



The Reel News

The Newsletter of the . . .



Serving the Northeast Florida Fishing Community Since 1959

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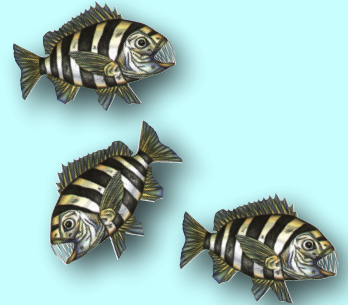
PRESIDENTS CAST NET Tom Ruggles



How about that January? Well, if you are a working person like me you have been able to clear out your honey-do-list for the house and the yard since the ocean has remained closed. You have heard the stories of the few who have made it out during the week and managed to bag a Wahoo or two and you watch multiple wind and weather apps in the hopes that one of them has a better outlook.

At this point we have been forced to defer, and then ultimately cancel, our first tournament of the year. Next up will be the Sheepshead Tune Up. Given that this one can be fished both inshore and offshore we are almost certain to kick off the fishing season with it.

So what's your method? Do you like fiddlers on a jig head? Or is your preferred method live shrimp on a Carolina rig? Maybe some mussels and a number 3/0 circle hook or oysters on a 2/0 J hook? Got a secret inshore spot? Do you plan to fish the jetties? Or are you more likely to avoid the crowds and hit one of your offshore spots? However you do it, sign up and do it! Let's all get out there and get this season off to a roaring start.



Well it is almost that time of year again... when we start getting visions of fiddlers dancing in our heads and we become obsessed with the elusive sheepshead. Yup! El Cheapo is coming!! Now in it's 20th year the El Cheapo has become a family favorite and a reunion like get together for anglers far and wide. We've consistently got anglers from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and even as far as Texas popping in to join our Florida folks. Lifelong friendships have been made and it is such a pleasure to see our anglers looking out for each other as much as they are anxious to compete against each other.

We have an incredible prize structure with **Carolina Skiff and Suzuki taking our 1st place boat** to a new level! Carolina Skiff has introduced a new liner series to replace the traditional JV hull so **this year's Grand Prize will be a 178CC JLS with a 115HP Suzuki sitting on a Magic Tilt trailer!**

With 15 places awarded in the general tournament, 15 places in the junior division, 4 places in the lady's division and a host of assorted and mystery prizes, you have over 30



Life Jackets,
Yeah, I know
you don't wear
one most of the
time, but
maybe you

should consider
wearing one at
least while the
boat is underway!



Please Note

We have a new
address to Snail Mail
the Club! It is on the
last page.



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El Cheapo Continued

opportunities to win SOMETHING...bring your
fish in!

New for 2020 - we are excited to
announce the 1st (hopefully) Annual El Cheapo
Sheepshead Kayak Tournament! Kayakers will be
competing in their own tournament for a
beautiful **Independence 131 Pedal Drive Kayak**.
We will be awarding 3 places as of this writing;
this year's participation will really set the tone
for where this goes next year so let's make it
great! And yes, you can still enter the general
tournament if you prefer.

On to the weigh in! Besides our delicious
fish fry, new 20th Anniversary merchandise and
lots of fish coming in...**we are excited to have
the Island Spice Band playing as we finish
weighing in all your fish!** We will have an
incredible raffle both at the captains meeting
and after awards including a wrapped 45 quart
RTIC cooler from Watson Realty Orange Park, a
custom leaning post by All Aluminum Concepts
and Mousa's Auto & Marine Interiors, charters
from many of our local captains, free entries for
other local tournaments like the Greater 
Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament and so much
more!

The El Cheapo will take place on March 7th,
captains meeting on March 6th at 7:30, we will
open onsite registration at 5:30. General entry is
\$100 and kayak entry is \$50 until February 22,
2020, then they are \$120 and \$70 respectively.
You can register online now at 
www.elcheapojax.com. The first 400 entries will
receive a FREE limited edition 20th Anniversary
El Cheapo Hoo Rag in your captain's buckets/
bags!

Special note Please be sure to read all
the rules as there have been a couple of
modifications. Here are a couple of examples: It
will be an open format tournament this year,



Continued Page 3

El Cheapo Continued



(meaning no check out or check in), with fishing starting at safe light, usually around 7:00am. We are encouraging you to let your ladies and juniors fight their own fish if safety allows, especially with the juniors. Also, if a small craft advisory warning has been issued, fishing will be restricted to the river system. Again, please be sure to read the rules all the way through!



