

WITH TWO PARTICIPATING CLASSES OFFERED FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, THE EMERALD COAST POKER RUN'S LOCAL RUBY CLASS BOATERS, COMBINED WITH THE EMERALD CLASS PERFORMANCE BOATS, TO CELEBRATE THE BOATING LIFESTYLE AND RAKE IN SOME HIGH STAKES CHARITY PROCEEDS FOR THE 23RD RUNNING OF THIS SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER.

The calm waters near Santa Rosa sound give Emerald Coast Poker Run participants an ideal 120 mile course that is well-suited to any size boat.

Story: Stu Jones

Photography: Jerry Wyszatycki & Stu Jones

The many factors that make Emerald Coast vastly different than so many other coastal regions throughout Florida, continue to play a vital role in why Emerald Coast Poker Run is remarkably different than so many other poker run events not only in Florida, but around the nation. It begins with the striking and unique flavor of the geography alone, where miles upon miles of sandy shoreline are appealing to the eye, soft on the feet, and ready to welcome any anchor. More importantly, a large percentage of that shoreline is free and public domain, Mostly government land and remains free for the public to en-

joy, and there's no federal refuge officers waving their magic wand of selective enforcement, telling locals "they" can stay, and sending powerboaters along on their way. No, in the Emerald Coast, unlike Boca Grande near Key West, powerboaters are loved and treated with respect.

In addition to excellent beaches and pristine anchorages, the waterways are equally superb. Long stretches of open bay waters and protected sounds connect masterfully from Sandestin to Pensacola Beach along a fifty-three mile east-west corridor, and when combined with more northerly checkpoints in the small towns of Shalimar and Niceville, add up to a

near-perfect, 120-mile poker run course that is manageable by virtually any waterborne craft with a fast spinning propeller carefully positioned in the water, preferably near the flat end of the boat.

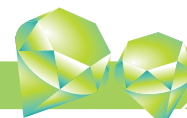
From a small outboard bow rider that squeezes our 36 mph on its best day, to the thundering offshore dream machine that guzzles the average American's weekly take-home pay at a single fuel stop, the Emerald Coast Poker Run has consistently and quite remarkably delivered that perfect, end-of-summer blow-out that tens of thousands have enjoyed for twenty three years running.

Then of course, on another playing field altogether, there's the Emerald Coast boating culture that makes this summer poker run event so incredible. Unlike the South Florida, which typically sees lower tourism numbers throughout the summer months, more than six hundred miles to the north, beyond the state capital and a good hour west of Spring Break Capital of the world Panama City Beach, the Emerald Coast is wide open, full throttle, party-on fun. Right in the dead of summer. Yes indeed, it is the one rare location in Florida, where mid-summer means it is Season here, and unlike its tourism partners east of the Panhandle, this little

beach gem is 99.9% packed with *Americans on vacation*... locked and loaded for some Southern-fried-fun! The only difference is, for this particular poker run weekend in late August, most of them figured out a way to bring their boat!!

For the Jones family, arriving in Fort Walton Beach every summer means two things. One, assuming we arrive at least a week before he poker run, is that we get to hang out with the kids, rent a pontoon boat, bask in the sun at Crab Island, hit the waterparks spend far too much time trying to reach the bottom of the jumbo seafood bucket at AJ's. (It really is bottomless. There's no hope until the

boys are at least teens that we will ever finish that last shrimp!) The second thing that eventually sinks in, is the reality that Jackie and Stu eventually have to go to work and run this darn poker run. But this year, we cut our travel schedule pretty tight, and as you may have seen in an earlier editorial of this issue of Powerboating in Paradise, we had clocked close to 5,000 miles and visited a half dozen poker runs around the country, in the two months leading up to the Emerald Coast Poker Run. In fact, we hadn't been home in Pompano Beach since June, and after rolling over the Florida state line from Alabama on Sunday evening, after



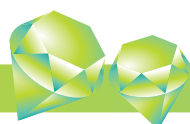
From that point forward, the Emerald Coast Poker Run shifts into cruise control, as a pattern of nightly parties and fundraising activities continue Wednesday through the weekend, giving participants a continuous agenda of fun, where they can meet new boating friends and support the event's beneficiary, the Emerald Coast Foundation. There are plenty of editorial side-bars contained within the pages of this magazine feature, that highlight the various day-to-day events that make up Emerald Coast Boat Week. As for the on-water excitement, it goes without saying, the incredible photos contained within this spread, will leave no doubt that this stop on the summer poker run calendar, is a must-do for all boaters, whether you're from the local area, or traveling hundreds of miles to attend. With first class hotels, incredible waterways, vibrant nightlife and a giant welcome mat extended to all, this event just keeps on delivering, year after year!



