

Treasure is theme for Grant fishing tournament

BILL SARGENT 10:38 a.m. EDT October 10, 2015



(Photo: Gary Giles)

Treasure Coast Marina on the Indian River in Grant south of Melbourne reflects a bit of Spanish treasure history even if it's only in name.

On Saturday, the marina will host its 15th annual Autumn Inshore Classic, a river fishing tournament that has become a popular family affair that includes kids, lots of raffles, a free dockside cookout, and many of the same anglers vying for cash prizes.

Unlike previous tournaments, this year's event will carry a historical theme in observance of the 300th anniversary of the 1715 Spanish fleet sinking off Florida's coast, coupled with the recent recovery of more than \$1 million in gold coins, gold chain and silver coins from that doomed fleet.

"There's a lot of treasure history right here in the Grant area that ties in with this tricentennial and we're using our tournament and our marina name to bring attention to the historical significance," said Bonnie Roberts, owner of the marina on U.S. 1.

In June, ocean divers working inshore waters near Vero Beach, headed by treasure hunter Eric Schmitt, discovered some of the bounty that was carried by the Capitana, the flagship of Spain's Tierra Firme fleet that sank in shallow water on July 30 and 31, 1715, during a hurricane. The 11 ships, including those from the New Spain fleet that formed regular convoys transporting gold, silver and other precious resources from the Spanish colonies in the New World, were en route back to Spain.

"We named our marina the Treasure Coast because of the treasure history that's been uncovered in this area, especially around Shell Pit Road," Roberts said. "The Ais Indians lived here and the Spanish used them to salvage the gold and silver from their ship wrecks.

"Soon, the Ais realized they could do the salvaging for themselves, and no doubt they brought treasure back here to the mainland and buried it. For all we know, we could be standing on buried treasure," Roberts added.

"When we realized this year's tournament coincided with the tricentennial of the Spanish fleet sinking, we knew we had to use it as a theme."

Cash prizes totaling \$1,200 will be offered for the heaviest catches of snook, redfish, seatrout and sheepshead within the state length limits. A \$250 grand slam will be included for anyone weighing in the heaviest total weight of the four eligible species, of which two must be released alive.

Special awards of \$100 each for the two largest trout released alive will be given in memory of the late Chris Marshall and George Greenwalt, and a \$100 merchandise award, the Bill Sargent Resource Conservation Award, will go for the redfish with the most spots.

Anglers can fish anywhere in public waters, with no boundary restrictions, by boat, by wading or from piers and docks. Fishing will begin at dawn and the deadline for weigh-in at the marina will be 4 p.m.

Jerry Davis of Melbourne will enter the tournament if he's smart. He says the fishing for snook and redfish in the Grant to Palm Bay area of the Indian River is the best he's experienced in six years. He's been fishing with Gary Giles, a river fly-fishing guide from Palm Bay who knows that section of the river exceptionally well. But Davis' larger catches are coming on plugs.

Davis' advice to tournament anglers is to be on the water at dawn. "For us, the best bite has been early mainly on the west side of the river," he said.

Surely there are snook and redfish in their respective slot limits to be taken for the tournament, but chances are anglers will be releasing larger snook and reds. One of Davis' heaviest snook was an estimated 15-pounder measuring 35 inches. It struck a top-water, bone-colored Heddon Zara Spook Jr., just as the eastern horizon was turning golden.

Entry fees in the tournament will be \$35 for adults and \$10 for children fishing with registered adults. Special categories will be included in the children's division and every child entered will receive a rod-and-reel combo and a tackle box.

This year's commemorative T-shirt included in the captains' bags depicts a Spanish ship, a treasure chest and a rendering of the 1715 manifest. Look for the shirt to become a collector's item.

Contestants must be registered by 5 p.m. Friday when a registration party begins at the marina at 5185 S. U.S. 1. No registrations will be taken Saturday.

The marina, at Intracoastal Waterway marker No. 35 and 4.5 miles north of Sebastian Inlet, includes The Old Fish House Bar and Grill owned by Tom Oylar, one of the more popular eateries in South Brevard.

Proceeds from the tournament will fund the annual Treasure Coast Marina Children's Christmas Party in early December, when Santa arrives by boat.

For more information, call the marina at 321-733-3390.

Fly Fishing Expo

at Harry Goode's

Clinics, flats boats, casting competition and vendors will be part of the free Fly Fishing Expo at the Harry Goode's Outdoor Shop in Melbourne from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

"It's our big fly-fishing event of the year," said owner Richard Goode.

Flats guide Rick Worman will give a clinic at 1 p.m. while representatives from three shallow water skiff manufacturers will be offering tips and demonstrations of their boats. Well-known guide John Tarr will represent Hell's Bay Boatworks, and others will rep for East Cape Boats and Towee Boats.

A fly-casting contest will include prizes for accuracy and distance.

An expo kickoff featuring fly-tying competition and refreshments will be from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday.

For more, call the shop at 321-723-4751.

Contact Bill Sargent at sargentwb@gmail.com.

Read or Share this story: <http://on.flatoday.com/1LnFmT0>

TOP VIDEOS



</videos/sports/3230448649001/45560527710>

The Steve Englehart Show for Oct. 13, 2015

</videos/sports/3230448649001/45560527710>
22:57



Video: Eastern Florida State Women's Basketball Media Day

</videos/sports/3230448649001/455325880000>
</videos/sports/3230448649001/455325880001>
02:30



Video: Brian Lankford-Johnson talks about Palm Bay's win over Viera

</videos/sports/3230448649001/454745126700>
</videos/sports/3230448649001/4547451267001>

MORE STORIES



VIDEO: Kaz Soyk talks hole-in-one (</videos/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/73888418/>)

Oct. 13, 2015, 5:11 p.m.

[\(/videos/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/73888418/\)](/videos/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/73888418/)



Holy Trinity's Corbin is last-second success story

[\(/story/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/holy-trinitys-corbin-last-second-success-story/73848622/\)](/story/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/holy-trinitys-corbin-last-second-success-story/73848622/)

[\(/story/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/holy-trinitys-corbin-last-second-success-story/73848622/\)](/story/sports/high-school/2015/10/13/holy-trinitys-corbin-last-second-success-story/73848622/)

Oct. 13, 2015, 4:14 p.m.



Orlando City to announce plans at Eastern Florida

[\(/story/sports/2015/10/13/orlando-city-announce-plans-eastern-florida/73882042/\)](/story/sports/2015/10/13/orlando-city-announce-plans-eastern-florida/73882042/)

[\(/story/sports/2015/10/13/orlando-city-announce-plans-eastern-florida/73882042/\)](/story/sports/2015/10/13/orlando-city-announce-plans-eastern-florida/73882042/)

Oct. 13, 2015, 3:58 p.m.