

STILL A SUCCESS DESPITE RAINY WEATHER!

First Fish Memorable One For Flounder Tourney Winner

BY DOUG RUTTER

Who says you need experience to win a flounder tournament? Sometimes a little beginner's luck goes a long way.

Just ask Billy Patterson Jr. The 20-year-old Lumberton man caught his first fish Friday, a 5.53-pound flounder which ended up winning the Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department Flounder Tournament.

"You can believe for \$1,500 I'll be back," Patterson said before picking up the top cash prize at Saturday night's awards ceremony.

Patterson was part of a first-time entry in the tournament. He fished with his father, Billy Sr., on a boat captained by Franklin Hursey.

Wives Carol Patterson and Sandra Hursey had to work Friday, but joined the crew for second-day action Saturday.

Using finger mullet for bait, Patterson hooked the winner late Friday morning in Lockwood Folly River just before a heavy downpour.

"I didn't even realize I had him on the line," he confessed. "I was going to move to the front of the boat, and I reeled in the line and there it was."

Shallotte Point VFD Secretary-Treasurer Vernon Ward said the winning fish was one of the smallest in tournament history.

"That's \$300 per pound. That's an expensive flounder," he said. "There's some big ones out there, they just didn't catch them."

The second-biggest fish in the tournament, worth \$1,000, was landed by Fred Davis and Ron Reedy of Wilmington. It weighed 4.93 pounds.

Gary Long of Grissetown, a



KELLY HEWETT of Shallotte won \$50 for landing this fish Saturday.

Fifth-place honors and \$400 went to Gregory Garner with a 4.74-pound flounder. Jimmy Price of Southport won \$200 for the fifth-largest fish.

Daily prizes of \$200 for weighing in the most fish went to Jimmy High of Calabash for Saturday and Long for Friday.

Runners-up winning \$100 each were Bill Lawing on Saturday and High on Friday. Three fishermen shared the \$50 third-place money on both days.

Children's winners included Kelly Hewett of Shallotte, who won \$50 for the biggest fish Saturday.

Ward said the rain last week didn't keep too many people from fishing in the tournament.

The ninth annual event drew 92 entries, which was eight more than last year but still one of the smallest fields in tournament history.

The forecast for rain apparently kept some tournament veterans away. Ward said 47 of the 92 entries were newcomers to the event.

"If the weather had been clear we probably would have had 110 to 120 boats," Ward said.

Despite rainy weather Friday, all but two of the boats went fishing and anglers caught 113 flounder averaging 2.16 pounds each.

With a 5 1/2-pounder leading after day one, Ward said the all of the fishermen went out Saturday thinking they still had a chance to win.

"We had people fishing all day today," he said Saturday night.

Even the leaders got an early start. "We fished hard today," Hursey said. "We were through the checkpoint at 7 a.m."



BILLY PATTERSON JR. shows off the 5.53-pound tournament winner. Also pictured (from left) are Franklin Hursey, Carol Patterson and Billy Patterson Sr.

The leading crew stood close to the scales Saturday afternoon as each boat brought in its fish. "We were sweating bullets," said the senior Patterson.

Anglers weighed in 125 flounder Saturday, but nothing over 5 pounds. The average weight was just over 2 pounds.

"We thought it would probably place, but we didn't think it would in, especially when it cleared up today," Hursey said of the winning fish.

perennial winner at the tournament, was up to his usual form.

He won \$600 for weighing in five fish over the two days with the heaviest total weight—20.01 pounds. Long won an additional \$217 for weighing in the most flounder Friday and tying for third Saturday.

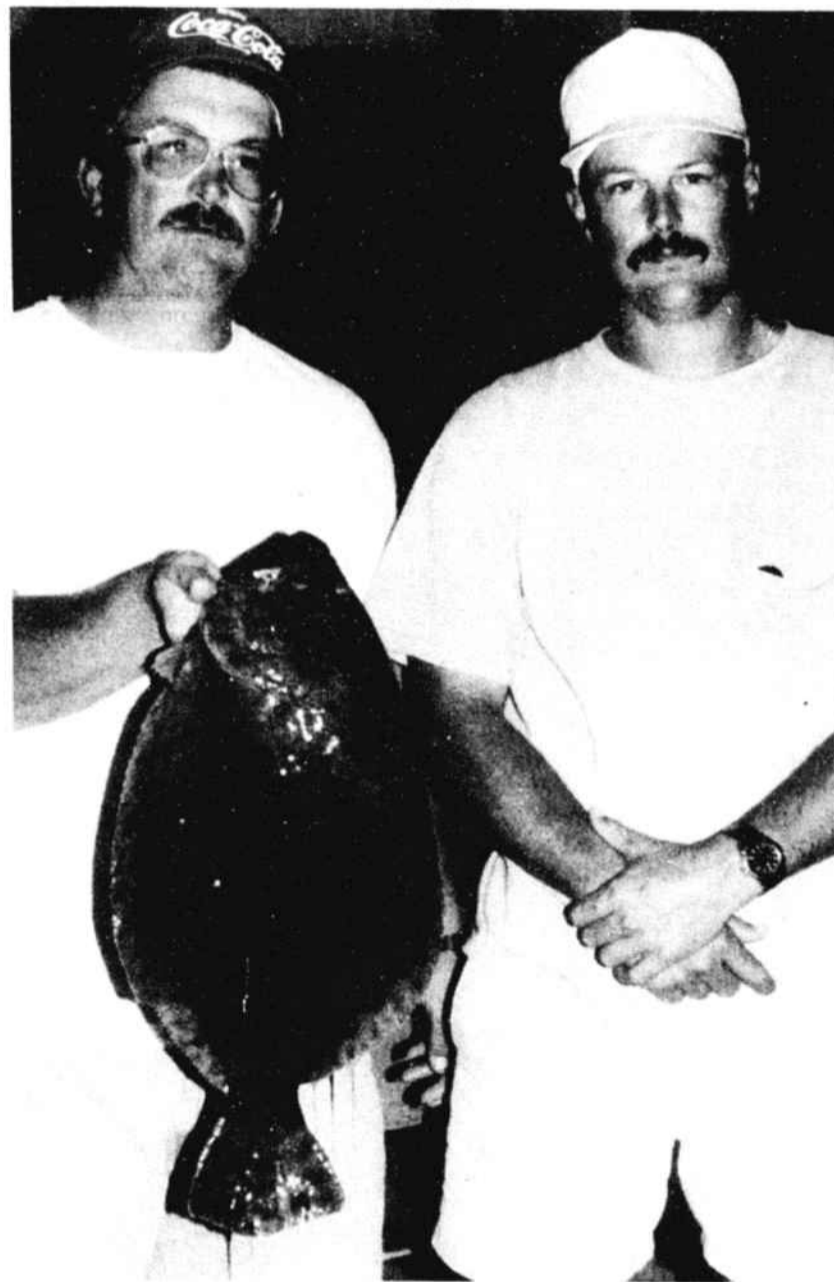
Former tournament winner Henry Martinez of Fayetteville weighed in the third-largest flounder. He won \$500 for a 4.83-pounder.



GARY LONG of Grissetown caught five fish over the two days weighing 20.01 pounds.



PLACING FOURTH with a 4.83-pound flounder were Mike Tew (left) and Henry Martinez.



SECOND PLACE HONORS went to Fred Davis (left) and Ron Reedy of Wilmington with a 4.93-pounder.

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