

*By Jackie Pratt*

## **MALLARDS/MERCURY SKI-BOAT FESTIVAL 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

The first of the modern era Ski-Boat “Bonanza” type competition held at Shelly Beach was the 2 day weekend “Tuna Bonanza” which was held in a small marquee in the parking area outside the Ski-Boat Clubhouse in 2001. The top prize for the biggest Yellowfin Tuna was R15,000 and the Landrover “Bonanza” prize, for a fish heavier than the previous local record weight, was not won.

That event proved so successful that the following year S.A Breweries came on board and sponsored a bigger marquee with all the infrastructure and the weigh-in so the festivities were moved to the larger venue at St. Michaels beach.

In 2004 Mallards Boating and Mercury Marine came along and offered a fully fitted Cobra Cat 525 with 2 x Mercury Outboard Motors as the top prize for the biggest GAMEFISH caught in the competition and it was decided to extend the competition to four days, from Wednesday to Saturday, to give everyone a chance to get out and catch a fish in case of bad weather.

The rest, as they say, is history. Mallards and Mercury have stayed on board and due to the publicity this event receives more and more sponsors have joined; total sponsorship for 2010 was over R800,000. A Festival of this size with live entertainment, stunning prizes for the anglers and something for all the visitors would not be possible if it were not for their fantastic support and we sincerely thank our sponsors.

A record number of 111 boats were hoping to take to sea on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June, but the wind had other ideas; from 1<sup>st</sup> light approximately 80 boats were waiting to launch at Shelly Beach, but with the sea already big and a forecast of stronger winds, for safety reasons the base had to be closed. A few boats were brave enough to take a chance at one or two other launch sites but only 6 fish were weighed for the day, the biggest being a “Cuda” (King Mackerel) of 25,4kg caught by Ant Defilippi on CHEPU which launched at Hibberdene.

Thursday was a much better day, although the wind did blow but not enough to prevent the boats from launching. Some good fish were brought to the scales, the biggest fish of the day a 23,8kg Yellowfin caught by Kelvin Chambler on the boat POACH 'N SEA, now lying 2nd.

On Friday again the weather was fine, some good size Tuna were weighed, the biggest being a 20,6kg Yellowfin by Simon Heaver on the boat SEAMADHI.

Saturday dawned a beautiful day for fishing so the guys were raring to go and catch a fish bigger than Ant Defilippi's 25,4 kg Cuda which at this stage was taking the boat and Kelvin Chambler's Yellowfin of 23,8kg which was in line to drive away the car. Although these were both high quality fish everyone believed there was a bigger one out there with his name on it; this would only be revealed when the last fish was brought to the scale on Saturday afternoon.

Word spread that Wayne Bentley fishing off his little Jetski had a really big Cuda and Willie Schoeman, also on a Jetski had a big Wahoo but when they came to the scale they were both disappointed, they just missed the mark at 23,2kg and 20kgs respectively. At 2.40pm Andre Loubser fishing off his boat ANGLERS PRIDE brought a whopping big Cuda to the stage and was delighted when it weighed in at 31,6kg; he now had a nail biting wait until 4pm to know if it would be the one to win the big prize.

Some quality fish, were weighed on Saturday, four big Cuda and some nice Yellowfin but at 16h00 when Weigh-master Dick Pratt called time, Andre Loubser was a very happy man knowing that later that night a brand new Cobra Cat 525 with 2 x 75hp Mercury Motors would be his.

The Chevy Spark car from Bates G.M. went to Kelvin Chamblor for his Yellowfin of 23,8kgs caught on day 2 (the car being the prize for the biggest fish of another specie) and Ant Defilippi received 2<sup>nd</sup> prize of a Lowrance Fish-finder and GPS for his 25,4kg Cuda.

Overall the Festival was an outstanding success; Lions did a fantastic job of providing top class entertainment on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Their corporate function was a sell out, everyone enjoyed a lovely meal prepared by Frey's and Mel Miller kept the people laughing for over hour before Vagabond took over and got them up on their feet and dancing. On Friday Kurt Darren had the young girls and the Oumas dancing on the tables and kept young and old entertained with both traditional Afrikaans music interspersed with some pop; something for everyone, a superb evening.

On Saturday the Prize giving for the anglers took centre stage with the top 20 fish all receiving a prize as well as the Juniors, Ladies and best fish (other than those in the top 20) of the species.

Ballyhoo took over, after the keys to the boat and car had been handed over to the winners, they got everyone singing their signature song "Man on the Moon" and kept the tent jumping until late.

Shelly Beach Ski-Boat Club would like to sincerely thank all their fantastic sponsors and especially FEVER for their outstanding coverage and assistance with the marketing of this event. Hope to see you all next year.