

SCUBA DIVING

JACK BELICH



Divers aiming to win prizes in 16th annual spearfishing tourney

Spearfishing enthusiasts are gearing up for one of the biggest tournaments in Florida, the 16th annual St. Petersburg Open Spearfishing Tournament with prizes totaling at least \$6,000. The big day is Sunday, Sept. 13.

Contest chairman Dick McCormick, calling the gathering "the real granddaddy of them all," said the contest is expected to attract about 175 divers.

There will be four actual categories, and prizes will be awarded to the spearfishermen who come back with the biggest fish. McCormick has added a new angle this year and has reserved all first places for members of the Florida Skin Divers Association Inc. (FSDA).

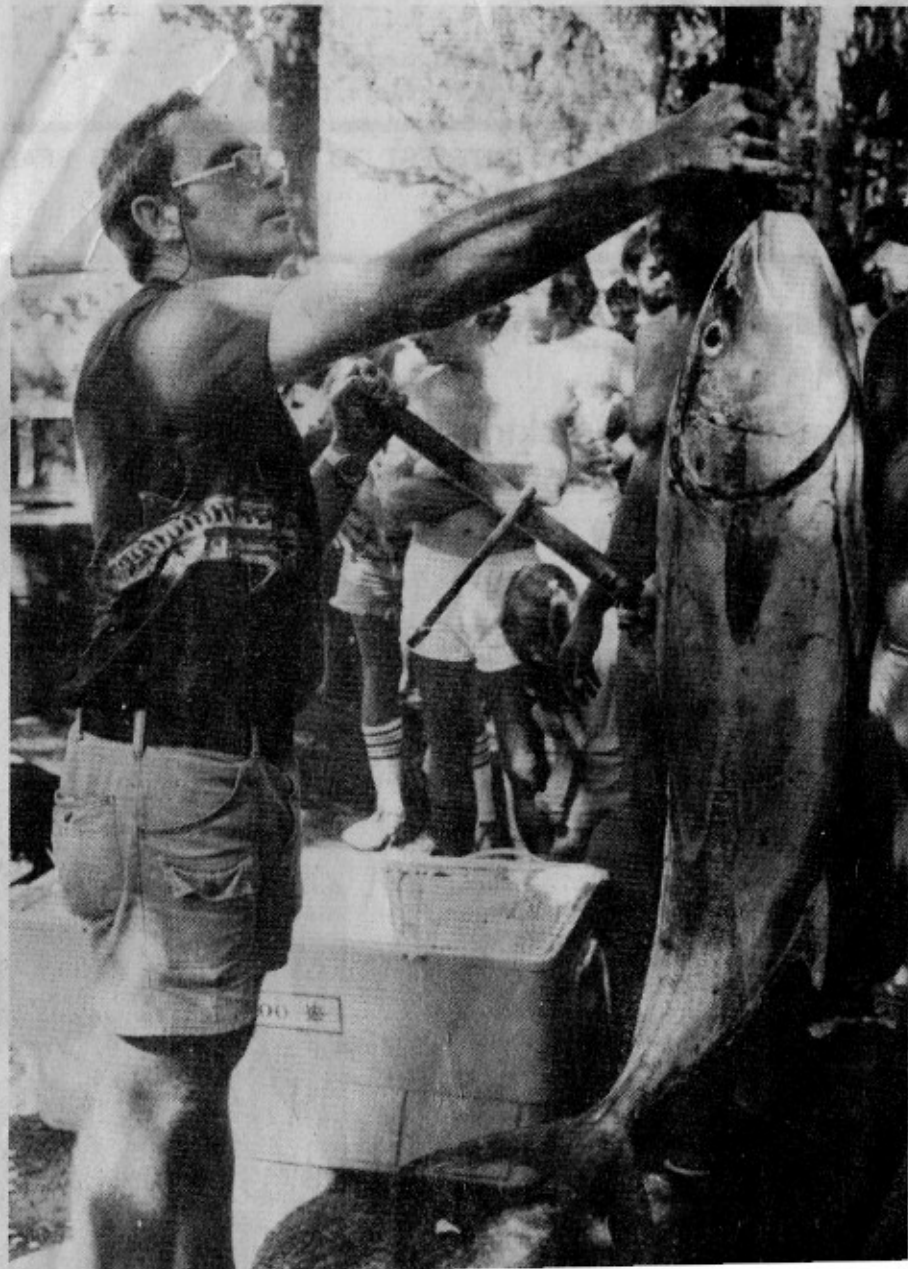
"The FSDA is our main statewide organization," McCormick said, "and it really is the scuba divers' lobby. We all need to support the group, and we are trying to increase the FSDA membership by saving the winning places for FSDA members."

