



2020 Team Fluke Win Pinch Me... I Must Be Dreaming!

by Rich Hittinger



Please don't think that this is in any way boastful, but we did it; we finally WON the Team Fluke Tournament!

Bob and I were about to organize a parade in our own honor upon this momentous occasion, but decided against it because of the pandemic.

Our wives are going to bring noise makers to the Banquet next January (if the pandemic allows) to celebrate in front of all of the RISAA members present.



This has been a story of so many near victories that Bruce Lawing told us at a RISAA meeting in 2016 that Rich and Gisele Golembeski had changed their boat name to *Skipjack*. When I replied, "but they know we have that name," he said they heard that we renamed our boat to "*Brides Maid*" because of all of our *almost* wins.

Since 2006 my fishing buddy Bob Murray and I have finished this tournament in 3rd place 5 years and 2nd place 3 years, but even though we fished the event at least 10 different years we never won until this crazy year of 2020.

We were so convinced that 1st place was not in our future that Bob often said "we will be coming down to the boat with our walkers in early July many years from now still trying for 1st place in the RISAA Team Fluke Tournament."

Its not like we are new to fluke fishing; we have owned a boat together and have been fishing together since 1989 and fluke have been one of our key targets at least for the last 15 years or more.

TEAM GOLEMBESKI

I think we were attracted to the Team Fluke Tournament in 2006 because this great fishing pair of **Rich and Gisele Golembeski** were successful for several years. They seemed like normal people at the RISAA meetings, but clearly turned into superheros on the water. We were in awe of their 4 fish total weight of 27.15 pounds in 2006 and then in 2009 they won with a total of 29.06 pounds!



Rich and Gisele Golembeski have been two of the best fluke anglers in all of RISAA for many years!

This was the coup de grace – we had to do better than 3rd place – could we ever match the greatness of this dynamic duo? That was very uncertain, but we were committed to try. And try we did for many more years.

TEAM LAWNG

The years have been memorable – like 2014 when we missed 2nd place by only 0.01 pounds to **Bruce and Mike Lawing**. When we saw Bruce at the RISAA meeting he said, "I weighed the fish at Breachway Bait & Tackle and when I put the fish in the scale it kept sliding off, so I put a couple paper towels down under the fish."



The father/son team of Mike and Bruce Lawing

Or like 2017 when my grandson was born late Saturday night and my wife and I made previous arrangements to watch his older brother, so I couldn't fish Sunday. Bob went out by himself on Sunday and caught some nice fish that put our 2 day total high enough to get 2nd place, I wondered if Max had been born 1 day later would we have made 1st place? No, I am sure.

We fish out of Snug Harbor, so we look for fluke anywhere from the West Wall to Charlestown Beach to South of Newport or out to Block Island. To try to catch big fluke during this particular tournament we have scouted areas further east and further south. I think we wanted this win so bad we would have gone anywhere within the capabilities of our boat to catch them. On Team Fluke fishing days it wasn't just catch fluke, but catch a few BIG fluke. Don't worry about how many fluke – just catch some BIG ones!

We have had years when we were inundated with dogfish everywhere we went, years with strong winds that kept us at the dock, days when we had mechanical issues with our boat (that was the previous boat, our twin diesel Hydrocat that constantly needed some repair).

But we kept trying and 2020 was the year that it finally paid off.

The moral of this story is PERSERVERENCE PAYS OFF!

Enjoy fishing and make your own stories – maybe even enter the Team Fluke Tournament next year.



**BOB MURRAY and RICHARD HITTINGER
2020 Team Fluke Winners**