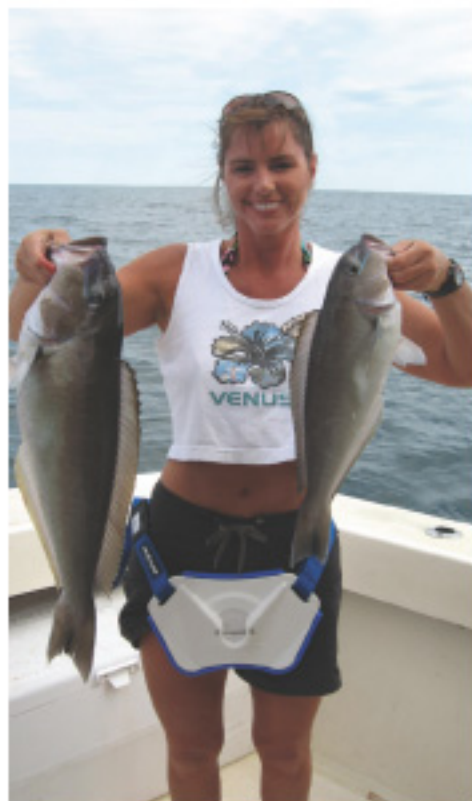


Fish Tales

DR. JULIE BALL CASTS
HER AFFINITY FOR ANGLING
TO THE WORLD
BY BARRETT BAKER



on fishing for striped marlin and has appeared in two *Sportsman Magazine* television shows. She has been featured in dozens of national advertisements and has participated in more than 80 seminars and lectures to promote fishing. She even has her own calendar.

But what really drives Dr. Ball is simply encouraging others to take up the sport that she loves so dearly. "The whole reason I'm here is to inspire others to get out on the water—especially women and children," she says. "Kids are so busy

these days, and you just don't hear about parents, or other adults, taking the time to

take young people out and teaching them to fish. I say, take the time. Because you don't want your children's memories to be all about schedules and being rushed here and there.

You want their memories to be about catching fish

with their mom, competing with their dad, learning how to thread a hook correctly and having fun. Those memories will last a lifetime, and I think that's something we're missing today."

It's easy for Dr. Ball to be so passion-

Dr. Julie Ball is like a local superhero. By day, she's a mild-mannered dentist; but on evenings and weekends, she's a whirlwind of energy, acting as the local International Game Fish Association (IGFA) representative while still trying to add to her already impressive achievements on the international sport fishing scene.

Dr. Ball holds seven IGFA world records and was ranked as the third Female World Record Saltwater Angler in 2007. She is one of two people to achieve Level V Master Angler status (with 125-plus trophy catches), has attained Virginia Expert Angler every year since 1996 (the

first female ever to receive the title), has been awarded the Top Virginia Saltwater Angler nod for the last four years running, and has earned citation certificates for more than 40 different species of fresh and saltwater fish. She has won countless fishing tournaments, and caught the largest tautog ever landed by a woman (22 pounds, 8 ounces).

She writes weekly and monthly columns for her own website (www.drjball.com) and a number of local publications, and has published more than 25 articles in national magazines. She has filmed a video series in the Galapagos Islands

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ate about the sport—fishing has always been in her blood. Her mom got her into fishing when she was a little girl growing up in Pensacola, Fla., and Julie's mom learned the sport from her mother. But winning awards and competing on local, state and international levels didn't even cross Julie's mind until she relocated to Virginia Beach and was exposed to the great variety of fish the waters in the area had to offer.

"When we first moved here, my husband and I joined the Virginia Beach Angler's Club, where we met many great anglers who showed us the ropes. The members taught us how to catch these big sport fish—amberjack, black drum, red drum—then photograph them and release them. I quickly learned the prize fish program inside and out, and all of a sudden, I was winning the top awards in our club. It just snowballed from there."

That snowball effect has grown into an avalanche, positioning Julie as an ambassador for a sport that is largely populated by men—some of them don't take her seriously as an angler or as a spokesperson for sport fishing. "It's a lot of work, a lot of responsibility, and there are a lot of heartaches. But there's so much more positive feedback and goodness that comes out of it. There's always that small group of negative people, but the support that's positive makes it so much

more worthwhile."

Ball gives back and shows appreciation for that support by teaching other people how to fish. For a small fee, she'll take people into a classroom setting and give them one-on-one instruction on whatever they want to learn. She especially enjoys providing beginner-level lessons for children, with subjects ranging from knot tying to casting, fish species identification, and more.

"I'm the kind of person who, whenever I want to do something, I get the job done. And I take a lot of pride in doing that. I love fishing—it's my passion. I do it whenever I have a chance to do it. I teach others to do it ... I share with them and inspire them, and that's what I love to do."

Ball knows that being able to do something she loves on a daily basis makes her very fortunate. She just hopes that her enthusiasm is contagious enough that other people, especially families, will benefit on levels that will make them feel just as privileged.

"Until you take a child fishing, they don't realize what they are missing—they have no idea. They're perfectly content to sit there and play video games. Once you watch a child hook that fish for the first time and see the sense of accomplishment on their face, well there's nothing like it in the whole world." **BBB**

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