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13-Year-Old Earl Questel Wins Big, Literally, at St. Thomas Kid's Fishing Tournament

Young angler Earl Questel triumphs with an impressive 8.1-pound tarpon, taking first place at the annual event in Red Hook, where over 165 junior participants embraced conservation through catch-and-release practices

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Thirteen-year-old Earl Questel with his whopper winning Tarpon. By. RIAN BAREUTHER/VIGFC

Saturday's Kid's Fishing Tournament, hosted by the Virgin Islands Game Fishing Club, ended in triumph for 13-year old Earl Questel, who hoisted a mammoth 8.1 pound tarpon out of the water to capture first place.

“It was there swimming in a school by the dock,” said young Mr. Questel. “It came to my bait, and I caught it.”

The tournament winner was one of 165 junior anglers aged 14 and below who participated in this year’s iteration of the annual event, held at the IGY American Yacht Harbor Marina in Red Hook, St. Thomas. The VI Game Fishing Club supplied all registrants to the free event with bait, hand lines and buckets, before sending them off to find a spot along the docks.

One of the first to catch a fish was 7-year old Kain LaPlace, who received an honorable mention for a 485-gram Cubera Snapper. “I like being outside,” he noted. Kai James, age 6, approached the day with a particular target in mind. “I want to catch an eel,” he expressed. That honor, however, was reserved for K’nyaii Rochester, who earned a prize for pulling in the most unique fish, a 1425-gram Green Moray eel.

Other prize-winners on the day included 10-year old Christian Bryan, who took second place for Biggest Fish, and won Most Fish by Total Weight (2180 grams). Mr. Bryan and 10-year old Lynnea Steurwald both had the Most Fish By Count (19), and thus both earned prizes for their achievement.

Despite the prodigious hauls by Mr. Bryan and Ms. Steurwald, they and the other participants went home clutching only the prizes they had won. The tournament promotes the principles of conservation by implementing a catch and release system. Fish are kept in buckets of seawater until weighed, and then released back into the ocean after they have been recorded.

Apart from imprinting the principles of sustainability among young anglers, the Game Fishing Club hopes that in hosting the annual tournament, they are “passing these skills and a love of fishing to the next generation,” according to Kelvin Bailey Jr, president of the VIGFC Board of Directors. Prizes included fishing rods, Mr. Bailey noted, “so kids and families can continue fishing year-round. It’s what we as a club are all about.”

The tournament, as is customary, was supported by several entities in the business community.