Presidents Message Continued

On the El Cheapo front, posters are being finalized and will start showing up all over town. Prizes have been secured and the word is getting out. Please take the opportunity to sign up for some volunteer slots as the tournament approaches. There is plenty to do on tournament day and the days leading up to it. It is totally possible to volunteer AND to fish the tournament. This is our club and this is OUR biggest fundraiser of the year. It is all of our responsibility to help make it a continued success.

Here's to a much calmer February. Good luck and tight lines!

Are your flares still in date?

They have an expiration date, and the Coast Guard checks!

How about your fire extinguisher?

Is it good, the right type and big enough? Do you have more than 1?

How about your first aid kit?

is it just a couple of bandaids or good enough to handle a major injury?

Do you carry a wire cutter big enough to cut the heaviest hooks on your boat?

Have a PLB or Epirb in case of an emergency?

Remember we lost 2 experienced First Responders recently, Isn't your life worth a couple hundred dollars?

Check everything NOW, not when you need them in an EMERGENCY!



All right all you kayakers...I know you've been waiting to see what the prize will be for the 1st (hopefully) Annual El Cheapo Kayak Tournament! How about an Independence 131 Pedal Drive kayak by [Liberty Outdoors Kayaks](#) graciously sponsored by [Ricks Bait n Tackle](#) and the [Jacksonville Offshore Sport Fishing Club](#)??

Entry fee is only \$50 until 2/22/2020...that's a lot of 2's LOL, then \$70 after that. Since this is the first year doing it this way...it would help me out TREMENDOUSLY if you get online and get registered or let me know if you are serious about fishing it. I have no idea how many of you to plan on! Please visit www.elcheapojax.com to check rules and get yourself registered.

SHEEPSHEAD RECORDS



EL CHEAPO SHEEPSHEAD TOURNAMENT RECORD:

14# 3oz, 3/4/17, Chris Beasley, Mayport, FL

FLORIDA STATE RECORD:

15# 2oz, 1/29/81, Eugene Lechler, Homosassa Springs, FL

WORLD RECORD:

21# 4oz, 4/92, Wayne Deselle, Bayou St. John, Louisiana

Little Details

Lets start talking about some little details that can make or break your day on the water.

First and foremost is safety, for you, your crew and the boat.

Have you checked all your hose fittings to make sure they are tight? Yeah I know, when you try to remove one it is like you had epoxied it on and almost impossible to get off, BUT when you don't want one to pop off it will do so all by it's self. You should also check your hoses to make sure they are not cracked and rotten. How often should you do this? At least once a month, or as I try to do after every trip as I wash and clean up my boat getting it ready for the next trip.

Here is something I bet you haven't thought about, emergency plugs. If you have a "Below the water line through the Hull" fitting like a water pickup for your live well or a protruding sonar (Yes, your fish finder is sonar.) fitting. What are you going to do if you hit a log, surfacing turtle or whatever, and snap it off? You should have a wood or rubber plug, that is a tapered cylinder that you can drive in the hole. (Unless you really WANT your boat to sink.)

Now, where to keep that plug. Use a Zip Tie and fasten one the correct size to the inside part of the fitting or the bulkhead right next to it. (Here is a tip in side of a tip!) Instead of putting screws into your fiberglass use a spot of 5200 to glue a Stainless Steel ring to your bulkhead. You can do this anyplace you want or need, and use them to run wires through it, zip tie things to it, or anything you want.

It would not hurt to have 4 or 5 tapered plugs in different sizes hanging below deck where they are easy and fast to get to.

Now another thing you should pay close attention to is FIRST AID. You should always cary a good First Aid kit. As you are fishing, using those sharp barbed hooks, include a good heavy duty pair of wire or bolt cutters, sturdy enough to cut the heaviest fish hooks you use. Don't just get a little plastic Walmart First Aid Kit, you need to assemble a good kit. Just think of some of the injuries you could see.

Cuts down to the bone, hooks through the hand, broken bones from falls on a slippery deck. Kingfish, Wahoo, Barracuda, Sharks and all kinds of

fish here have a mouth FULL of big sharp teeth! (That is why on my boat I don't recommend sandals, flip flops or bare feet.)

