378 sailfish and six blue marlin but, most importantly, racked up a total of 230 sancochos worth \$4,980. Cummins matched the total amount, and Bob Smith matched the totals from the three boats he had entered in the tournament. In addition to several other personal donations, the event raised a total of \$13,760 for the local school.

While I had no problem coughing up money for such a worthy cause, I ended up having a great tournament and walked away with only a \$20 donation from my single sancocho from 22 bites. I fished with the boys aboard *Spindrift*, and we took third place with 56 sails and a blue marlin in three days. We also found some really incredible yellowfin tuna action that made for delicious sashimi. Tracey Kealy took the title of Sancocho Queen, but she walked away with a smile knowing the money was going to a truly worthy cause.

During the awards party, I stood with Andy Kelly from Cummins Marine as we watched a slide show that showed all the work Casa Vieja had done at the school over the past year. Kelly said, "It really is amazing what they can do with something as little as \$5,000 and the difference it makes." He was absolutely correct. Despite what little the school still has by our standards, all the students now have desks to sit at, and the teachers' desks are no longer falling apart. Most importantly, the main classroom building received a new roof, and they put in a new water filtration system so all the kids at school can drink clean water directly from the fountain. When you see the kids smiling and happy at the school, it definitely puts everything into perspective of just how fortunate we are.

The No Sancocho is a special event because many of the lodge's workers, captains and crew have children who attend the school that the tournament benefits. And while I wish I was still down in Guatemala taking part in the incredible action, the 2017 event is already shaping up to be an incredible one, with even more water-balloon fights and activities — you are almost guaranteed nonstop belly-hurting laughs during the week. I hope to see you there.

Check out photos from this event on page 44 and a video of the fun at [marlinmag.com/nosancocho2016](http://marlinmag.com/nosancocho2016).



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