

## **Rizzo and Futch take day one lead in Redfish Tour Championship**

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (Nov. 2, 2007) – It was a sunny morning for the first time this week on this stretch of the Emerald Coast as the 2-day IFA Redfish Tour Championship, presented by Cabela's, got under way today, brightening the anglers' spirits and catches over what they had reported during practice.

Of the 123 teams in the tournament, 79 of them weighed fish today, with 45 having their two-redfish limits. In the lead is the team of Phil Rizzo and Mike Futch with a weight of 15.31 pounds. Their catch was just enough to edge out the Power-Pole team that finished the day in second, Wayne Gatlin and Brandon Franklin with 15.27 pounds. As close as their weights were, their days on the water were quite different.

“We had an area all to ourselves, some really clean water loaded with baitfish,” explained Rizzo. “We’re fishing sand holes in the grass, 2 ½ to 3 feet of water, throwing gold-colored Johnson Sprite spoons. The fish we’re catching are fat, quality fish, at the upper end of the slot. The two we weighed were our only ones under the 27” maximum length limit. The others were ‘overs.’ We’ll definitely be returning to this area tomorrow,” he said.

In contrast, Franklin said his team, currently in second, is on a big school of reds. “We’re in an area with lots of fish and we probably caught 10 each in the first two hours before quitting the spot, saving it for tomorrow. These fish have been here for a few days so we expect them to still be here tomorrow. “If they’re not, we have a couple of more spots for backup.” The Gatlin/Franklin duo had big fish of the day, an 8.13 pounder. They are tossing white jerkbaits on 1/8<sup>th</sup> ounce Mission Fishin heads

Rounding out the top five finishers of the day are: 3<sup>rd</sup> place, A.C. Lockyer (the 2006 Redfish Tour winner) and Joe Thomas with 14.48 pounds; 4<sup>th</sup> place, Brady Nelson and Josh Ramsey with 14.16 pounds; and 5<sup>th</sup> place, Darrell Crabtree and Cole Scroggs with 13.82 pounds. Scroggs is a 13-year-old, and his adult partner Crabtree, a family friend, said the young man “graduated from amateur to veteran” today.

“We had an awesome fishing day,” Crabtree expounded. “We were fishing an area that I had found a lot of fish in during this same event and time last year, and they are in it again. There were eight Ranger boats in the area with us, so we got to see lots of fish being caught, as well as catch a bunch ourselves. The boats respected each other and the area, so I think Cole learned a lot today from the quality fishing experience.” The adult/youth combo was throwing Berkley Gulp Jerk Shads and Gulp Alive Shrimp.

In addition to everyone fishing for the first place prize of a Ranger 173 Ghost with a 115HP, 4-stroke Yamaha outboard, Ranger Trail trailer, Power-Pole, [Minn Kota](#) trolling motor and [Humminbird](#) electronics, five teams are in the running for the Cabela's Team of the Year title and the \$5,000 cash prize that goes with it.

Team of the Year standings going into the final day are: 1<sup>st</sup> – the Florida West division team of Brady Nelson and Josh Ramsey with 14.16 pounds; 2<sup>nd</sup> – the Louisiana division's Dwayne Eschete and Bruce Lindheim with 12.92 pounds; 3<sup>rd</sup> – the Florida East division's Scott Guthrie and Mark Sepe with 12.40 pounds; 4<sup>th</sup> – the South Carolina division's John Halker and Josh

Cruze with 6.18 pounds; and 5<sup>th</sup> – the Georgia division’s Adam Loud and Cliff White with 3.82 pounds.

All prize winners, including the Cabela’s Team of the Year honors, will be determined immediately following Saturday’s final weigh-in, beginning at 3 p.m. at RiverCamps on Crooked Creek.

The Redfish Tour is the oldest of all redfish tournaments consists of six divisions and each holds three one-day tournaments “close to home” in their respective regions. Teams that fish in all three events qualify to compete in the two-day IFA Redfish Tour Championship.

It is those qualifiers who are competing this week in the Panama City event. Take-offs and weigh-ins are at the RiverCamps facility, located approximately five miles north of Panama City Beach on Highway 388.

IFA Redfish Tour sponsors include Cabela’s, Ranger Boats, Yamaha Outboards, Minn Kota, Humminbird, Pioneer Beef Jerky, Loadmaster, Sebile Lures, Jax Wraps, KeelShield, Power Pole, Solar Bat, Shimano, Powertex Group, *Florida Fishing Weekly*, Palmer Conrad Consulting, Audubon Nature Institute, Choice Hotels International and Careco Multimedia. Local sponsors include Edgewater Beach Resort and RiverCamps on Crooked Creek.

For more information about the IFA Redfish Tour tournaments, including the 2008 schedule, visit [www.redfishtour.com](http://www.redfishtour.com) or call (478) 788-8871.

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