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Shock Wave Wins the 2018 Blue Marlin Grand Championship with 795.6-Pound Blue

The Wharf, Orange Beach, Alabama:

The crew of *Shock Wave* will never be superstitious about Friday the 13th again. The Orange Beach team brought a 795.2-pound blue marlin to the scales Friday evening and it held on to win the 2018 Blue Marlin Grand Championship and earn the team a payout of \$371,250. Brien Blakeney is the owner of the 64 Viking and his son, Austin, was the angler who whipped the trophy-winning catch. Captain Marco Gaona is the skipper, Lawton Shaffer is the mate and Chris Head was the other angler. *Shock Wave's* fish was caught on a live bait and subdued after a 4.5-hour battle on 100-pound test monofilament with a 200-pound test leader.

"It's prestigious to win any tournament, but this was nice to do it here at home with family and friends looking on," Gaona said before Sunday's awards ceremony. "We were fishing against the best teams in the Gulf of Mexico. It makes me happy for the owners for all the effort and expense they put into the sport. It's a very family oriented team."

Done Deal, a 70 Viking owned by Jon Gonsoulin and run by Capt. Jason Buck, settled for second place in the tournament standings but came away with the biggest share of the \$1.8 million in overall prize money. Katie Gonsoulin, Jon's daughter, fought the 640.8-pound blue for eight hours before it was finally boated. *Done Deal*, with mate Nick Borell and crew members Scott Sullivan, Vic Lott, Wilks Hommock, Donnie Rouse and Jeff Landry, took home a check totaling \$612,000 for the second-place finish in the weight division, first in Release and multiple optional category winnings. That payout is one of the largest ever for a multi-day tournament in Gulf sport-fishing history. Katie was also named the Top Lady Angler for 2018. *Done Deal's* release tally included four blues and a white.

Breathe Easy, a 68 Viking owned by Matt McDonald with Capt. Patrick Ivie at the helm, earned the third six-figure payday for the 2018 event. Ivie, angler Rick Olsen and the team brought a 598.2-pound blue to the scales Saturday evening. It took third place honors and multiple optional categories, good for \$229,725.

Reel Addiction won \$61,200 for its 499.6-pound blue and a 140-pound yellowfin, while *Quick Time* settled for \$36,000 for a 507 blue, the first fish weighed on Friday morning.

Melanie won \$89,235 for its releases and *Team Galati* pocketed \$33,795. *Chasin' Tail* and *Tenacious* also won optional prize money in the release division.

Carib set a new BMGC tournament record when Larry Wireman muscled a 192.2-pound yellowfin tuna to the transom. That fish was worth \$64,575. Nick Pratt (*Hauling Away*) had the second largest tuna at 185.2 pounds, followed by Ashley Faulkner (*El Gancho*) at 158.6 pounds.

Chris Williams, fishing aboard *REHAB*, caught the biggest dolphin of the week, a 45-pounder, good for a \$17,100 payout. Drew Marshall and the *Traders Hill* team cashed in with optional money on a dolphin weighing 42.6 pounds and Scott Cooper on *CE* rounded out the division with a 39.8-pound bull.

Southern Miss and Billy Richardson topped the wahoo category with a 56.6-pound catch. Joey Difatta on *Gunfighter* was second with 49 pounds, followed by Neal Foster (*Intense*) at 34.6 pounds.

A record 76 boats competed in the 7th annual version of this popular—and last—stop on the Gulf Coast Triple Crown Championship circuit. A total of 51 blue marlin were caught with eight weighed. Five white marlin were also released during 2.5 days of fishing.

At the captains' meeting Wednesday night, Dewey Blaylock was honored as the Gulf Legends recipient for 2018. Blaylock works as a release video judge for the Grand Championship and is also an IGFA Tournament Observer. He has been voluntarily working Gulf tournaments for decades. The BMGC also has a charitable component. To date, the tournament has raised \$120,000 in donations to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

"I asked you to light up the Flaming Marlins at weigh-in, and you did—in a big way!" Tournament Director Scott Burt told the teams at the awards ceremony. "Great job. Thanks to all of you for fishing with us and we look forward to seeing everyone again for the 2019 Blue Marlin Grand Championship, the Greatest Show in Sportfishing."

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