SPONSORED BY the St. Petersburg Underwater Club and Sunshine Fins Inc., festivities will get under way at a scuba flea market and decompression party on Saturday, Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m. Again this year, the party will be at the Sheraton-St. Pete Marina & Tennis Resort, 6800 34th St. S.

"Spearfishermen will be able to pre-register for the tournament during the party," McCormick said. "We will also have our 1981 tournament T-shirts on sale, and you can always find a good bargain at the flea market."

Registration will be \$10 at the Saturday night party.

Tournament chairman Dick McCormick weighs an amberjack that tipped the scales at 50 pounds at the Mullet Key boat ramp during last year's tournament.



St. Petersburg Times
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missible, and there will be no restriction on the number of tanks allowed.

POWER HEADS are not permitted, and a contestant may not receive assistance with any fish until he or she has one hand on the boat. There are no boundaries, and divers may spear fish anywhere in Tampa Bay or the Gulf of Mexico.

All contestants should wear a BC or a scuba safety vest or a wetsuit jacket. All fish must have been caught using a spear loaded or propelled by the contestant's own muscle power.

All fish must be weighed at the Mullet Key boat ramp area no later than 3:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon. All fish must have been caught on contest day, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

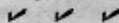
Spearfishing not your bag? Well, would you like to buy some fish?

All fish caught in the tournament become the property of the tournament sponsors and will be sold to the public immediately after the weigh-in. A lot of good fish at very reasonable prices will be available. All profits from the sale go to running the tournament and buying prizes, McCormick said.

THE ACTUAL weigh-in is a sight to see and usually attracts quite a crowd under the old weigh-in tree. A large commercial scale is used, and divers deliver their catches to a large trailer equipped with several big ice chests. The fish sale will take place in the trailer.

McCormick listed the following fish as record-holders in their respective categories: sheepshead, 9 pounds 13 ounces, by Ray Hinton; snapper, 54 pounds by Dick Newman; amberjack, 75 pounds by Jim Helinger; and grouper, 42 pounds by Bruce Myers.

Entry forms are available at all dive shops. More information and entry forms are available from Dick McCormick, 855-5781 (day) or 866-0727 (nights).



The Manatee Shuffle might sound like a dance to some, but scuba divers, snorkelers and river-tubers know it to be a pleasant day of fun on the Rainbow River.

This year's shuffle, the sixth annual, will be sponsored by the Florida Skin Divers Association, Inc. (FSDA) and will be on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 7.

Festivities get under way at 10:30 a.m. with several swimming contests down the river. Using only their feet (swimmers must keep their hands at their sides), contestants go for a mile and a half with mask, snorkel and fins. There will be prizes for the winners.

After the races, there will be a family float down the river for everyone. Bring your own tube, and transportation will be provided to the starting point. A family picnic will be held after the float-down.

The meeting point will be at the old K. P. Hole north of Dunnellon near the intersection of state roads 200 and 484.

Chairman of the Manatee Shuffle, Jim Bedsaul Sr., cautions all participants to keep the area clean and says that no food or beverages will be allowed on the river.

If you need directions or more information, call Bedsaul at 855-1531 in Oldsmar.



The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will begin a safe-boating course, consisting of 12 classes, on Wednesday, Sept. 9.

Floatilla 77 of the auxiliary will provide instructors for the Monday and Wednesday classes, which begin at 7:30 p.m. at 4230 Shore Acres Blvd. NE, St. Petersburg.

The instruction is free, but the auxiliary recommends that a textbook and a workbook be purchased for \$8.

For more information, call their public education officer, Willis A. Shaw, at 527-5663.



The scuba column invites questions, story ideas, diving activity schedules and comments in general. Write to Jack Belich, *The St. Petersburg Times*, P.O. Box 1121, St. Petersburg, Fla. 33731.



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The official insignia of the spearfishing tournament.