You need plenty of gauze pads, Gauze wraps, Anti-biotic spray, cream, and something to wash the wound with like fresh water or a sterile saline wash. A friend that is a Doctor said he does not like Hydrogen Peroxide as while it does sterilize the wound and area it also actually kills some of your cells on the exposed surface of the wound and delays healing and makes bigger scars.

Here is something you would not think of for a first aid kit, but how about a roll of good cloth backed Duct Tape? It is good for temporary splints as well making a waterproof wraps over wounds and lots of other temporary repairs around the boat.

How about an Eye Wash? People do get suntan spray or lotion in their eyes and who knows what.

Do you cary a couple of those \$2.00 Mylar Emergency Blankets to use in case someone needs to get warm or prevent shock?

Ok, don't forget the little stuff like band-aids or "New Skin" a waterproof antiseptic brush on band-aid for little cuts, Aspirin (The quick dissolve powder in case of heart attack. ((My Son was only 34.)) Also some Tylenol or Motrin for those people that can't take Aspirin.

Do you have a tool kit of some type? Repair that reel, hose fitting, clean your spark plugs, or change your broken prop? (From hitting that same turtle or log that broke off your fitting.)

Fire Extinguishers (Yes, plural ExtinguisherS) Your boat is fiberglass, foam, and plastic (All burn very well and ignite easily.) and GAS!!!! I carry 3 extinguishers, the little way undersize one that came with the boat, and 2 bigger ABC 5 pounders. If you have an inboard motor, install a fire port, so you don't have to open the cover which gives it lots of oxygen to flair up.

Don't forget to shake them up to keep the powder loose so it all comes out, and have them checked out or recharged every couple of years. (There are only two things that really frighten me on the water and they are FIRE and LIGHTNING that can also cause that fire.)

Little Things Continued

You have your "Throwable PFD," as required by the USCG, but do you also have a rope with a weight on the end (Like a Monkey's Fist, not an anchor to drag them down!) to throw to someone overboard to pull them to your boat?

Do you carry extra Sunscreen for Mr. Forgot mine, or even an extra pair of good sunglasses, just in case?

How about an extra Drain Plug? You can't tell me YOU never forgot or misplaced one!

All these things can save a day out on the water and make your day end better. All these things combined won't break the bank and should be part of your everyday boating.

Now for goodness sake, DO NOT forget to leave a FLOAT PLAN, and to take a couple of minutes to give your crew a "Safety Tour / Lecture" on your boat, how to run it if YOU are hurt, and where all the safety gear is stored, BEFORE you leave the dock!

Here is one last Little Thing to remember! Florida requires a "Safety Chain" from your bow tow hook to your Trailer frame. Why? I think the photo below explains it all!



Gary Newman

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Loud Hailings

Bill Breen
Newsletter
Editor

Just a reminder, ANYONE and everyone can submit something, a good story, joke, or you can also submit photos to be included in our Newsletter. Just get your article and or pictures to me by the 18th of the month, to be in the next months newsletter. Just hand me a copy at any meeting, or E-mail it to me at :

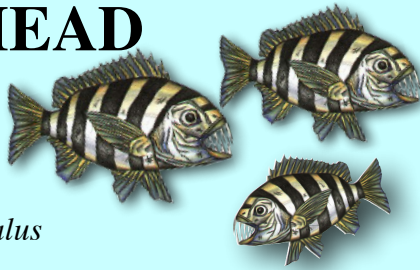
breenw@bellsouth.net



Big Wahoo are out there now!

SHEEPSHEAD

Order: Perciformes
Family: Sparidae
Genus: *Archosargus*
Species: *probatocephalus*



Although it reaches a maximum size of about 29.5 inches (76 cm) and 22 pounds (9.6 kg), adult sheepshead are most commonly about 1-8 pounds (.5-3.6 kg) and 14-18 inches (35 cm). Maximum known lifespan of the sheepshead is at least 20 years with maturity typically reached at 2 years of age.

This fish is highly valued for human consumption due to its fine white flesh and mild flavor. However, its heavy scales and strong fin spines make it difficult to clean and fillet. It is marketed fresh and frozen and may be prepared by frying, broiling, microwaving, and baking.

