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**Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament Reeling It In
21 years after inaugural 1998 contest**

SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine — The Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament will hold its final fishing tourney in honor of the late Philip H. Grondin, Sr., who founded the tournament and helped grow it into the premier tuna-fishing contest in northern New England while raising more than \$800,000 for Maine's community colleges and other worthy causes.

The goal of this year's tournament is to raise \$200,000 and push the 21-year fundraising total to over \$1 million. This year's contest, scheduled for Aug. 1-4 at Spring Point Marina in South Portland, will be kicked off with a huge fundraising auction on Aug. 1 featuring live and silent bidding that is free and open to the public. The live auction will feature many unique items including a 1949 Cadillac Series 75 limousine, a private performance by Don Campbell, a 20 gauge ultralight Benelli shotgun, and 22 Sea Dogs sky-box tickets.

"When the first tournament was held in 1998, nobody could have predicted what a smashing success it would become among tuna fishermen throughout New England," said Chuck Gregory, Secretary of the tournament. "And with the passing of Phil Grondin, we want to make the final tournament the biggest and best ever! We want to raise and donate \$200,000 for community college scholarships, and we hope everyone will show up on August 1 to support us."

Phil Grondin, who co-founded RJ Grondin & Sons construction company, was the driving force behind the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament. He died last September at the age of 76 following a brief illness.

This year's contest will feature up to 40 boats that will fish out of Spring Point Marina in South Portland in search of the elusive and majestic giant bluefin tuna. There are still a few slots open for captains to register. For more information about the tournament and how to register, please visit www.mainetuna.org.

The 2018 festivities are open to the public and begin Wednesday, Aug. 1, at 5 p.m., with a dinner buffet plus live and silent fundraising auctions. Proceeds from the tournament benefit students at Maine's seven community colleges.

Fishing begins on Thursday, Aug. 2, and continues through 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 4. An awards dinner will be held that Saturday at 6 p.m. with a fish fry prepared by Susan's Fish & Chips, and a raffle drawing for a John Deere 2310E Loader with trailer valued at over \$19,000. Raffle tickets can be purchased during the tournament.

Bluefin tuna, sometimes called the king of the sea, can grow to more than half a ton in size and travel faster than 50 mph while swimming thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean. The fish are also lucrative, with fishermen able to get thousands of dollars for a single fish. Much of the U.S. catch is shipped to Japan, where the tuna's fatty richness is prized for sushi.

In the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament, captains catching the five largest bluefin tuna qualify for cash prizes, with a top prize of \$6,250. Other prizes are \$3,250 for second place, \$1,500 for third, \$1,000 for fourth and \$500 for fifth. As an added incentive, a grand prize of \$50,000 will be awarded to any boat that catches a tuna that beats the Maine state rod-and-reel record of 819 pounds.

Last year, Captain John Harmon and crew of the F/V Banshee took home first-place prize with an 719-pound fish. The all-time tournament record was set in 1999, when a 931.8-pound tuna was caught.

With the help of tournament participants and generous sponsors, the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament over the past 20 years has raised about \$800,000 in charitable contributions. Most of the money has been contributed toward scholarships at Maine's seven community colleges, with funds also donated to the Byron R. Gouzie Foundation, the McAuley Residence at Mercy Hospital, the Isaac Baker "Baker-Mobile" fund, and the Maine Community Foundation.

In 2010, the Council for Resource Development award the tournament a prestigious national Benefactor Award for its contributions to Maine's community colleges.

2017 photo of Captain John Harmon and crew of the F/V Banshee weighing their 719 lb. winning tuna.
http://mainetuna.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IMG_0650.jpg

