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Year

"The Magazine for West Coast Sportsmen!"

Sockeyes and Chromers at the Shaver Lake Kokanee Power Derby

This year's Kokanee Power derby season wrapped up at Shaver Lake on September 9. It featured three distinct classes of fish. Huge red sockeyes in the seventeen to twenty-inch class; a smaller class of red spawners; and a separate class of chromers that were typically smaller in size. It marked this author's first every entry into the event, the final bookend to the 2023 Kokanee Power derby season.

Never having visited the lake myself, I enjoyed the long, but interesting journey from the Sacramento area to the distant alpine lake. First, we made our way south, and then we cut east from the Fresno area up to the 5,500 ft elevation lake. It was the Thursday before the derby, and my fishing partner Jim Brittain and I got there early enough to do some pre-fishing.

Not wasting any time, we launched and had lines in the water by 10:30 am. The scenic pine trees and fresh air were a stark contrast to the hot stuffy conditions that we had left behind in the Sacramento Valley. We started marking fish right away and staggered our four downriggers to cover different depths. We immediately began to catch kokanee

WHAT'S
HOT
by
Jack Naves



Jim Brittain (left) and Jack Naves (right) troll in Jack's North River boat in front of the dam at the Kokanee Power Shaver Lake derby on September 9. In this shot, dark gloomy storm clouds in the background are cut by a rainbow that suddenly appeared above the boat, announcing good weather for the remainder of the derby. The team's pot of gold ended up being a massive 20-inch kokanee that Jim landed only moments after the photo was taken.

Photo courtesy of Kyle Draper

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Angler Catches and Releases 31 lb. Lahontan Cutthroat Trout at Pyramid Lake

Sutcliffe, NV - On October 5, Klay Gustin caught the fish of a lifetime at Pyramid Lake. Known for its stunning desert scenery, the lake is located on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Reservation in Nevada 39 miles northwest of Reno.

The Lahontan cutthroat weighed 31 pounds, 4 ounces on Gustin's scale. It is the biggest fish reported at the lake this year and possibly the largest of its kind caught in nearly 100 years. After taking photos and video of the fish, he released it back into the lake.

"I caught what could possibly be the Nevada State Record for Lahontan cutthroat at 31 pounds, 4 ounces," he stated on Facebook. "In all the excitement, we didn't get the scale reading in our video. What a trip!"

Gustin is the President of Gustin Hydraulics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The world record cutthroat trout, caught by John Skimmerhorn at Pyramid in 1925, weighed 41 pounds.

In 2021, Quinn Pauley landed a 39-inch Lahontan that he estimated to be close to 30 pounds at Pyramid.

The proliferation of big fish now found in the lake is due to the introduction of the Pilot Peak strain of Lahontan cutthroat trout into the lake. These fish descended from the original stain of Pyramid Lake trout



GONE
FISHING
by
Dan Bacher



Klay Gustin caught and released this huge Lahontan cutthroat trout weighing 31 pounds, 4 ounces while fishing at Pyramid Lake on Ox. 5.

Photo courtesy of Klay Gustin

that were planted in a small creek in Utah before the fish became extinct in Pyramid Lake by the 1940s.

They were introduced into the lake by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after being successfully raised at the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery in Gardnerville. These fish have drawn anglers from all over the world to target them.

I successfully battled a 14 lb. cutthroat while jigging a

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What We're Using

Ernie Marlan fished for striped bass on the California Delta. He caught and released four stripers to 12 pounds. All the fish were caught while using a Strike King KVD Mega Dawn in bone color. The rod of choice was a Lew's Elite TLE610MH 10-20lb rod team up with an Elite Ti reel spooled up with 50lb braid.

Paul Kneeland fished Pyramid Lake with Gary Caruso of Auburn in the Fish Sniffer 21' Rogue Jet Coastal. They caught Lahontan cutthroat trout to 22 pounds, using an Okuma 8'6" SST steelhead Rod with an Okuma Cold Water SS line counter reel loaded with 10 lb test Soft Steel line. They trolled Bottom Line Tackle B-21 spoons and Lyman plugs in tui chub and red dot frog colors, trolling with Canon Downriggers at 50 to 75 feet deep and 2.5 mph.

Dan Bacher fished for rainbow trout at Collins Lake. He used a Berkley Ugly Stick GX2 6' 6" medium action spinning rod, teamed up with a Shakespeare GX235 spinning reel filled with 8 lb. test P-Line CX Premium Fluorocarbon Coated Line. He fished with Berkley Tequila Sunrise Power Bait on a #14 Eagle Claw gold treble hook on a sliding sinker rig.

WHAT'S HOT

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SOCKEYE ALERT! Jim Brittain of Orangevale shows off a massive 20-inch 2.66-pound kokanee salmon landed at Shaver Lake on September 9. The fish hit a Hot Spot Apex lure trolled at 80 feet deep going 1.3 miles-per-hour. It was big enough to win his team the 'Big Kokanee' award in the Kokanee Power derby.

Photo courtesy of Kyle Draper



Gary Coe (left) and Mark Hall (right) show off three massive spawner kokanee in front of a magnificent pine backdrop at Shaver Lake on September 9. These fish garnered the team a first-place finish in the Kokanee Power derby by a wide margin. A bigger class of fish like these were available below 70 feet deep using downriggers.

