

## SNOOK FIN-ADDICT

Winter/Spring 2005

CAPTAIN RICK GRASSETT

### What's New!

There is a new and exciting brand of spinning tackle on the market now, **Quantum**, which I am now using. The name Quantum, formerly known as Zebco/Quantum, is now a different product. Don't be fooled, this is not your father's Zebco, but it's the hottest new tackle on the market. The spinning reels feature Titanium bails that work magnetically rather than with a bail spring, ceramic drags and multiple ball bearings. The reels are as smooth as silk and the rods are wrapped like custom rods and perfectly matched to the reels. I think that once you hold one of these spinning reels in your hand, you'll be looking for one of your own.

**Orvis** has a new fly reel this year, known as the **Mach Reel**. I have one on the boat now, matched with a 12-weight TLS rod for tarpon. The new reel features a large arbor, which allows for a high line capacity. The machined design is 35% lighter than the Vortex and has twice the line capacity as the Battenkill large arbor reel. The drag is extremely smooth and should whip a big tarpon quick!

My wife, Karen, took early retirement from Sarasota County government after 20-years and started a business of her own. **Dog-Gone Good Critter Sitters**, offers personalized pet care services including pet sitting, dog walking, pet taxi services and more. If you have a pet that needs care while you're working, vacationing or out fishing for the day, you can reach her at [www.dggs.com](http://www.dggs.com) or (941) 925-4164.

### What's Not!

Some things never change-because they don't need to! I am still running my **Action Craft 1820 Hybrid**, which is a feather light Carbon Fiber/Kevlar hull, powered by a **Mercury 115 HP EFI 4-stroke** outboard. This boat runs in a foot of water, floats in 9" and is a dream to pole

Since I am still an **Orvis-Endorsed** fly fishing guide at **CB's Saltwater Outfitters**, fly anglers on my boat will continue to use the latest technology Orvis fly tackle that is available. I will be attending the Orvis Southeastern Guide Rendezvous in January, where new products will be unveiled and we'll receive instruction in a variety of guiding and instructional skills.

### Fly Fishing Schools

The fly fishing school at **CB's Saltwater Outfitters** is now an **Orvis-Endorsed Fly Casting School**. The dates have been set for our winter and spring fly casting schools to be held at CB's Saltwater Outfitters on Siesta Key and in conjunction with CB's Saltwater Outfitter's at the Longboat Recreation Center on Longboat Key. The Instructors at the Longboat Key schools, Rusty Chinnis and I, are Federation of Fly Fishers Certified Fly Casting Instructors. Experienced fly fishing guide, Capt. Ed Hurst and I will be the instructors at the Siesta Key Schools.

The dates and locations are as follows:

- Jan. 22nd** CB's Saltwater Outfitters, Siesta Key
- Feb. 5th** CB's Saltwater Outfitters, Siesta Key
- Feb. 19th** Longboat Recreation Center, LB Key
- Mar.5th** CB's Saltwater Outfitters, Siesta Key
- Mar. 19th** Longboat Recreation Center, LB Key
- April 9th** CB's Saltwater Outfitters, Siesta Key

The fly fishing schools will focus on the basics of fly casting. However, if you are an experienced fly caster, we will work with you at your own skill level. The "Essentials of Fly Casting" are an important foundation for both beginning and intermediate fly casters and will be an integral part of our schools. We want to teach you to become a good fly caster, so that you can become a good fly angler. When you are able to cast effectively, the sport becomes a lot of fun!



*Debbie Chapman, from Lakeland, FL, caught & released this nice red on a fly while fishing Sarasota Bay with Capt. Rick*

Participants in our fly fishing schools will be provided the use of the latest technology Orvis fly tackle, a textbook and various materials, including an instructional video. We will also cover leader construction, fly selection and how to fly fish in saltwater. In addition, as a participant in our fly fishing schools, you will be able to purchase Orvis fly tackle at a discounted price.

Why not plan your next trip around one of our fly fishing schools? You can spend a Saturday learning how to fly cast and then put your skills to work on the water. A ½ day or an evening fly fishing trip combined with one of our fly fishing schools may just cause you to

get bitten by the fly fishing bug! There are plenty of accommodations on Siesta Key and Longboat Key in the close vicinity of our schools that I can get you connected with if you need help. I also offer private fly casting instruction, which can be customized to fit your schedule. You can contact me to sign up for one of our fly fishing schools or private fly casting instruction.

### Fishing Calendar

One of the best things about living in Southwest Florida is the variety of fishing that we have. Spring through Fall are the best times to fish, with winter being the most challenging, but there's always something that is a good option. I'll cover the seasons and the best options for each season.

During the **winter**, January and February are probably the two toughest months to fish due to cool water and fronts moving through. Even so, if you choose when you will fish the action can be fast. Winter low tides will concentrate **reds and trout** in potholes and along drop offs. Fishing these negative low tides can be like fishing in a barrel. I offer trips that include wading, particularly with fly anglers. You will need waders in the winter. It's a great way to fish on these very low tides and often is the only way to get to the fish. **Bluefish** will also make an appearance during the winter on deep grass flats and in passes. They are great fighters that hit hard and jump.



*Joey Schwab, from Sarasota, FL, caught & released this 20-lb Silver King on a DOA TerrorEyz while fishing a Port Charlotte canal with Capt. Rick*

**Night snook fishing**, particularly fly fishing, is excellent during the winter months. All of the large baitfish disappear during the winter, leaving glass minnows as the primary food source. We duplicate this best with small white flies. Tide is critical, so we try to choose a fast moving tide and the action can be hot. On good trips, we will catch and release 20 or 30 snook in the 2 to 5-pound class with the occasional larger fish. There is the possibility of a freeze or frost during the winter, in which case, I wouldn't target snook. When fronts are approaching, the barometer will be falling and the fishing can be hot!

