



SPECIAL REPORT

# Cape Verde's phenomenal blue marlin season

**Cape Verde was named the third-best billfishery in the world last year, and this year the blue marlin hotspot has again shown us why.**

This cluster of 10 volcanic islands in the Atlantic Ocean west of Africa is renowned as a prolific blue marlin fishery, and as one of the world's best locations for your chance to catch a 'grander' blue.

'Billfishing Cape Verde' launched its social-media pages on May 5 and now provides daily reports in season for 18 charterboats fishing out of Cape Verde's island of Sao Vicente. For most of the fleet, the season begins in early April and continues through to the end of July. Teasing and switch-baiting has proven to be the most effective and undeniably the most exciting method used here.

The fleet's daily reporting has given us the opportunity to obtain accurate statistics on the huge numbers of blue marlin that Cape Verde is producing. Over 75 days, the 18 charter boats raised 1525 blue marlin, of which 710 blues were successfully caught and released from 1179 strikes. The statistics showed that

60% of the blue marlin that struck were successfully released, and 98 of them were estimated to be over 225kg, with 12 of them over 360kg (800 pounds). The first Sunday of June was notable, with one-third of the blue marlin released estimated at between 225 and 430kg.

At the start of the season we saw large numbers of smaller fish at Sao Vicente's

neighbouring islands, Sao Nicolau and Santo Antao. Halfway through the season brought consistent numbers of larger fish, which congregated to the south of Sao Vicente. Along with the blue marlin, a few Atlantic spearfish, sailfish, white marlin and 45kg-plus yellowfin tuna were also caught.

We had 11 boats compete in the Blue Marlin World Cup, held on the 4th of



Cape Verde, a cluster of 10 islands off the western coast of Africa, produced consistent numbers of large Atlantic blue marlin this season.

July, and Cape Verde was looking very promising in the lead-up. A 385kg blue was released two days before the tournament, and a 270kg fish the day before.

### FIRST GRANDER OF THE SEASON

The first weighed 'grander' of the season was caught seven days before the World Cup on Friday 28 June. The crew of *Black Marlin* secured the 533.9kg (1177lb) blue after a battle lasting nearly two hours off Sao Nicolau. It came up very aggressively on their Black Bart teaser and was easily switched to a tuna bait before Heiko Steinmetz fought the fish on 60kg tackle. Once hooked, the huge blue made a series of jumps close to the boat which showed the crew how big she really was, before dragging them eight nautical miles into rougher seas.

With the leader in hand several times, but the deckie unable to lift her, the call was nearly made to end the fight due to the rough conditions and the amount of water the boat was taking on. Eventually the fish died on the surface, so no gaffs were needed although it took 30 minutes for the crew to get her into the boat. After being weighed, the fish was donated as food for the hospital and schools in the local village.

Only one fish from Cape Verde was weighed as a contender on the day of the World Cup. The team on *Mystic Blue* caught the 235kg (518lb) marlin in the morning, unfortunately missing out to a 245.5kg (541.2lb) blue caught by an Aussie team in Madeira.



### BIGGEST FISH IN JUNE/JULY

As a whole, this year delivered a much better season than last. Mid-season brought a crescendo, with big fish consistently raised and released in larger numbers than the smaller blues.

May proved the best time for numbers of fish, trumped by much larger blues towards the end of the season in June and July. The three leading boats, *The Hooker*, *Smoker* and *Amelia* had each released more than 100 blue marlin for the season by 22 June.

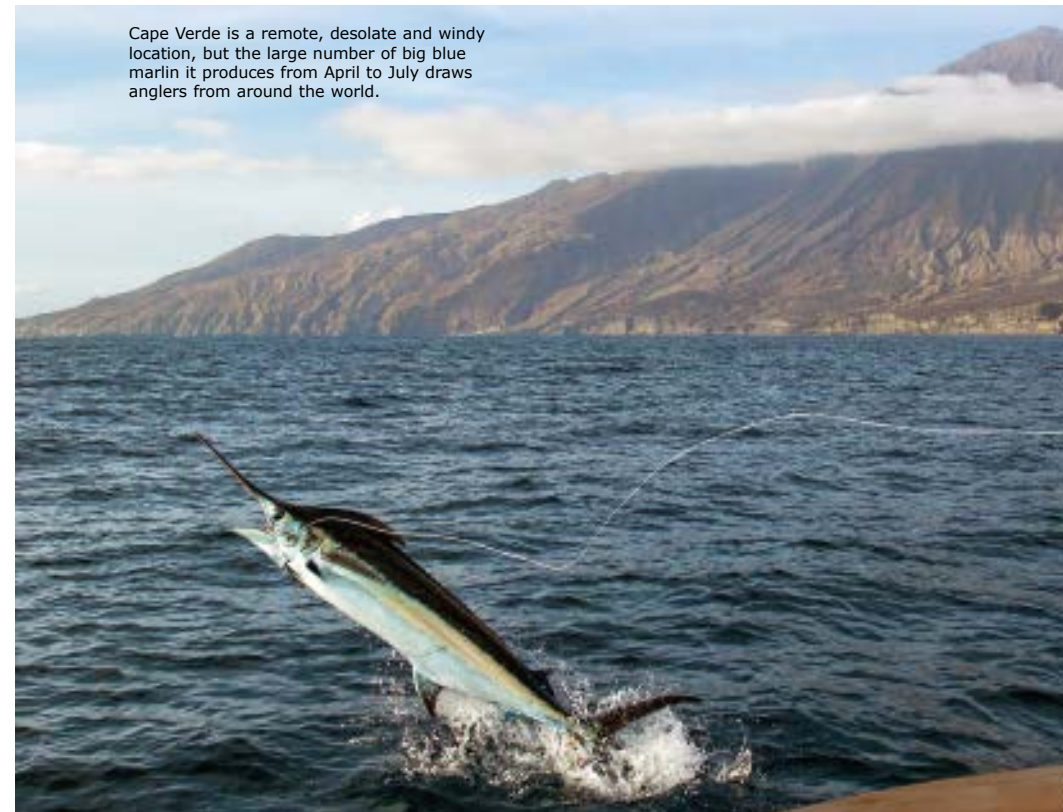
The numbers of fish diminished as the

season slowly wound down to an end, although the islands were still producing blues of more than 200kg. Some crews are staying through to October for their chance at a really big one.

Over recent years, Cape Verde has earned a reputation as one of the world's greatest blue marlin hotspots. It is definitely a place to add to your fishing bucket-list.

For up-to-date reports, check out 'Billfishing Cape Verde' on Facebook and Instagram, or email: [billfishingcapeverde@gmail.com](mailto:billfishingcapeverde@gmail.com) for charter information.

— **Christie Turner**



Cape Verde is a remote, desolate and windy location, but the large number of big blue marlin it produces from April to July draws anglers from around the world.



The first weighed 'grander' of the season was a 533.9kg blue caught on 28 June by the team aboard *Black Marlin*.