STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG RUTTER

WAYNE HILL of North Myrtle Beach, S.C., displays the record-breaking fish that won him and his partner, Al Davis of Little River, S.C., the fifth annual Shallotte Point VFD Flounder Tournament. Hill's fish weighed 9.23 pounds, breaking the previous tournament record by 2.6 pounds and winning this year's tournament by 3.66 pounds.

JIMMY AND LYNN HIGH of Calabash won the second-place cash prize of $1,000 for this 5.57-pound flounder. Their fish was 23¾-inches long.

THE FATHER/SON TEAM of Lonnie (left) and Willard Causey of Shallotte Point cleaned up during Saturday's awards ceremony. Aboard his father's boat, Willard not only won $400 for landing the fourth largest fish in the tournament, the 3.94-pounder pictured here, but also won $100 for catching the largest fish for a child during both days of the event.

Record Flounder Wins Shallotte Point Tourney

BY DOUG RUTTER

Wayne Hill and Al Davis were just about to give up on this year's Shallotte Point VFD Flounder Tournament Saturday when their luck changed dramatically.

Only two hours remained in the tournament and the South Carolina fishing buddies had seen very little action during the two-day event when Hill reared back and pulled the winning flounder from the water.

Until then, the angling duo had caught only two small flounder in their first flounder tournament at Shallotte Point. They had suffered through a day of cold rain on Friday without catching a single one.

Hill, the angler from North Myrtle Beach who caught the tournament-winning fish, was anxious and estatic as he waited for the final few boats to dock and the captains to bring their nets full of flounder to the weigh station.

His was an enormous fish, weighing more than nine pounds and measuring more than two feet long. Spectators and contestants alike were in awe as they walked up to the weigh station and saw the fish dangling from its hook underneath the tournament tent.

Although he was happy to talk to all of the contestants and spectators about his winning fish as the final results were determined, Hill avoided answering the question on everyone's mind.

When asked where he caught the monstrous flounder, which many said was the largest they had ever seen, Hill replied that he caught it somewhere south of Tripp's Fishing Center, where the tournament weigh station was located. He added that he used "the killer thing" for bait.

Davis, of Little River, the second member of the winning team, said the two fishermen came in to weigh the fish right after it was landed about 3 p.m. "You never know what troubles you might have with the boat," he said. "We figured the chances of beating that weren't very good with about an hour left."

"I was right happy to see him coming up," added Hill. "When I pulled it up I said to myself, 'Everyone else is going to have to beat this 'cause I've had my luck for the day.'"

Whether it was luck or skill or a combination of the two, Hill's flounder tipped the electronic scales at 9.23 pounds, measured 26¾ inches long and lined his pocket with $1,500 cash.

Not only did his fish shatter the previous tournament record of 6.63 pounds, it ran away with this year's event.

The next largest flounder, caught by Jimmy High of Calabash, weighed 5.57 pounds and was 23¾ inches long. He earned $1,000 for that fish.

Another record broken during the fifth annual tournament was the number of boats entered. The 125 boats surpassed last year's mark of 97. Organizers said they expect at least 150 boats next year.

Tournament Chairman Mike Potts said he was very pleased with this year's tournament. He could not say how much money the fire department raised, but said it will be used to purchase much-needed equipment.

Two-time defending champions Henry Martinez and Don Matthews of Fayetteville didn't quite make it to three straight wins this year, but did walk away with $600 for entering the five largest fish in the tournament. Their five fish had a combined weight of 17.35 pounds.

Bill Duncan of Summerville, S.C., won the fourth prize of $500 for the third largest fish caught in the tournament. It was a 5.15-pound flounder measuring 23 inches.

The fifth prize of $400 went to Willard Causey of Shallotte Point. His 20-inch, 3.94-pound fish was the fourth largest fish in the tournament. That flounder also won him an extra $50 for the largest fish caught by a child (age 12 and under) on Friday. He also won $50 Saturday for the largest flounder caught by a child. That one weighed 3.43 pounds.

Wilmington resident Fred Davis won the $200 sixth prize for entering the fifth largest fish. His winning flounder weighed 3.51 pounds and measured 20¼ inches long.

Daily prizes of $200, $100 and $50 were awarded for the most fish entered by each boat.

On Friday, Gary Long battled the elements and weighed in 23 fish to take the top cash award. Tommy Johnson turned in 17 flounder and Phillip Cheers entered 15. All three are from Shallotte.

Tommy Johnson led the way Saturday when he entered 26 flounder. The second and third prizes were split between Robert Ball of Ocean Isle Beach and Ricky Lefler of Albemarle, who both weighed in 17 fish.

THIRD PRIZE WINNER was the team of Don Matthews (left) and Henry Martinez, both of Fayetteville, who entered the five fish in the tournament with the most combined weight. This pairing, which had won the tournament the past two years, took home $600. Total weight of their fish was 17.35 pounds.

BILL DUNCAN of Summerville, S.C., landed this 5.15-pound fish, the third largest caught during the flounder tournament, to earn the fourth-place prize of $500.