

2003 Marlin Season

2003 was another great season on the Great Barrier Reef. It was a slower start to previous years even though the conditions were ideal. The fish came in good numbers on No. 10 Ribbon Reef around the 20th September and really started to peak from the 22nd Sept onwards. Average size of the fish encountered seemed to be around the 450lb mark. Catching our first 900lb Plus on the 20th September.

We had some slow periods during October although when the bite was on the fishing was incredible, with fantastic numbers of big fish.

The Lizard Island Tournament coincided with this bite and the final stats for the tournament read as follows

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"The final stats of a memorable Lizard Island tournament were 478 strikes, 319 Hook-Ups, 157 Tags, I weighed at 565kg (1245 lb) 2 "granders" weighed at sea and thus non qualifying, and 7 further tags in fish self disqualified by anglers and crew for technical breaches of the rules.

A break down of estimated sizes, in pounds, of fish tagged is:

100-300, 53 tags

300-500 32 tags

500-700 22 tags

700-900 27 tags

900-1100 23 tags

It was quite a strange season overall, in the regard that many great spots along the lower Ribbons and possibly the most consistent location "Lindenbank", only fired very occasionally throughout most of the season, though it did fish well from mid November and throughout December.

There were still plenty of big fish around late in the season with December once again fishing extremely well. On my last charter for the season in the 2nd week of December we caught an estimated 950lb PLUS. Some boats fishing even later than this were still encountering large fish like these.

No.10 Ribbon Reef was the pick of the locations for overall consistency. I and most other captains have not seen a season like this where the main concentration of fish were focused on one given area for so long. Just goes to prove how little we all know and how our theories can be only generalised.

Even so I managed to catch the most fish I have done in a season to date, 98 marlin in 78 days of fishing with plenty of big fish, the biggest an estimated 1100 pounder and 18 over 700lb plus.

Looking forward to another great season in 2004.

Ross Finlayson.