



We're in the money

Team *Vitamin Sea Too* took home a cool \$100,000 in the SKA National Championship. See the story on page 36. FF Weekly photo by Loren Rea

IN THE KEYS



ABOVE: Team Vitamin Sea Too consisted of: Tim Maddock, Mike Reisert, Jon Krieg, Bryan Schultz, Chris Zidar and Mike Dinnen. BELOW: Captain Andrea Paulson with a healthy 15-pound permit caught off Western Dry Rocks. FF Weekly photos by Loren Rea

Sailfish anglers release nearly 400 fish

Tarpon, permit continue to oblige Key West and Lower Keys anglers

By Loren Rea
Lower Keys

Spring fishing in the Florida Keys is still going strong this week. Both shallow water and deep sea fishing have seen a flourish of activity, as well as a wide variety of fish.

The 2006 World Sailfish Championship brought 116 teams from around the Southeast to Key West for three days of world-class sailfishing. Although the bite was didn't equal the one in 2005, several teams managed to release multiple fish each day. In the end, *Vitamin Sea Too*, from Pompano Beach, reigned as the winner of the 2006 tournament and walked away with the \$100,000 check.

A total of 394 sailfish were caught and released during this year's three day tournament. *Vitamin Sea Too* hung-on to the lead, releasing six sails the first day, six sails the second, and two on the third. It was enough to stay ahead of *Sea Wolf*, who took second place with 12 fish released. *Cowater Culture* came in third place, also with 12 fish released.

Vitamin Sea Too and most of the other tournament participants were fishing west of Key West from the end of the bar all the way to the Tail End buoy near Rebecca Shoal.

"It was tough," said Captain Brice Barr on the *Double Down* out of Key



West. Barr fished to the West for the first two days. He mentioned that they saw quite a few fish and each day they hooked-up several times. The third day of fishing left the fleet of participants split; some went way east while the rest stuck to the original plan and headed west once again.

There are certainly plenty of fish in the sea and actively biting this week. Offshore fishing took a positive turn just after the sailfish tournament ended. Winds decreased and the five to 10

mph wind out of the south-east brought the mahi-mahi and wahoo into our area. Several large dolphin in the 30-pound range were caught this week, along with some smaller ones in the 10-pound range. Needless to say, there is really no shortage of mahi-mahi action this time of year and it will last into the summer months.

Captain Tom Ault on the *Time Out* at A&B Marina reported some wahoo that were caught last week on a full-day charter. Ault was trolling in an area called the

Ups and Downs in 750 feet where he landed a 33- and 43-pound wahoo. Ault landed several mahi-mahi on the same trip.

Permit fishing near Western Dry Rocks, Vestal Shoal and some of the smaller wrecks around the Marquesas has still been decent this week. Captain Andrea Paulson joined us for an afternoon out on the reef where we sight-casted to a large school of permit. Paulson and I doubled-up on our first casts into the school. One was on a live shrimp,

the other on a live crab and small jig. We landed five permit that day and lost a few others.

Blackfin tuna fishing off the Gulf shrimp boats has been hot this week. Several boats, including Captain Steve Rodger on *Spear One* out of Murray Marina, had a nice catch of tuna in the 30-pound range. Tuna that hang out below the shrimp boats are generally larger than the ones we catch in the winter in the Atlantic.

On the flats there has been nothing but great action for tarpon. From Big Pine to the Marquesas there are plenty of large tarpon following their migratory path up the coast of Florida. There were a few days this week where the fishing slowed down a bit. It seemed that one group of tarpon moved out while another group moved in a few days later to take its place.

Night tarpon fishing has been extremely productive as well. Tarpon enjoy slurping shrimp off the surface during the full moon phase and it's a terrific time to fish for them with live bait, a sinking plug or even a dark colored fly. Black and purple patterns, and the traditional Black Death work great for nighttime tarpon fishing.

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