

As we move into the last half of summer, the game fishing on the north coast of NSW should start hotting up. So far this season, it's been very poor compared to previous years, but with unseasonably strong northerly winds and some bizarre behaviour by the East Australian Current now hopefully all behind us, the expectation is that while the peak season is definitely late, the best fishing may all end up crammed into the next three months.

This is just fine with most local anglers, because we're now getting into tournament season.

At this time of year, the two biggest game fishing tournaments on the north coast attract a lot of attention from local and visiting anglers. The first tournament to be held in summer up this way is the Golden Lure competition staged by the Port Macquarie Game Fishing Club, and it concluded just a couple of weeks ago. Among the visiting boats was local Solitary Islands Game Fishing Club boat "Alcatraz", skippered by James McGinty, crewed by well known local Coffs anglers Marcus Blackwell, Pete English, and David Wright. This team from Coffs did pretty well in less than wonderful weather conditions, and even though they failed to feature on the winners' podium, they acquitted themselves nicely in the face of strong competition, tagging three marlin, two caught by Marcus Blackwell, and one by David Wright.



Local Coffs angler Marcus Blackwell about to release one of the black marlin he caught while fishing on local game boat "Alcatraz" recently.

The next big event on the local game fishing calendar is the Solitary Islands Game Fishing Club's Heavy Tackle Challenge. This big Coffs tournament has a pretty short history, but in terms of its growth and reputation, it's proven to be the most popular on the northern NSW coast, attracting a

total of 41 local and interstate boats last year, a number almost certain to be exceeded this year according to organisers.

The Heavy Tackle Challenge is run out of Coffs Harbour on the weekend of 25/26 March, and thanks to a highly innovative scoring system and some of the best marlin grounds on the coast, it provides teams with some of the most exciting big game angling they're likely to experience. The tournament is strongly biased towards tag and release angling, and everyone's target is the awe-inspiring blue marlin, the largest and most challenging of our local game fish.

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