

## Coast Guard dentist reels in record tautog



**Dr. Julie Ball's 14-pound, 14-ounce tautog is the pending 12-pound-test women's world record for the species.** COURTESY PHOTO

By **LEE TOLLIVER**, The Virginian-Pilot  
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Dr. Julie Ball has that special touch when it comes to light-tackle fishing.

She also has the kind of determination needed to pull off a major catch using equipment better suited to catching panfish.

Last week, Ball landed two tautog that topped the existing women's 12 -pound-test line-class world record of 11 pounds, 6 ounces.

Her catch is especially extraordinary because of the kind of gnarly structure where togs make their home.

Most anglers search for the toothy critters with heavy, braided line to avoid breakoffs. But Ball, a Coast Guard dentist and an IGFA representative, wasn't about to let a few lost fish deter her from setting the record.

"Don't get me wrong, I love fishing with my braided line," said Ball, who lives in Virginia Beach. "But when you are record-fishing, you have no choice but to use the kind of line needed."

For Ball, light-tackle fishing is about more than records.

Light-tackle fishing for bigger fish is about a test of skill and equipment. It also is a diversion.



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Ball, who last week earned Virginia's sixth level in the Master Angler program, always is looking for a new fishing challenge.

"It keeps things interesting and exciting for me," said Ball, who registered more than 150 Virginia citation catches to earn the Master Angler Level 6 honor. "Not that fishing would ever get boring for me. It's just that when you get to a certain place in fishing, you need more challenges."

Ball said experience helps in light-tackle fishing. To get that experience, she advises that anglers purchase good equipment - especially reels with good drag.

"The drag is your best friend," Ball said.

"First you have to have a good understanding of how the drag works. Then it's about finessing the fish with the rod and the drag, working with the fish and almost second-guessing everything it's going to do."

Ball suggests getting started on fish that are plentiful and easy to catch - such as croaker or spot.

She also says that anyone attempting light-tackle angling must avoid frustration because plenty of fish will be lost.

"I lost tons trying for this record," she said. "It's just one of those things that's going to happen."

- *Reach Lee Tolliver at (757) 222-5844 or [Lee.Tolliver@pilotonline.com](mailto:Lee.Tolliver@pilotonline.com)*