

Waterfronts

By Steve Waters

CHASING BIG FISH IN STYLE



STEVE WATERS, SUN SENTINEL

Capt. Terry Claus, right, his wife, Janene, and their sons Tyler, left, and Trey are part of a very successful tournament fishing team on their 52-foot Viking *Qualifier*.

Claus family runs classy charter operation — and catches plenty of fish

CORAL GABLES » Whether they're fishing in a tournament or running a charter, Capt. Terry Claus Jr. and his crew go overboard.

They fish smart, they fish hard and they fish as a team. That strategy has resulted in an impressive tournament record for *Qualifier*, their 52-foot Viking.

This year's highlights include victories in the Nova Southeastern Sailfish Tournament and the EAGM Memorial, a fourth in the Florida Billfish Masters and a couple of top junior angler titles for son Tyler, 15, who also caught the biggest kingfish in the Mayor's Cup, a 28-pounder that was worth \$11,000. Last year *Qualifier* won the Bob Lewis Billfish Challenge — wife Janene was the top female angler — and was second in the K-Rock Classic.

When Claus runs a charter with his son Trey, 19, the boat's tireless mate, they make you feel at home on their luxurious vessel while they work as a team to give you a good chance of catching everything from sailfish and swordfish to dolphin, snapper, grouper and tuna.

"When we have a charter," Claus said, "we're out there like we're fishing a tournament."

Claus, 48, takes fishing seriously. He grew up fishing with his father, got his captain's license in 1980 and ran charters on his

dad's 35 Bertram, *Vitamin Sea*, out of Kings Bay Country Club while a student at the University of Miami.

He became a successful mortgage broker and used to take clients fishing on his boat. After selling his mortgage company last year, Claus became a full-time charter captain.

His business is geared to corporate clients (visit www.qualifierfishing.com or call 305-205-4246) who need a break from the office or want to entertain customers in style. A 2006 model, *Qualifier* looks new, which reflects the pride Claus takes in his operation, and features a galley, leather sofas and a 42-inch plasma TV with satellite service so business people can watch the financial channels.

The boat also has a high-speed Internet connection, which Claus uses to get real-time weather, ocean currents and ocean temperatures. Knowing the sea conditions before you head offshore makes it easier to find fish.

During a trip last week, Claus ran the boat from the tuna tower while Trey, who does a masterful job of rigging lines, putting out baits and keeping tabs on everything, ran the cockpit and kept an eye on two candidates seeking to join the *Qualifier* fishing team, Scott Fleischer and Alex Whelp-

ton. Janene was in the middle of things, manning the three kite baits on the starboard fishing kite.

Janene was not a hardcore angler when she met her husband, who took her fishing on one of their dates and got Janene her first sailfish. Now she fishes all the tournaments with her husband and sons.

"If I want to see my boys, I have to go fishing," she said with a smile.

I had a great time. Soon after heading offshore, Claus spotted some floating debris, including a refrigerator door, that produced several dolphin for us and a couple of tripletail for Trey. Then he headed north to Miami Beach to do some kite-fishing, where Janene released a sailfish and we picked up a kingfish.

We were heading home when Claus spotted a piece of bamboo, but no dolphin appeared to be home. As Claus pulled away, he saw a nice dolphin come up and he stopped the boat, so I stopped reeling in my live pilchard and the fish grabbed it. After a five-minute fight, Trey gaffed the 20-pound bull to put the finishing touch on a fun-filled day.

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Fishing trends

LAKE OKEECHOBEE

Bass anglers were having success fishing along the outside grass lines, then moving into the grass and working plastic frogs, worms, crawdads and Gambler Flapp'n Shads in and across open areas. Fishing has been best on the south end of the lake. Good spots include Observation Island, West Wall, East Wall, Ritta Island and Long Point. Bluegills were biting live crickets in the rim canal.

FRESHWATER/EVERGLADES

Mike Lendl reported that some big bass along with some snook 15-20 pounds were biting around the pumps out of the Harold A. Campbell Public Use Area at STA 3/4. The bass were hitting Gambler Giggy Heads with Sweebo worms, and the snook were hitting Zara Spook Jr. topwater plugs. Peacock bass, along with a few largemouths, were biting topwater plugs and jerkbaits in the Lake Ida chain of lakes.

FLORIDA BAY/10,000 ISLANDS

Lots of snook and tarpon were biting live mullet in front of and around Flamingo. Snook and redfish were biting live bait, topwater plugs and jerkbaits in and around the river mouths on the Gulf Coast.

GOLD COAST OFFSHORE

Capt. Skip Dana of the *Helen S* and *Fish City Pride* drift boats at Hillsboro Inlet Marina said fishing picked up the past three days. Anglers were catching good numbers of kingfish in 50-120 feet off Hillsboro Inlet and there were plenty of under-sized kings — the minimum size for a keeper is 24 inches to the fork of the tail — mixed in. *Fish City Pride* had 25 keepers Thursday morning and threw back a bunch more, and *Helen S* also had quite a few kings. Mutton snapper were biting best on the morning trips, with some fish as shallow as 35 feet. The best yellowtail snapper fishing has been on the afternoon and evening trips. The boats were catching most of the snapper, along with a few red grouper and lots of small gag grouper, in 50-95 feet from Hillsboro Inlet to Sea Ranch Lakes. Dana added that there's been a good swordfish bite at night.

