

VFD PLEASED WITH TURNOUT

Ballenger Wins Tightly-Contested Shallotte Point Flounder Tournament



MIKE BALLENGER shows off the 5.83-pound flounder that took first place in the 10th annual Shallotte Point VFD Flounder Tournament. Also pictured are Mike's parents, John and Doris Ballenger of Holden Beach.

BY DOUG RUTTER

Mike Ballenger of West End caught a 5.83-pound fish in the opening hours of the two-day Shallotte Point VFD Flounder Tournament that ended up winning the top prize of \$1,500.

Fishing with his parents, John and Doris Ballenger of Holden Beach, Mike's catch highlighted one of the most tightly-contested and successful tournaments in recent years.

Each of the five biggest fish weighed between 5.09 and 5.83 pounds. The 114 entries were the most in four years, and the fire department sold out of fish plates at its awards dinner Saturday night.

"The weather was great," Shallotte Point VFD Secretary-Treasurer Vernon Ward said Saturday. "We had more entrants. We had more people here eating. And when you have that it makes you less tired at the end of the day."

Mike Ballenger, a newcomer to the 10th annual flounder tournament out of Tripp's Fishing Center, said he caught the winning fish near the mouth of Shallotte Inlet.

The Ballengers landed two small flounder Friday morning before Mike pulled in the eventual winner. They brought the fish to the weigh station at Tripp's around 9 a.m. It was the first fish on the scales.

"We wanted to get him weighed before he lost any weight," Ballenger said. "We were hoping it would win."

The fish did win, barely. Randy Parnell of Lumberton placed second with a flounder weighing 5.59 pounds. It was worth \$1,000.

Fred Davis of Wilmington won \$600 for weighing in the five biggest fish over the two days. The combined weight was 13.49 pounds.

Hank Martinez of Fayetteville, a perennial tournament winner, caught the third largest flounder. The 5.53-pounder was worth \$500.

Finishing fifth and winning \$400 was Richard Canady of Longwood with a flounder weighing 5.24 pounds. Dwight McCall of Shallotte won \$200 for a fish weighing 5.09 pounds.

Mike Warren of Myrtle Beach, S.C., caught the most fish both days. He landed 13 flounder Friday and 15 Saturday to win a total of \$400 in daily prize money.

Canady, Gary Long of Longwood and Ron Baucom of Lumberton tied for second place on the first day with 10 fish each. They won \$50 apiece.

On Saturday, Long was second with 14 flounder and Canady third with 12. Long won \$100 and Canady \$50.

Winners of the \$50 daily children's prizes were Brodie Warren of Myrtle Beach with a 4.39-pounder, and Beverlee McDowell of Sunset Harbor with a 1.72-pounder.

Overall, Ward said fishermen brought 177 flounder to the weigh station.



BRODIE WARREN of Myrtle Beach, S.C., won a \$50 child's prize for this 4.83-pound flounder. Brodie's father, Mike Warren, caught the most fish both days of the tournament and won \$400.

The combined weight was 290 pounds.

Fishermen caught a lot of undersized fish. Flounder less than 13 inches long have to be thrown back. "There's a lot of them out there," Ward said. "If they're not caught before next year we'll have a whole lot of big ones."

Ward said weather for the tournament was excellent. "It's either been cold or rainy or both for the last two years. The weather this year was by far the prettiest we've had in a long time."

Tournament officials said they couldn't remember a better turnout for the Saturday night fish fry and

awards ceremony. Approximately 450 people ate fish or barbecue dinners at the fire station. Firefighters and auxiliary members cooked all of the fish caught in the tournament plus 100 extra pounds.

Ward said the fish fry gives residents in the fire district an opportunity to visit the station and see the needs of the department. The VFD is trying to save money for a new truck.

"It's something we really need, and the only way to get it is to work toward that end and put a few thousand dollars a year in the account until we get enough," he said.



RODNEY CLINE of Supply (right) receives a trophy for the largest wahoo at last week's Bald Head Island Fishing Rodeo. Presenting the award is Jim Lachey of the Washington Redskins.

Female Crew Wins Bald Head Event

Three female anglers captured the top prize of \$7,500 in last week's Bald Head Island Fishing Rodeo.

Kim Gottwald, Sharon Dixon and Anne Burnett made up the fishing team on the winning boat, the Kimberly out of Bald Head Island. Drew Dixon and Donnie Lee were crew members.

The winners brought 164.5 pounds of fish to the docks during the two-day tournament last Friday and Saturday. One point was awarded for each pound of wahoo, tuna and dolphin.

Finishing second with 155 points was the Rascal Fair, another boat out of Bald Head. The prize was \$3,750.

Winning \$2,000 for third place was the Slow Poke out of Morehead City with 151.5 points.

The Miss Sarah, captained by Rodney Cline of Supply, was the fourth-place finisher with 128.5 points. Cline also weighed in the largest wahoo at 36.5 pounds.

The Reel Thing of Bald Head Island took fifth place with 106 points. The Kimberly and Slow Poke each won an additional \$500 in daily prizes.

Jim Lachey of the Washington Redskins presented the awards.

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THE KIMBERLY was the overall winner of the Bald Head Island Fishing Rodeo. Pictured (from left) are Sharon Dixon, Drew Dixon, Kim Gottwald, Donnie Lee and Anne Burnett.

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