Primarily occurring inshore around rock pilings, jetties, mangrove roots, and piers as well as in tidal creeks, the euryhaline sheepshead prefers brackish waters. It seeks out warmer spots near spring outlets and river discharges and sometimes enters freshwater during the winter months. This fish moves to offshore areas in later winter and early spring for spawning, which sometimes occurs over artificial reefs and navigation markers.

Sheepshead average about three pounds but can get over ten, and are terrific fighters who like to run anglers' lines around the pilings where they are most often caught. Their bite is very hard to detect and they are a difficult fish to hook if you don't know what you are doing.

Sheepshead are tied to hard structure such as bridges, jetties, docks, and piers. They use their sharp teeth to scrap barnacles from this structure and gobble up and break the shells of barnacles, mussels, and crabs. They do not travel in schools but orientate themselves around a food source and become very territorial, often staying in an area until the food supply is used up.

Catching sheepshead is not easy. They are not often caught incidentally by bottom fishermen but are hooked and fought by local anglers in many states who target them. A strong rod and heavier than usual line, around 20 lb test, is recommended as when hooked

sheepshead quickly try to run the line around those pilings. It is important to put strong pressure on the fish to bring them away from the hang-ups.

Sheepshead are caught on unusual saltwater baits and rarely take usual ones such as cut shrimp, squid or cut fish. Instead they hit fiddler crabs, pieces of larger crabs such as cut blue crab, sand fleas (also called mole crabs) or even barnacles scrapped from a piling and held together by their own sticky mesh or rubber bands.

- Despite their brute strength Sheepshead have a bite that it is so soft it is often impossible to detect. ***The old saying among sheepshead fishermen is that you must set the hook just before a sheepshead bites!*** It's not that difficult, but almost. One trick is to watch the rod tip, which will have a slight dip from the weight of your sinker. When a sheepshead bite the dip will disappear as the tip rises. Even if you feel nothing, set the hook.


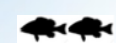

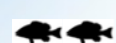
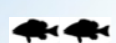

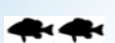
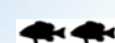

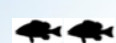
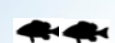
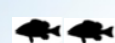

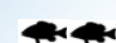

Sheepshead anglers don't stay in one place but move from piling to piling. Sometimes they can be seen in clear water rising up and slowly working on the barnacles and mussels of the pilings.

Sheepshead have protruding lips that give the fish its name. They also have a white body and big, black bold stripes. They are sometimes confused with black drum, another inshore structure fish that covers the same areas but is easier to catch.

Sheepshead are a hearty, tasty fish that yield delicious white meat fillets which fit into many seafood recipes. Sheepshead fillets are also very good simply breaded and fried.



This is your target for the month of February, the Sheepshead, 7 Striped Jetty Snapper, or as I like to call them DINNER!








Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
February						1 
			5 	6 Club Meeting Chili Cook-Off 	7 	8 
2 	3 Board Meeting 	4 	12 	13 	14 	15 
9 	10 	11 	19 	20 Club Meeting. 	21 	22 Club Sheepshead Tournament 
16 	17 	18 	26 	27 	28 	29 
23 	24 	25 				



COMING EVENTS:

February 3rd - Board Meeting
 February 6th - Club Meeting Chili Cook-Off
 February 20th - Club Meeting
 February 22nd - Sheepshead Tune-Up Tournament
 March 5th - Captains Bag / Bucket Stuffing
March 7th 2020 El Cheapo Sheepshead Tournament
 Club Annual Banquet - October 17, 2020



Month - Offshore -	Inshore -	Date - Weather	Date
Feb. - Sheepshead -	Sheepshead -	2/22/20 - 2/29/20	
Mar. - Non-Live - 	River -	3/21/20 - 3/28/20	
April - Unlimited Trolling - 	Shrimp Only -	4/11/20 - 4/18/20	
May - May Trolling - 	Trout -	5/9/20 - 5/16/20	
June - Junior Ang. - 	Junior Ang. -	6/6/20 - 6/13/20	
July - Kingfish Tune-up - 	Roulette -	7/11/20 - 7/25/20	
Aug. - Ladies - 	Ladies -	8/15/20 - 8/22/20	
Sept. - Bottom - 	Flounder -	9/12/20 - 9/19/20	



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