

Our 40th Year

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2023 Kokanee Power Derby Season Kicks off at Bullards Bar

On April 1, the kickoff event to Kokanee Power's 2023 derby season featured small fish and big paychecks. With 68 boats and 175 registered anglers, New Bullards Bar Reservoir was descended upon by boats in every size, shape, and color. So, with all those boats out there, how was the fishing?

As a derby participant myself, I can tell you that you needed to be in the right location to have any decent success. Luckily for me, my teammate Jim Brittain and I scouted the lake the day before the derby in separate boats. He found dense pockets of fish piled up inside of tight coves. I, on the other hand, struggled to catch fish out in open water.

The day before the derby on Friday, March 31, I left home at five o'clock am along with Patti Parker to scout the lake. We opted to launch at the Emerald Cove site by the dam in hopes of avoiding a traffic jam of pre-fishing boats at the

WHAT'S HOT by Jack Naves

The top five teams in the 2023 Bullards Bar Kokanee Derby show off their prizes on April 1. These fun filled derbies are a great way to meet new anglers and catch up on the kokanee fishing scene in California.

Photo Courtesy of Jack Naves

Dark Day ramp. We encountered no traffic at the ramp, and the fish marks on my sonar unit nearly matched.

We hit spot after spot, hooking a few fish at each stop,

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Jerry Cabral Wins Collins Lake NTAC Event With 6.79 Lb. Rainbow

OREGON HOUSE - A total of 145 participants enjoyed spring weather competing for big fish honors in the 2023 NorCal Trout Angler's Challenge at Collins Lake on Saturday, April 8.

"We're back," said Vince Harris, president of Angler's Press Outdoors, the creator of the NorCal Trout Angler's Challenge series. "With the weather now changing for the best, It was a great day for families to be out on the water trout fishing!"

Jerry Cabral won first place in the competition with a 6.79 lb. rainbow trout that earned him a \$550 cash prize and a custom trophy. He caught his fish while trolling with his wife, Krystal, who landed two trout up to 2.39 pounds. The winning fish hit one of Cal Kellogg's Magnum Metal Head Trolling Flies from Fishhunt-shoot.com.

Ken Murakami placed second in the adult division with his 4.95 lb. rainbow, winning \$450. "I was topline trolling with a perch-colored Kastmaster when the fish hit," stated Murakami.

The third through tenth place winners in the event were (3) Austin Soucy, 4.76; (4) Zack Hyson, 4.61; (5) Steve Leal, 4.43; (6) Erin Baldanzi, 4.21; (7) Joey Hill, Sr., 3.75; (8) Ken Happs, 3.74; (9) Tony Jaechien, 3.68; and (10) Christina Smith, 3.58.

Mike Minnikov won first place in the youth division with a 4.46 lb. rainbow trout, while Trent Zizilevskias placed second with a 3.69 lb. rainbow.

The third through tenth place winners in the youth division were (3) James Zizilevskias, 2.62; (4) Joey Hill Jr., 2.36; (5) Dave Grass, 2.22; (6) Avery Edson, 2.16; (7) Eva Edson, 2.15, (8) Kinsley Brylinke, 1.93; (9) Wesley Happs, 1.91; and (10) Jordon Brooks, 1.55. Information: <https://www.anglerspress.com>.

The lake is being planted with trout weekly. The lake was stocked with a

GONE FISHING by Dan Bacher

Jerry Cabral of Chico won first place in the adult division of the NTAC Collins Lake event with this 6.79. lb. rainbow landed on April 8.

Photo by Dan Bacher

2,000 pound private plant including trophy rainbows and a 1,000 pound CDFW plant the week of April 3.

The week of April 10 featured a 1,000 pound private plant including

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STAFF TACKLE

What We're Using

Ernie Marlan used a 7' Kevin Van Dam Team Lew's Signature Series rod with a line rating of 10-17lb. He tossed a Strike King KVD Mega Dawg in bone color on the banks of the Feather River and had several blow ups on the topwater bait but only connected with one 7lb striped bass.

Paul Kneeland fished Folsom Lake with John Brassfield of Trucksmart stores in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught rainbow trout to 3 pounds using an Daiwa 8 foot DXS composite rod with a Daiwa Lexa 100 linecounter reel loaded with 8 lb test Yozuri Hybrid line.. They trolled gold Yakima Bait #2 Mag Lips and Speedy Shiner spoons in watermelon colors off the Canon Downriggers at 25 to 45 feet deep and 2.5 mph.

Dan Bacher fished for trout at Lake Amador. He used a Berkley Ugly Stik GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 6 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with garlic chartreuse Berkley PowerBait, 1/8 oz. gold and black Panther Martins and 2/5 oz. gold/red stripe Little Cleos.

WHAT'S HOT

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This colorful display of kokanee was caught by the author and his team at the Kokanee Power Bullards Bar derby on April 1. The bright-orange fillets made for great table fare once the anglers returned home with their catch. With the void of ocean salmon fishing this year in California, don't overlook their smaller freshwater cousins to fill your frying pans this season.

but seeing almost no fish on the sonar screen. With only four fish in the box and many lost fish, we cut out before noon and headed back home. Patti remarked, "This pre-fishing wasn't very helpful, was it?" to which I replied, "It was actually very helpful. Now I know where NOT to fish tomorrow. We eliminated a lot of water today."

