

It's a high five day for Bandolera at the 34th Annual USVI Open/Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament

ST. THOMAS — The Puerto Rican and Venezuelan-based anglers and crew aboard Bandolera, were hi-fiving each other in the FNS 63's cockpit as five blue marlin release flags flew over their heads.

"Today, we decided to fish west rather than east," said Luis Fernandez, Jr. "It paid off. We got a double header less than an hour after lines in this morning."

After the third release of the day at around 11 a.m., Bandolera went fish less until 4 p.m.

"We released one then, and then our fifth for the day at 4:45 p.m.," says Fernandez, who made one of the releases, his father, Luis

Fernandez, Sr. had two releases, and fellow angler, Manuel Felipez, had another two.

The release of four blue marlin today pushed Vintage into the Top Boat position with nine releases. The Florida-based team won last year's Best Boat title with only seven releases for the tournament. Bandalero finished today as runner up Best Boat with 8 releases, while Mojito is in third with 6 releases.

Scoring is even tighter in the Top Angler category. In fact, the top three anglers have all released the same number of blue marlin — four — and what separates their position is only time, mean-

ing who caught their four first.

Luis Nevares, aboard Sharkey's Revenge, is in first, with Mojito's Luis Infanzon second and Black Gold's Mike McCarthy, third.

Fishing off the Drop today definitely proved gangbusters with the 37 boat fleet hooking up 60 blue marlin and collectively releasing 45. This one day release total is more than anglers would see in many other sports fishing destinations in the world during an entire season.

The full moon tomorrow night is destined to turn up the heat on the fishing even more.

"The bite can be really hot right after the full moon," says Spike

Herbert, a long-time St. Thomas sports fishing captain who enjoyed being in the Top Boat slot on the first day aboard Miss Makaylah.

Anglers and crews will enjoy a layday tomorrow, with the Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas, hosting its Full Moon Party in the evening.

Final fishing action on Thursday ends with the sport fishing fleet's swift Jim Smith "Race From The Edge." The best place to watch this often photo finish is from the spit of land past the pool at the Sapphire Beach Resort.

The Awards Ceremony takes place later in the evening along with the naming of the 2006 USVI Open/Atlantic Blue Marlin Top

Angler, who pockets a \$10 cash prize.

**RESULTS AFTER
THREE DAYS OF FISHING**
134 Total Hook-Ups, 100 Total
Releases

Top Boat

1. Vintage (9 releases)
2. Bandolera (8 releases)
3. Mojito (6 releases)

Top Angler

1. Luis Nevares, Sharkey's Revenge (4 releases)
2. Luis Infanzon, Mojito (4 releases)
3. Mike McCarthy, Black Gold (4 releases)