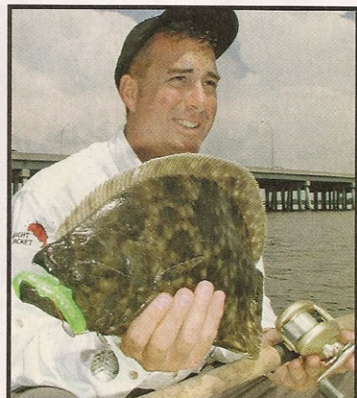


Tournament Insider

By DAVID CONWAY,
Managing Editor

The first half of the spring dolphin season in Florida saw plenty of big bulls coming over the boards. Forty- and 50-pound fish were not uncommon for weeks at a time from Key West to Jacksonville in May and June, so it's no surprise that a number of tournament dolphin records were broken. Among those that fell was the big dolphin record at the **KDW Classic**, held May 31 at Riviera Beach. Dave Balthius, of New Smyrna Beach, at the left, on *Don't Matta*, along with friends Glenn Wooton, center, and Garrett Wooton, both from Boca Raton, took a 45.3-pound bull for a \$3,000 win. His team caught the bull under a floating pallet about 17 miles out, in 1,000 feet, off Riviera Beach.



"I pre-fished several days before the **Annual Jacksonville Kayak Tournament** started on May 3, 2008," Jacksonville's Capt. Roger Bump, above, said. "I knew firsthand that the 6-foot tides that we have in Jacksonville would be the key to catching all three species during the event. I also had to figure out where I could launch my Hobie kayak to gain quick access to my targeted fishing waters."

During practice, Bump found an early morning flood tide holding tournament-size seatrout at an area called the Wall, located at the Buckman Bridge. Bump launched his kayak at Dane's Point and was soon casting a Rapala Skitter Walk to the school of specks he located during practice fishing.

"I quickly boated a 19-inch trout with my favorite topwater plug, then pedaled back to the landing," Bump said. "The tide was now falling, perfect timing for flounder!"

Bump then launched his kayak in Dunn's Creek and began working docks where glass minnows were holding close to pilings during the falling tide.

"During my first cast, a flounder followed my spinner right up to the boat and missed the lure," Bump said. "I knew right away that I needed to slow down my retrieve. A few casts later, a 16-inch flounder nailed my spinner!"

With two of the targeted species already caught and photographed, Bump only needed to catch a redfish to complete his Jacksonville Slam.

"Once again I loaded up my kayak and headed to Clapboard Creek where I knew a hard-running falling tide would produce a redfish," Bump said.

While pedaling his kayak close to oyster bars that were now becoming partially exposed, Bump saw the water hump up, indicating that redfish were holding on the deep side of the oyster bar.



Two hundred teams competed in the 24th annual **Big Fish Cobia Tournament** out of MacRae's in Homosassa on June 7 and 8. Matt Scales of Leesburg, at left, came out on top with his chunky 47.38-pound cobia. That made a good catch and a \$6,000 payday for Scales, all part of a great fishing tradition now that the tournament, which raises money

for charity, is a quarter-century old, technically a classic. But what's also compelling, says our writer on the scene, *FS* field contributor Ray Markham, was the outstanding gag grouper bite anglers had that weekend.

"I think just about every boat had limits of gags and there were a few red grouper too, which are not typical of the catch out of Hernando and Citrus counties," says Markham.

The second installment of the popular **MirrOlure Madness** tournament of the Florida Lure Anglers was held on April 19th in Jacksonville.

Members of the FLA fishing club are well versed in the use of all types of artificial lures when targeting redfish, trout and flounder during monthly tournaments. **MirrOlure Madness** challenges these anglers by taking all of their planning and preparation out of the equation on tournament day due to the "maddening" format. At check-in, they get a box of lures and the instructions, "Use only these and fish."

Fred Rounsaville and Brian McGowan, shown above, enjoyed a runaway victory anchored by a studly 6.95-pound trout caught at 9:40 in the morning. The pair then moved to a new spot to target redfish using the 17MR-18 **MirrOdine** suspending plug along the edge of some flooded oyster mounds.

Six-year-old Ethan Holland teamed with his dad Jeff to bring the tournament's largest redfish to the scales, which resulted in a 4th-place finish and a \$250 **MirrOlure** gift certificate.



"I rigged half of a blue crab, a popular redfish bait, to a 3/0 red circle hook and cast into the deep depression by the oyster bar," Bump said.

After a short fight, he landed the 29½-inch redfish which completed his three species, giving him both the win and a

brand new Hobie Revolution kayak.

The 5th Annual Jacksonville Kayak Tournament had 340 entries and benefited the charity Daniel's Boys. For more information, visit www.jaxkaykayfishing.com.

—Terry Lacoss