PIERS

Deerfield Beach Pier anglers had jacks, ladyfish, some Spanish mackerel and kingfish and loads of bluefish. Anglin's Pier had some keeper pompano Thursday, along with plenty of small ones. Also biting this week were mackerel, kingfish, bluefish, jacks and snapper. Dania Beach Pier had mackerel, mangrove snapper and some pompano Thursday.

THE KEYS

Very few anglers have been fishing, so charter captains haven't had much to report. Bud N' Mary's Marina in Islamorada said the *Miss Islamorada* party boat did well on yellowtail snapper Thursday and a few kingfish were biting on the reefs. Dolphin were scattered along the edge.

Outdoors Notebook

Volvo Race: The Volvo Ocean Race begins Saturday with eight 11-man crews departing Alicante, Spain, on the Mediterranean Sea for the 6,500-mile first leg to Cape Town, South Africa. The 10th running of the 37,000-mile race has stops in 11 ports, including India, Singapore and China before finishing in St. Petersburg, Russia. Visit www.volvooceanrace.org.

Anglers wanted: The Bottom Line Mike's bass fishing trail is seeking new members. Call **Mike Lendl** at 754-246-3198.

Darling days: Birding, nature cruises, kayaking, and biking opportunities abound during "Ding" Darling Days birding and eco-festival, Oct. 19-16 at Sanibel Island. Recreational events take place at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge — co-host of the 19th annual event along with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society (its friends group) and Tarpon Bay Explorers (its recreation concessions operator) — and at other island venues. For a schedule, prices and contact information, visit www.dingdarlingdays.com.

Bass-Holes results: **Jason Meadows** and **Ron Ackerman** caught 12 pounds of fish to win the Bass-Holes tournament Saturday and Sunday on Lake Okeechobee out of Clewiston and the Lake Ida chain of lakes. **Mike Allgair** and **Trey Maddox** were second at 11.53. Allgair had the big bass Saturday at 4.95. **Matt Hurst** had the big bass Sunday at 4.88.

Renegades results: **Eric Love** and **Jason Walsh** caught 20 pounds, 3 ounces of fish to win the Renegades Bass Club monthly tournament on Lake Okeechobee out of Clewiston. **Tom Mazzei** and **Steve Warner** were second at 17-9. **Don Brown** and **Fred Shuey** were third at 15-1. Love took big-bass honors with an 8-pounder.

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

Saturday-Sunday: Columbus Day Regatta, Biscayne National Park. Visit www.columbusdayregatta.net.
Tuesday: IGFA School of Sportfishing class on targeting largemouth and peacock bass with Capt. Alan Zaremba, 7-10 p.m., IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum, Dania Beach. Topics include sight fishing, best locations, best times during the year and finding fish. Cost \$100 for IGFA members, \$150 for non-members. To register call Veronica at 954-924-4309 or e-mail reservations@igfa.org.
Tuesday: South Florida Fishing Club meeting, Tony Roma's, 18050 Collins Ave., Sunny Isles Beach. Dinner and cocktails at 6:30 p.m., followed by a talk by Capt. Bouncer Smith at 7:30. For reservations, call Michael Cohen at 305-788-0047.
Oct. 18: Lauderdale Small Boat Club Marine Flea Market, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., HospiceCare of Southeast Florida, 309 SE 18th St., Fort Lauderdale. Free admission. Vendor spaces \$100. Proceeds benefit HospiceCare. Apply online at www.i-s-b-c.com or www.hospicecareflorida.org or call 954-HOSPICE.

Learn fly-fishing from Lefty up close and personal

Imagine talking golf with Jack Nicklaus or sailing with Dennis Conner. Those who fish with a fly rod can pick the brains of legendary angler Lefty Kreh at his upcoming South Florida fly-fishing seminar.

A LEADER IN HIS FIELD

Although he is 84, Kreh, whose Lefty's Deceiver is one of the most popular flies in fishing, is still on the cutting edge of fly-fishing and constantly coming up with new ways to cast better and catch more fish. "He's at the top of his game and as sharp as ever," said Fort Lauderdale editor and columnist Steve Kantner, who is putting on the seminar. "He is probably the most in-demand speaker and instructor in the history of the sport."

AN EXCEPTIONAL TEACHER

Kreh excels at getting anglers, whether they're new to the sport or veteran fly-rodgers, to cast better. He does it by conveying in simple but meaningful terms the motions that are needed to make a tight, accurate cast. Kantner, himself an expert fly-caster and angler, said a recent injury prompted Kreh to devise an effective new way of casting that will appeal to those with physical limitations.

MORE THAN JUST CASTING

Kantner has set up this seminar as a discussion group, with attendees sitting around Kreh and asking him questions on anything about fly-fishing, from destinations to selecting the proper flies and tackle.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE KANTNER

Lefty Kreh, here helping Emily Bennett with her casting, will conduct a fly-fishing seminar in South Florida next month.

"I want everybody to have all their inner questions answered and I want people to walk away from this thing feeling good about the sport of fly-fishing," Kantner said.

WHERE, WHEN AND WHAT

The seminar is 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Nov. 8 at the IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum in Dania Beach.

SECURING YOUR SPOT

The cost is \$350 per person and advance registration is required. For information or to reserve a seat, contact Steve Kantner at steve@landcaptain.com or 954-761-3570.