



# Duo fills the bill

## After 15 years of competing, mates rise to Challenge

THE "old firm" of Luke Fallon and Mike Carney won the Townsville Billfishing Challenge this week for the first time.

The pair have fished the annual 6kg line tournament over the past 15 years – since Fallon first acquired his skipper's ticket.

Mike, an experienced billfishing exponent who has chased billfish all over the world, was named champion angler in the 8m and over division and Fallon was named champion skipper.

The newly built 57-foot gameboat *Kekoa* was the champion boat in the 8m and over division, with Carney, who sponsored the event, his son Chris and Nigel Lucas the champion team.

They caught and released

five of the 10 billfish tagged during the five-day tournament, which ended on Wednesday.

They led the tournament from day two, tagging one sailfish and one black marlin.

The team on *Castille III* also tagged one marlin.

On Tuesday, the *Kekoa* team added another black to their tally and *Kanahoe*, skippered by Sharkey Miles, came into contention with one sail tagged.

However, *Kekoa* put the result beyond doubt on Wednesday when they tagged yet another sail and one black, while *Kanahoe* managed one black.

Greg Gilbert's team on *Manana* also scored one black.

Carney said he won the champion angler award on a



**It's a strike:** Nigel Lucas battles to capture a small black marlin on light line during the Challenge.

Pictures: Kelly Fallon

countback from his 30-year-old son Chris, who at one stage was so seasick he wanted to withdraw from the event.

He hooked an estimated 45-50kg marlin 10 minutes

before fishing was to cease at 3pm on the last day and after a 40-minute fight the fish was tagged.

The tag was allowed as the fish was hooked before cease-

fishing time and that brought his tally to two, equal with his dad.

However, Mike was awarded the title because his fish had been tagged first.

Cairns-based Fallon had brought *Kekoa* south to tackle the tournament as a lead-up to upcoming heavy tackle events along the far north Queensland coast.

The Townsville 6kg line class event was to start last Saturday but due to big seas competing gameboats, particularly those 8m and under, were given an option not to fish on the first day.

Many of the fleet headed north of Townsville to troll baits around the Brittomart Reef area, but others, mostly the bigger boats, stuck to the known grounds north and

south of Cape Bowling Green, east of Townsville.

The billfish were scarce, and for many of the anglers the seas "fresh to frightening".

A decision to take on the weather on Saturday and use Yank's Jetty on Hinchinbrook Island as a base paid off for the team aboard Mick Davidson's 25-foot Grady White gameboat *Elektrakusen*.

Team member on strike Dale Welldon hooked an estimated 35kg sailfish early on the Monday. The fish was the only one tagged by anglers in the 8m and under division and Welldon claimed the champion angler award.

*Elektrakusen* was named champion boat in the 8m and under division and Chris Davidson snapped up the champion skipper award.