



# THIS WEEK'S SPEAKER

June 8, 2021

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## Bethany Bradsher, Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament

By Jim Kelley

[Herb Harriss](#) introduced Bethany Bradsher. Bethany has been a sportswriter and freelancer since 1990, and since that time she has covered every sport for media ranging from newspapers to magazines, Internet columns, and books. She is the author of *Coaching Third: The Keith LeClair Story*, which was published by Whitecaps Media in 2010, *The Classic: How Everett Case and His Tournament Brought Big-Time Basketball to the South* in 2011 and *Bones McKinney: Basketball's Unforgettable Showman*, in 2014. She was also the co-author, with Tony Collins, of *Broken Road*, and the developmental editor for *Strength Coach* by Jeff Connors.

She is a 1991 graduate of the University of North Carolina with degrees in journalism and political science. In 1995 as a sportswriter for the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, she covered the inaugural two seasons of the Carolina Panthers and the preparations for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. She has written for the Associated Press, the Durham Herald-Sun, the Orlando Sentinel, and the Houston Post, several magazines, and as a content provider for a variety of corporate websites. She and her husband, Sid, live in Greenville North Carolina with their four children.

Bethany discussed her newest book called [The Big Rock: Inside the High-Stakes Hunt for the Elusive Million-Dollar Marlin](#). The Big Rock is a series of ledges, peaks and plateaus that runs along the North Carolina coastline just south of the Morehead City port. Big Rock is now considered the premier spot for marlin fishing on the East Coast. The Big Rock tournament is located in Morehead City, NC and is one of the largest blue marlin tournaments in the country with about 200 boats fishing. The winning payout is over \$1 million. This

is one of the oldest tournaments on the east coast starting in 1957. Over 5,000 people attend the tournament. Those thousands of fans and followers crowd the dock to watch the weigh-ins as the boats compete for millions of dollars in prizes.

The Big Rock tournament is six days and each boat is allowed to fish only four of those six days. The boats fish 60 miles off shore. The average catch that is weighed is 500 to 800 pounds. The entry fee is \$30,000 per boat and 95% of the 200 boats win either little prize money or no prize money. One of the board members of the Big Rock was quoted as saying, "it is like each participant is buying a Honda Accord and driving it off a pier. For the large majority of participants, the \$30,000 investment yields nothing."

Marine biologists take charge of blue marlins brought to the weigh station so they can study and research this important species. Representatives from the NC State University Center for Marine Science and Technology (CMAST) collect samples at the weigh station of all gamefish and blue marlin weighed in. Proceeds from every Big Rock tournament are donated to support organizations that are dedicated to help certain fish species to flourish.

Bethany wrote the book about the 2018 tournament. It is her 10th published book. In the 183-page book, Bethany takes us behind the scenes for all the action. Skill, strategy, and a healthy dose of luck all combine to crown the eventual winners, and Bethany brings us "aboard" with unforgettable characters and epic tales of sportfishing at its finest, including a few that "got away." *The Big Rock* is full of fabulous fish tales that just happen to be true. In 2019, the tournament had its biggest catch ever at 914 pounds so Bethany added that story to the Epilogue.

Fittingly, Michael Jordan entered the 62nd installment of the annual tournament in 2020 and made an immediate impact. Jordan and the crew on his boat, Catch 23, reeled in a 442-pound blue marlin Tuesday, the second day of the tournament in the basketball great's home state of North Carolina. It was the tenth biggest catch of the week.

\*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/560561374>

Ms. Bradsher's introduction begins at approximately 19:40 minutes.