

MALLARDS/MERCURY SKI-BOAT FESTIVAL 2011

By Jackie Pratt

Registration for the 11th annual Shelly Beach Ski-Boat Festival kicked off on Tuesday afternoon; in spite of the heavy winds and huge swells which the weather experts predicted would not lie down until Thursday, 59 boats signed up to brave the big seas and try capture the big one and the main prize of a Mallards Cobra Cat 525 complete with 2 x 75hp Mercury Outboards.

Unfortunately on Wednesday the Shelly Beach base was closed due to the sea and wind conditions and although one or two boats did manage to launch at other launch sites, no fish were weighed. Thursday was a little better but although the base was not closed very few boats launched and again no weighable fish were brought to the scale. (A fish must weigh 6kg or more to count in this competition).

On Friday the anglers were up early, the weather was much better and the majority of the fleet were able to launch. At the weigh-in on Friday afternoon we started to see the results of the recent Sardine run in terms of the type and size of fish coming to the scale. The previous two years the fishing was dominated by Cuda (King Mackerel) a fish which prefers slighter warmer water, but on Friday not one Cuda was brought to the scale. The majority of fish were Yellowfin Tuna between 10-19kg as well as some Yellowtail all around 13/14kg and an Amberjack. The biggest fish of the day was caught by Inx Jordaan on the boat Numzaan, a Yellowfin weighing 19,8kg. Only tomorrow would tell if this would be big enough to take the boat.

Saturday dawned with perfect fishing conditions and all boats headed out in the hope of capturing the big prize. The anglers started to trickle into the weigh-in around 2pm and quite soon the fish caught by Inx was beaten. At 2.55pm PJ Botha and the Botha boys from WATT 4 arrived with their catch, the best being Tyler Botha's Amberjack which clocked in at 28.2 kg, an excellent fish for anyone let along a young man of 17yrs. They had a tense hour to wait until close of weigh-in, during which time some really good fish were weighed, interestingly still not one Cuda in the whole competition.

At last when the gate closed at the end of the weigh-in at 4pm on Saturday, a big cheer went up from the WATT 4 corner, the 28,2 kg Amberjack was put back on the gantry, the angler and crew gathered around, the cameras flashed and the champagne sprayed over the fish and the crew.

WATT 4 had done it again and would now be able to drive away with a brand new boat, perhaps to upgrade the Mallards Cobra Cat they won 7yrs ago in the 2004 Festival, the very first time a boat was offered as a "must win" 1st prize, or perhaps a 2nd boat to accommodate all the fishermen the Botha family seem to produce.

This is the very first time in 11 years an Amberjack has won this competition so its is interesting to note that the 2nd biggest fish in the competition was also an Amberjack caught by Rory van Deventer on Stay Ahead and he won a fantastic Lowrance GPS/Fishfinder. The 3rd fish qualified as the biggest fish of another specie, a Yellowfin of 22kg caught by Elmar Basson in his own boat Aquaholic, he won the Island Adventures trip to Bassas da India. The next 6 fish, all Yellowfin over 20kg

won top of the range Okuma Makaira Rods and Gold Makaira 50W Reels, as well as other fantastic prizes; prizes were awarded right down to 17th place as well as Junior and specie prizes.

After the Prize giving and handing over of the boat the crowd were entertained by Elvis Blue, followed by disco music to keep the crowd on their feet during their celebrations which continued until late.

Shelly Beach Ski-Boat Club would like to thank the Lions of Shelly Beach, who took over the management of the entertainment and catering this year, for an excellent week. Our sponsors and many of the anglers enjoyed a great evening on Friday with Barry Hilton and the boys had a chance to see the Miss Hibiscus semi-finalists strut their stuff and listen to some local bands on Wednesday.

Most of all of course our grateful thanks to our sponsors Mallards and Mercury for again supplying a fantastic prize and to ALL our sponsors big and small who have continued to make this event such a success.

Perhaps the biggest thank you however should be to the anglers who participated in this event, and particularly for their support of the voluntary conservations measures which Shelly Beach Ski-Boat Club introduced at the end of 2010. The results prove that we can still have an excellent competition whilst still protecting the valuable resource of Protea Banks.

At the end of the day without the anglers and the sponsors this event would not be possible and we hope to see you all back next year.