Card Stop



| | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------|-----|-----------|
| 1. | John & Connie Fahmy | GA | TEAM EVERDRY | 38' | Baja |
| 2. | Vu Nguyen | LA | SEE VU PLAY | 38' | Donzi |
| 3. | Jerry Swanson | MS | TERRIBLE TWO | 50' | Skater |
| 4. | Joe & Vickie Amodio | GA | FORGET ABOUT IT | 46' | Cigarette |
| 5. | Gary Atz | GA | FOR SALE | 38' | Cigarette |
| 6. | Jerry Swanson | MS | TERRIBLE | 46' | Skater |



Wednesday:
Helen Back Café-
Ladies Night Party

The Helen Back Café is a waterfront sports-bar restaurant that has won countless local awards for having the best pizza in town. But it's more than the pizza that makes Helen Back a fun party venue. Live musical entertainment inside, and a huge outdoor patio, combine to provide a festive vibe that makes this a fun poker run party to entertain boat week participants and sponsors. Although the number of slips are limited, you can expect at least a few cool performance boats to have their engine hatches open and LED lights activated to provide a great dockside show. An entire room in the bar is dedicated to casino gaming, where a few games of black jack or a spin of the roulette wheel, gets the participants in the mood for the poker run, while raising funds for the Emerald Coast Foundation. And if any of that isn't enough to peek the interests of would be poker runners, Wednesday at Helen Back is the best ladies night in town, so the single guys can be sure to have plenty of opportunities to make a few friends, and work on the crew for the Saturday poker run!

SJ



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|----|---|----|-------------|-----|-----------|
| 1. | Roger & Pam Anderson | TX | EASY MONEY | 42' | Fountain |
| 2. | Michael & Veronica Voudouris | TX | CLEAN SWEEP | 39' | Nor-Tech |
| 3. | Johnie Weems | FL | THOR | 42' | Cigarette |



| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|-----|-----------|
| 4. | Bill Robbins | TX | CENTER OF ATTENTION | 39' | Cigarette |
| 5. | Chris Daggs | FL | HELEN BACK | 35' | Fountain |
| 6. | Ray Andrus | TX | RELENTLESS | 42' | Cigarette |
| 7. | Chris Bowers | NC | LIGHT EM UP | 43' | Fountain |



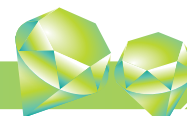
Thursday:
The Swamp-
Miss Boat Week Contest

If the Rose Festival has a Rose Queen, the high school prom has the Prom Queen, and NASCAR Racing has a Miss Sprint Cup, it only makes sense that Emerald Coast Poker Run has its designated beauty! In honor of that tradition, the Miss Boat Week contest is staged every year, on the Thursday prior to the poker run, at the Swamp Nightclub, an open air entertainment complex located at the beachfront Boardwalk in Fort Walton Beach. With high stakes cash, plenty of prizes and the coveted title of Miss Boat Week up for grabs, the event consistently draws some of the finest ladies in the Florida Panhandle, who compete with fitness routines, dance moves and witty charm, that is often coaxed out of these beauties by a comical pageant MC. Congratulations to the winners, who are generally obligated to attend the Saturday poker run, and pose for our event photographers. Judging these gals to determine the winners is a tough job, but somebody's gotta do it!

SJ



Emerald Coast Poker Run 2015



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|----|-------------------------------------|----|------------|-----|--------------|
| 1. | William "Tim" Bell | FL | ALL IN | 35' | Everglades |
| 2. | Simon & Kathryn Williams | FL | GOGPS | 42' | Cigarette |
| 3. | Scott & Allison Stinson | GA | POKER FACE | 41' | Liquid Glass |



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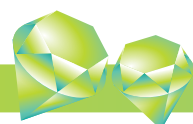
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Norriego Point, Destin





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| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|----|---------------------|-----|-------------|
| 1. | Vince Oddo | TX | BULLET | 30' | Cigarette |
| 2. | Cass Shewbart | TX | LIQUID PROZAC | 38' | Cigarette |
| 3. | Keith Rehder | FL | MOTHER DOG | 29' | Wellcraft |
| 4. | Buddy Thomas | MA | ALL SET | 46' | Outerlimits |
| 5. | Mark & Eileen Fischer | FL | WHERE'S EILEEN NOW? | 52' | Nor-Tech |



Okaloosa Island



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| | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|-----|-----------|
| 6. | Chris Shipp | TX | FIREWATER | 30' | Baja |
| 7. | Leon Daggs | FL | DAG GONE | 47' | Riviera |
| 8. | Jim & Lynne Archambault | GA | STILL KEEPIN' IT REAL | 34' | Sunsation |
| 9. | Rich Stone | GA | STILL SMOKIN | 38' | Cigarette |
| 10. | Tom & Rachel Regan | TX | ALL IN | 40' | Nor-Tech |



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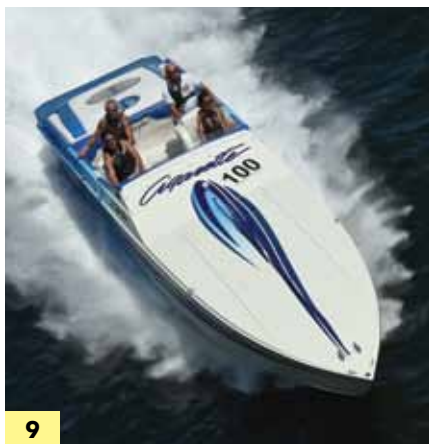
The Emerald Grande and Norriego Point



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