

THE PERSEVERANCE LURE



So, what do you do when your highly anticipated beach snook charter results in the following: black skies, tons of rain and lightning heading your direction, heavy wind and choppy seas, water so hot you could bathe in it, scarce bait, no tide, etc.? Do you race back to the ramp? Do you sling artificials around all day, blind-casting the mangroves and hoping for the best? Do you curse that it's your only day off and reluc-

tantly head to the dock? I know we've all been in this situation, looked around at each other with blank and wondering stares, just unable to make a decision. Lightning, of course, always mandates seeking shelter and nothing but that. Rain, well, you just have to decide how much rain is too much rain and will it affect the bite. Low and slack tides can be difficult to fish, but manageable. Combine all of these variables into one morning and someone must make the call.



What every angler should have in their box

By JOSHUA W. BROER



This very same scenario played out for me, two other fishermen and one guide on a scheduled trip on the flats. Led by Captain Trevor Meyer out of Tarpon Springs, FL, we launched from the Anclote River Boat Ramp at 7 a.m. Joined by his father and brother, both seasoned anglers from our east coast, we had our sights set on catching some big snook off the nearby beaches. Captain Meyer had the fish dialed in all season so we were eager to test our tackle on some of the larger fish being caught. We knew that the fish were not as thick as last summer due to the horrible double freeze which killed so many of our snook, but with summer closing fast, we nevertheless wanted to give it a shot.

I asked veteran Tampa Bay area guide, Captain Brent Gaskill, what he thought about the snook bite, and he commented that "I'm still catching snook, just not in the numbers we've seen in the past. Areas we used to catch twenty or thirty snook on a half day charter are now only producing two or three." That information became a sort of mantra for me and, unfortunately, ran through my head for most of the day.

Truly, the snook bite was just not there and after getting chased by thunderstorms from one spot to the next, we more or less collectively called it a day. After having spent more time than usual gathering bait on this tough fishing day, that is - sifting through the net-wrecking whitebait for some select pieces and some large pinfish and pigfish to fill his giant livewell, Captain Meyer nevertheless would not throw in the towel. He suggested a spot or two close to the boat ramp that one could consider "end of the day spots", and despite some pessimistic yawns and sighs from the tired bunch, we headed full throttle through some VERY skinny water to reach our targets.

The captain's boat was built for such sandbar jumping stuff. A 21 foot Carvel with a healthy 8.4 inch beam, originally built in 1995 and restored completely by himself in 2003. This huge tunnel-hull skiff with lower deck and tower controls is among the most unique flats skiffs on the North Suncoast. The bow deck is so large and clutter-free that four adults could square-dance on it! Just being on this boat is a special occasion. For us, this monster of the flats was about to prove her worth.

After the eyebrow raising ride that brought us to our shallow water destination, we came off plane to a known spot, according to our guide, that "...has been fished out over the years... but that you



just have to hit on the right part of the tide..." The idea was to hopefully find the fish trapped, more or less, in this one particular area. Finding fish trapped in holes is really nothing new to flats guides but this one in particular, even I knew, had been overfished in recent years. Still, the captain, as he explained it to us, based on the pace of the tide, the lack of fishing pressure that day, the type of bait we had left, and the time of day and time of year, said with a big smile as he peered down from the tower, "I just feel it in my gut too". In any

case, I'll tell you this - call it gut, instinct, or just tried and true time on the water, he put us on the fish and then some!

With only a handful of big whitebait left and more pinfish than we cared for, the first bait in the water lasted for maybe 30 seconds. The captain's father, Bob, had hooked up and hooked up good. I always like to say, "what do you call a drag screaming snook that doesn't jump? A jack crevalle!" No offense to the jack family of fish but this wasn't one. This was one mean, over-the-slot redfish that

took tons of line, bull-dogged the whole fight, and still bent the rod under the gunwale at boatside. Sooner than we could snap a shot of this bronze beauty, the captain's brother, Matt, had his bait - a big pinfish - blasted by an even bigger fish. This fight lasted a solid 10 minutes but ended with a 35" redfish at the boat which would begin an hour



long spanking of beefy reds. Whitebait, pinfish, cut bait - we threw the proverbial kitchen sink at these bruisers until the bite stopped and we were all laughs and hugs. I caught my biggest redfish to date, right at 30 inches.

This was in every way a special day for all of us. For Captain Meyer, it was a wonderful family affair with a touch of pride thrown in. For dad and brother, photographic bragging rights to take back home to the east coast. For me, as a good angler but not a great angler, I learned a valuable lesson - the importance of real patience and, PERSEVERANCE. I get frustrated on slow fish days and maybe hang it up too early. So, come on summer storms, slow tides and small bait - I'm ready for you. I'm heading out with a new attitude and a new set of skills. And, if that doesn't do the trick, I'll just go with my gut. I KNOW that works!

Built To Last A Lifetime

DORADO 23



DORADO 

727.786.3800
www.doradomarine.com



Want to know what

Floats our Boats?



You Do!

Do you have a boat, car, or RV that you no longer want or need? Donate it to Tampa Bay Watch, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and receive the full tax deduction allowed by law!

Your property donation will benefit marine habitat restoration, conservation, education, and protection of marine life. Your gift will also enable us to continue programs that improve our local estuary and enhance the quality of life for all of the fish, birds, marine mammals, and people that live here!



Many of Tampa Bay Watch's habitat restoration projects are completed through the use of our boats. We also fund many programs from donated vehicle sales!

Help Restore Tampa Bay with Your Vehicle Donation!

For more information on how your donation can benefit Tampa Bay Watch, please contact Dennis Kellenberger at 727-867-8166, extension 222 or dkellenberger@tampabaywatch.org.

WWW.
TAMPABAYWATCH.ORG

CHARITABLE REGISTRATION # CH4736. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.