Things really turn on in the **spring**. **Spanish mackerel and cobia** will pass through the area as they head north for the summer. **Tripletail** are also options in the coastal gulf waters in the spring. My favorite thing to do in the spring is fishing the flats for **reds, snook and trout**. As the water warms and baitfish become more

plentiful, the fishing gets hot. Snook will stage on the flats and around docks and bridges as they move from the backcountry toward passes. **Night snook fishing** is also very good in the spring as snook begin to feed on shrimp as they exit the bays for the gulf. **Tarpon** begin to show up in bays and backcountry areas, as they get ready to school along the beaches. **Pompano** should also be an option during the spring when we'll find them on deep grass flats close to passes.

**Summer** means **tarpon** time, which usually begins in mid May and continues through mid July. Some of the best fly fishing for large tarpon will be in July as we head toward the full moon. These tarpon, average 80 to 90-pounds and can be as large as 140 or 150-pounds. Many anglers quit tarpon fishing at the end of June, which leaves July with little fishing pressure. We target these giant torpedoes with 12-weight fly rods as they cross the pure white sandbars in as shallow as 3 or 4 feet of water! If you want to tarpon fish, you should plan ahead, since this type of fishing books well in advance. **I still have some July tarpon dates available.**

Later in the summer, we fish either early or late in the day to avoid mid afternoon heat. A popular trip is for me to start about 3 or 4 AM fishing snook around lighted docks and bridges and moving to the flats for reds, snook and trout at first light. Our trip is done by midday when the heat of the day becomes an issue.

**Juvenile Tarpon**, in the 20 to 30-pound class, will be available from July through mid November. These "mini silver kings" are one of my favorite fish. They jump higher and are more acrobatic than their larger counterparts. I target them in upper Charlotte Harbor with DOA's on spinning tackle or bunny flies fished with a fast-sinking fly line on a 9-weight fly rod.

**Snook** fishing can also be very good, particularly on the strong outgoing tides that occur during the new and full moon weeks during July, August and September. We fish from late afternoon until early evening with top water plugs, fly poppers or other sub surface lures and flies. This fishing can be very good, particularly at dusk.

In the **fall**, **Reds** will school during August and September. When they are schooled up they will roam the flats like a hungry pack of dogs. When the schools of reds start to break up, they disperse on the flats for some of the best fishing of the season from mid October through November. Reds will be found along mangrove shorelines, in potholes and along sandbars. This a great time of the year to wade, particularly when fly fishing. You can usually wet wade with just a pair of wading boots.

**Snook** fishing is also strong during the fall. As the water cools, they will move from beaches and passes toward backcountry areas. You will find them staging around docks and seawalls close to passes. They will also stage around sandbars and on points on flats. Night snook fishing gets good, particularly with a fly, as the days get shorter.

**Trout** become more active on the flats and spend more time feeding in shallow water. Later in the day they will drop out to deeper grass flats to feed.

The coastal gulf waters will come alive beginning in late October through November depending on the weather. **Little tunny (a.k.a. bonito or false albacore) and Spanish mackerel** will blitz the beaches feeding heavily on glass minnow schools. This is one of my favorite fly fishing options in terms of action and quality fish. Little tunny will run fast and far, taking you deep into the backing of your fly reel. The action is just as fun with jigs on spinning tackle. **Tripletail** will also



*Cody Kaufman, from Willow Street, PA, caught & released this 4-lb Spanish Mackerel on a fly while fishing Sarasota Bay with Capt. Rick*



*Clay Wilson, from Cortez, FL, caught & released this snook on a CAL jig while fishing Sarasota Bay with Capt. Rick*

be found in the same waters hanging around buoys or over artificial reefs or natural hard bottom. There is an excellent sight fishing opportunity for **cobia** as large as 50 or 60-pounds in upper Tampa Bay from November through mid December.

**Pompano** may make an appearance during the fall. We cast light jigs and flies on deep grass flats close to passes. They are excellent fighters and great table fare!

### Current Fishing Reports

I have been directing most of my efforts toward bringing you current information in the form of daily and weekly reports on my two web sites. Although this information is very valuable when current, it's not very useful when it's old news. Since most of you now use personal computers and have Internet access, this is the best way to communicate current information to you.

Daily reports are featured on my fly fishing website, [www.flyfishingflorida.net](http://www.flyfishingflorida.net). A more detailed weekly report is posted on [www.snookfin-addict.com](http://www.snookfin-addict.com). In addition you'll also find a monthly Fishing Forecast on that site. If you are planning a trip to Sarasota, you can monitor fishing reports prior to your arrival or get a forecast for the coming month.

There may be additional information available by e-mail. If there is a hot bite going on or if there is a particularly good fishing option available, I can notify you by e-mail. If you would like to be included in these "hot bite alerts", **please e-mail me with your e-mail address**. I assure you that I won't share your e-mail address with anyone else. A Photo Gallery of current and archived photos is available on both sites. You will find photos of some of the best catches of the year in this newsletter.

### Thanks

I've fished with many of you on a regular basis for years and I've gotten to know your families and your fishing habits. It's great to spend time with old friends. Others fish with me less frequently but still return after one or two years.

I just want to say again, **thanks to all of you for fishing with me, I appreciate your business**. It is the return clients that are the heart of my business. I look forward to fishing with you again during 2005.

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*David Smith, from the U.K., crossed the big pond to catch & release  
this 140-lb tarpon near Sarasota with Capt. Rick*

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