

Big grouper highlights slow day at the MCAC Reef Builder Fishing Tournament

- By Ed Killer
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Anthony La Viola, Emil La Viola, Joe Doran and Larry Benning of Sunseeker Too show off their 45.9-pound warsaw grouper they caught Saturday on live mullet in 100 feet of water off Fort Pierce while participating in the MCAC Reef Builder Fishing Tournament. Photo by Ed Killer

The crew fishing aboard Sunseeker Too learned Saturday that the day's last spot is always worth a stop.

While competing among the fleet of 36 boats entered in the fourth annual MCAC Reef Builder Fishing Tournament, the Fort Pierce team of Emil La Viola, son Anthony La Viola, Joe Doran and Larry Benning experienced the same slow fishing that plagued many offshore anglers. Without much more than a medium-sized kingfish in the fishbox, they began their way back to the inlet.

“That’s when I decided to make one last stop at a spot I have in 100 feet of water due east of the inlet,” La Viola said. “We dropped down a 2-pound live mullet and right away had a big hit.”

After besting the big bottom dweller, the team had a barrel-chested warsaw grouper that weighed in at 45.9 pounds.

Anglers returned to FINZ Waterfront Grille in Port Salerno to weigh catches in kingfish, dolphin, wahoo, grouper, snapper and cobia categories. Guaranteed cash prizes were awarded through third place for heaviest in each species.

Proceeds from the MCAC Reef Builder tournament will be used to help the Martin County Artificial Reef program acquire and deploy materials as artificial reefs in offshore county waters.

In addition to the anglers aboard 36 boats, the Safari I party boat carried 21 fishermen and women, who also competed in the tournament.

“We had a real good time out there,” said Eddie Haves of Lake City, who caught a kingfish. “I think this event is great. I’ve fished it the past three years and fished it this year, too.”

Calm seas invited bluewater anglers to seek catches. Although there were few reports of cold water upwellings, the fishing action for most was not exactly red hot. Despite not being a prize category, anglers did combine to release four sailfish.

For more information, visit www.mcacreeffund.org.

For more information about Martin County reefs, visit www.martinreefs.com.

Leaderboard

Grouper:

- 1, 45.9 pounds, Sunseeker Too, Emil La Viola, \$1,000;
- 2, 25.5, Salt Mec, Brian Williams, \$500;
- 3, 13.5, Lo Que Sea, Tony Huerta, \$250.

Kingfish:

- 1, 11.8, Sort A Wet, Pete Naylor, \$1,000;
- 2, 11.6, Safari I, Kenny Coey, \$500;
- 3, 11.6, Safari I, Eddie Haves, \$250.

Snapper:

- 1, 11.5, Commander, Jimmy Barry, \$1,000;
- 2, 7.5, Salt Mec, Steve Broxmeyer, \$500;
- 3, 4.2, For Reel, Terry Hoplseldt, \$250.

Dolphin:

- 1, 17.2, Procrastinator, Chris Blakeslee, \$1,000;
- 2, 11.0, Lo Que Sea, Tony Huerta, \$500;
- 3, 8.9, Miss K, Robert Carlson, \$250.

Wahoo: None weighed.

Cobia:

- 1, 17.3, Prime Time, Van Wichers, \$1,000;
- 2, 12.3, Slop Chop, Ed Skupeen, \$500;
- 3, None.

Top Boat Award: Sunseeker Too.