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Liki Tiki wins revived Fort Lauderdale billfish event

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Novice angler Brooke Atkinson of Fort Lauderdale led her six-member team on Liki Tiki to victory Saturday in the revived Fort Lauderdale Billfish Tournament, releasing two of the team's six sailfish and catching four dolphin to 16 pounds in the fun fish division.

"She was the star," boat owner Howard Newman of Delray Beach said.

Runner-up D & D, owned and skippered by Danny Massa of Pompano Beach, also released six sails, but lost to Liki Tiki on time.

Both teams fished off Palm Beach County using live bait on kites at a depth range of 100 to 140 feet.

Atkinson had never caught a sailfish until her team's practice day Friday. She got plenty of guidance in the heat of battle Saturday.

"Everyone was yelling, shouting what to do," she said. "It was awesome. I hung tight."

Atkinson won top female and heaviest dolphin honors.

Jeff Morton on A New Day was top male angler with two sailfish releases. Colton Richardson on Young Guns was top junior with one. Kevin Dean on Shaka caught the largest kingfish at 35.6 pounds.

Nova Southeastern University's Oceanographic Center partnered with the Marine Industries Association of Florida and several sponsors to bring back the tournament, which was last held in 2010. It raises money for scholarships for master's and doctorate students to study at the Nova campus in Hollywood.

The tournament also served as a research platform. Dolphin and kingfish weighed at the Hyatt Pier 66 docks Saturday were immediately turned over to NSU students, who collected numerous samples for studies on age, growth, reproduction and diet.

A fleet of 21 boats competed.