Photo – Susie DeMille puts the pressure on a large shark with her 5-weight fly rod while Time Seyda reaches far out with his landing net. Seconds later the large shark takes off on a final run and parts Susie's 20-pound tippet, which may have been a new Ladies IGFA record!

Photo – (Special) Jimmy Pickett is pictured with a nice dolphin he landed while fishing in the recently held “Amelia Island Blue Water Challenge” Jimmy is one tough angler while also knocking out his opponent in the 2nd round of the recently held Florida “Guns & Hoses” boxing matches for heavy weight honors!

Photo – (Special) Johnny Burbank also enjoyed a heavy weight match recently while landing these two heavy weight largemouth bass that weighed 10.5 and 9.6 pounds. Both bass were released!

Photo – Youth fishermen will be given out a free fishing rod and reel this Saturday during the Florida Wildlife Youth Fishing Clinic.

“Heavy Weight Fishing Matches”

By Terry Lacoss

“I watched with amazement as my brother Jimmy staggered his opponent in the 1st round of the annual Jacksonville “Guns & Hoses” boxing matches,” Steve Pickett said. “During the 2nd round Jimmy knocked his opponent out, claiming heavy weight honors!”

Jimmy Pickett is also an avid offshore angler while recently competing on his father's, Steve Pickett's blue water boat, “Burnin Daylight” in the “Annual Amelia Island Blue Water Challenge”. The local team finished in 3rd place.

Local outdoorsman Johnny Burbank recently bass fished in a small lake and knocked out several trophy size largemouth bass!

“It was some of the best bass fishing that I have ever experienced,” Johnny Burbank said. “We were fishing with wild shiners and caught and released some 35-bass with my largest weighing 10.5-pounds. I also caught and released a 9.6-pound largemouth bass as well. People think that the best bass fishing is during the winter and just before the spawn takes place, I believe the best bass fishing for trophy largemouth bass comes after the spawn”.

Ironically most freshwater fishermen switch from freshwater fishing to saltwater fishing after Florida bass have completed their spawning cycle. Today more and more freshwater fishermen are taking their freshwater fishing gear including spin and casting tackle to saltwater rivers and bays and casting for redfish, cobia and sea trout. With this in mind, many of Northeast Florida lakes and rivers are now experiencing little fishing pressure as bass fishermen switch their fishing tactics to saltwater.

Florida largemouth bass can be very finicky before they make their spawning beds, however one the female bass lays her eggs and returns to her normal feeding habits, post spawn largemouth are actually on a more active feeding pattern. One of my favorite times to catch trophy size largemouth bass is after the spawn during the month of May and June while working a large surface plug early in the morning on the deeper edges of spawning beds. Later in the day barbing large wild shiners and trolling slowly with the boat's electric motor along the edges of weed beds and drop offs often produces the Florida's very best trophy bass fishing.

During a recent fly fishing trip to the backwaters of Amelia Island, Susie DeMille and Tim Seyda were preparing for a fly fishing trip to the northern portion of Georgia. Both local anglers had fished with conventional spinning gear, but had little fly fishing experience.

However the best way to learn how to fly cast, is to locate a school of bluefish, or Spanish mackerel. With this in mind I soon had my Triton bay boat positioned at the mouth of the St. Mary's inlet where a large school of Spanish mackerel were feeding on glass minnows.

Both Tim and Susie were now false casting their five and six weight fly rods without thinking of all the tips I had taught them back on land. Which in this situation, fly casting almost comes automatic when you have to get that fly out their into a nearby school of feeding game fish.

After hooking up to a dozen of 1-3 pound Spanish mackerel on the fly, it was time to move back into the backwaters of Amelia Island and try for flood tide redfish on the fly.

After positioning my boat within casting distance of a flooding oyster bar, Susie immediately hooked into a large fish. Susie's fish soon took off on a powerful run, indicating that her hooked fish was a large redfish. However after 15-minutes of a back and forth battle, Susie brought a 15-20 pound bonnet head shark up to boat side. Here Tim Seyda stretched out desperately to land her fish, when Susie's shark took off on a last run parting her 20-pound tippet. We were hoping to weigh Susie's shark back at the Fernandina Harbor Marina with certified IGFA scales in hopes that it may qualify for a new Women's IGFA fly rod, line class record. Next time!

Local Amelia Island fishermen will certainly have several chances to fight with heavy weight game fish during this month when large schools of cobia weighing to 80-pounds, kingfish to 50-pounds and possibly 100-pound tarpon show up as well. Please don't rule out testing your fishing skills for heavy weight largemouth bass this month as well!

John Hartrich, past president of the NSFA is coordinating the up coming Florida Wildlife Youth Fishing Clinic which will be held at the George Crady fishing pier. The event will be held on Saturday, May 13th beginning at 9:00 am. Young fishermen will be taken through a series of learning centers where they will be taught a variety of fishing skills including casting, knot tying and more. Youth anglers will also receive a free fishing rod and reel which they will be able to fish from the pier and hopefully reel in a big catch! For more information please go to [www.nsfafish.net](http://www.nsfafish.net/) or call John Hartrich at (904) 206-0817.