Photo courtesy of Kyle Draper

in the thirteen to fifteen-inch class between thirty and seventy feet deep. In hopes of catching bigger fish, we explored deeper depths, only to catch fish of similar size. We knew that we needed to find a bigger class of fish, but so far hadn't figured out how. We were keeping our offerings close to the bottom when my downrigger ball started to bounce at 85-feet. I raised it five feet, but my rod was still dancing. "It's a fish!" I grunted as I pulled the rod out of its holder.

Much to my surprise, a red-colored mass emerged from the depths. Once netted, it proved to be our biggest kokanee of the day at eighteen inches in length. Soon afterwards, we trailered the boat and headed into the Affordable Tackle cabin.

The top-end dwelling was more like a premium vacation house than a cabin, and Jim and I felt fortunate to be their guests. We were able to relax, eat, charge the trolling batteries, and get ready for the next day of fishing.

While our first day of pre-fishing was fairly productive, our second day on Friday featured slow action. We covered the far-reaching areas of the lake looking for a secret stash of kokanee. Although we never found any new areas worth returning to, we had at least eliminated areas to cover during the derby on Saturday, which started out wet.

SHHHHHH...the tires of my pickup announced the presence of rain. My wipers worked overtime to give me a clear view of the road on the morning of the derby. It was still dark as we worked uphill along the winding pathway to the launching facility. After getting the boat wet, mother nature gave us a light show off in the distance. As we crept onto the lake in pre-dawn darkness, we were prepared to break for the ramp if lightning made its presence on the lake.

The storm passed, but the action started out slow as I guided the boat across the northern arm of the lake. We finally boated a red fifteen-incher as we made a big loop near the dam area. We were able to put a few smaller fish into the boat, but it was nothing to be excited about. As I was



Kokanee Power President Larry Abernathy of Valley Springs gazes across the water during the Shaver Lake derby on September 9. Loaded downrigger rods like this were a common site on that day, as 103 registered anglers descended upon the lake in search of the biggest kokanee they could find.

Photo courtesy of Kyle Draper

making a pass near the buoy line at the dam, Jim's rod started bouncing. "I'm on" he said, as I grabbed the net and continued to troll northbound using autopilot.

The fish slowly made its way up from the depths, but never went on any wild runs. As it came into view, I got a firm grip on the rear of the net handle and waited in anticipation. "Loot at this!" he relayed, as a gigantic sock-eye-looking salmon ascended to the surface. Without hesitation, I scooped the fish into the net and flung it into the boat as fast as I could.

We were jumping for joy as one of the largest kokanee we had ever seen was now flopping around the floor of my North River boat, pretty much guaranteeing us a good finish in the derby. It measured at twenty inches

on my ruler, tying the largest kokanee that has ever come over the rails of that boat.

I must have worked that spot over twenty times or more, but alas no other monsters were in the mood for our offerings. The bite slowed down and we only managed to land a few more fish before it was time to head to the weigh-in.

We had high hopes that our one big fish would push us over the top into first place, but those optimisms were quickly squashed when the Gary Coe/Mark Hall team weighed in. Their three-fish bag tapped out at a whopping 6.40 pounds on the scale! We had seen them catch their big

kokanee right next to us, so we knew that they had a good chance to take the crown, and they did! Although they won the main event, we ended up winning the 'Big Kokanee' side pot which was a first for my boat.

Although we didn't take the crown this time, it was a wonderful three days of kokanee fishing on the majestic high-alpine lake. In addition to the fishing, the accommodations and hospitality provided by the Affordable Tackle group made for a comfortable and relaxing stay. Be sure to check for updates on the Kokanee Power website or Facebook page for next year's tournament schedule and get in on the action!

Adult Leaderboard
3 Kokanee total (pounds)
1. Gary Coe, Mark Hall 6.40
2. Steve Cowles, Jamie Schulz 5.33
3. James Franco, Elvia Lopez, Jim Franco, Denise Franco 5.00
4. Jack Naves, Jim Brittain 4.68
5. Dean Uhrig, Rod Brown, Rick Childs, Ron Taylor 4.17
6. Kirk Emge, Jerilyn Emge, Jared Romero, Tom Oliveira 4.08
7. Matt Gil, Mike Gil, Petit Gil, Bethany Gil 3.98
8. Richard Contreras, Brian Thomas, Chris Miller 3.97
9. Kevin Smith, Karla Smith 3.83
10. David Mayo, Julie Mayo 3.38

Big Kokanee Side Pot
1 Kokanee (pounds)
1. Jack Naves, Jim Brittain 2.66
2. Gary Coe, Mark Hall 2.49
Big Trout Side Pot – 1 Trout (pounds)
1. Chris Dunham, Mary Dunham, Robert DeGroot 0.91
2. Kevin Smith, Karla Smith 0.87
Junior Leaderboard
1 Kokanee (pounds)
1. Bearrett Gil 1.07
2. Alex Thomas 1.03
3. Kaitlyn Contreras 1.02
4. Jack Sacfuri 0.89
5. Lorelei Cantrell 0.51

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