After speaking with Jim, we had a solid game plan for the next morning that avoided the dead zones that Patti and I had fished in. It was going to be an early start, so I headed home, packed my gear, and hit the sack.

At three-fifteen the next morning, I rolled out of bed and donned layer after layer of cold-weather gear

preparing for derby day. The weather had been unusually cold, and the forecast had originally called for a chance of snow showers. "Snow at a kokanee derby?", I thought to myself. As I neared the lake, I passed small but substantial snow banks lining the edges of the road. It was a bizarre sight to see, as I reckoned back to sweating through 105-degree heat at previous derbies held at New Melones, Pardee, and Whiskeytown.

It was still pitch dark when I finally pulled into the launching facility. Headlights flashed in every direction, as trucks with trailers rallied for position in the launch ramp line. Luckily for me, we were fishing out of team captain Jim's boat for this



During the Kokanee Power derby on April 1, the author deployed side-planers to bag Bullards Bar kokanee up to 12.5-inches in length. Top: This Church Tackle TX-6 side planer was modified by epoxying a strip of Styrofoam at the top to keep it from sinking. At the bottom is one of many keel sinkers of various sizes the author clipped 24-inches above his dodger. He tried different weights until he found the kokanee zone!

event. He was already on the water, so I made my way down with tackle bags and rods slung in every direction.

Fishing with us to round off our team was Jim's son-in-law Kyle Cobb. Kyle and I jumped on board Jim's jet boat and slowly crawled away from the pandemonium at the ramp. Under the guidance of my head lamp, I prepared the rods and corn while Jim gradually motored across the lake to our first stop.

Our game plan was to start in Jim's best area for about an hour, and if it didn't pan out, we would move to spot number two and so on. Luckily for us, the fish finder lit up with huge schools of kokanee right off the bat, and we never had to move all day. With six rods for the team, I decided to run two side-planer rods while Jim and Kyle deployed two downrigger rods each. If nothing else, we had the entire water column covered!

At the official derby start time of six-thirty am, Jim had us moving along at trolling speed while each of us sent our respective lines out. Jim and Kyle were the first to get in on the kokanee action using their downriggers, but soon afterwards my side-planer rods got hot. We were a well-oiled machine, with the action really taking off just after eight o'clock am.

Although the tiny kokanee were only averaging between ten and twelve inches long, we had a blast trying to keep our lines in the water between flurries of action. With a weigh-in of five fish per team, we were hoping to get five over eleven-inches, with hopefully several over twelve inches. The action had died off for a while when my starboard side-planer surged backwards on the water's surface.

"I think that was a fish" I remarked, and just then the planer-board dipped again like a giant bobber. I slowly worked the planer back to the boat,

where Kyle quickly unclipped it. "The fish is still on!", I relayed, while cranking the kokanee towards the boat. Kyle netted the fish, and Jim remarked, "That's a better fish right there!"

I have no idea how he could tell with the fish thrashing around in the net, but he was right. The kokanee measured out at twelve-and-a-half inches, and turned out to be our biggest fish of the day. Jim kept the boat in the same area for the rest of the day, and we pulled lines around 1:00 pm to race back to the weigh-in.

The Directors and volunteers did a great job of weighing in fish for the huge field of anglers who were on hand. The teams enjoyed a tasty barbecue lunch provided by Kokanee Power while mingling in the upper parking lot. Fish stories could be heard aplenty until the Directors started the raffle over the PA system.

Once the results were ready, the raffle was paused to hand out prizes. The first-place team of Tim Hill and John Casaulong took home \$1,000 for their efforts. The other top teams recouped winnings as well. Here is a rundown of the top finishing teams in each category:

Team Winners

- 1.) Tim Hill & John Casaulong
- 2.) Kevin Smith & Karla Smith
- 3.) Shawn Conlan & Mike Walker
- 4.) Tom Hamada & Mike Steer
- 5.) Jay Winchester & Harold Garabaldi
- 6.) Jim Brittain, Kyle Cobb, & Jack Naves
- 7.) Nathan Lenard, Cynthia Lenard, & Nathaniel Lenard III
- 8.) Roston Thunen
- 9.) John Flores, Andy Won, & Mike Edwards
- 10.) Jack Schultz & Alan Traynor

Big Kokanee Side Pot

- 1.) Jay Winchester & Harold Garabaldi
- 2.) Shawn Conlan & Mike Walker
- 3.) Adam Carpineta & Jaime Wheeler

Juniors

- 1.) Dylan Przeszlowski
- 2.) Lorelei Cantrell
- 3.) Kaitlyn Contreras
- 4.) Alex Thomas
- 5.) Reagan Beach

Big Trout Side Pot

- 1.) Dale Gibbons & Jason Tidwell
- 2.) Emanuel Villa, Scott Hill, Emanuel Ramirez, & Valatin Lopez
- 3.) Chris Dunham, Mary Dunham, & Robert DeGroot

If you are new to kokanee fishing, or just want to meet new anglers and get ideas, these low-key derby events are a must-do. They typically feature a hot lunch, raffles, and lots of sharing between the participants. Their next derby is at Shasta Lake May 6-7. Sign-ups and other information can be found on their website at kokaneepower.org

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