



Panoramic shot of 7500 dollars worth of prizes.

Commodore CYC, Anthony Morando, John H. Vargo, Pat Harbolic in rear, children under 13 in foreground



Mike Banahan, lifetime striper fisherman, primarily at the Tappan Zee Bridge



Pat Harbolic, Chris Pritchard, son Cole, Mother Tracy, with some of the prizes won by Cole.

Haverstraw Bay Classic at the Cortlandt Yacht Club

It began four years ago as a way of keeping a tradition alive by focusing on children!

Pat Harbolic and Tom Colandra, brought up in the wonderful fishing community of Verplanck felt that the recreational fishing industry needed a boost. So with no money and only a dream the two began talking up a really tiny striped bass fishing derby for just a few friends. It wasn't until Pat and Tom began selling the idea to supporters that they realized they had hit a "hot button," Families and individuals alike were turning away from the Hudson River in droves, something needed to be done.

As the pair sold the idea to participants and supporters they knew they had a real hot ticket, that of focusing on children. In the past three years this concept has grown to the point that every child entered in the Haverstraw Bay Classic receives a gift as well as a standing in the three day Tournament. Up and down the Hudson River the traditional striped bass fishing contests were dismantled as the slot limits made it difficult to have individual fisherman follow the rules and still weigh in a fish for a prize.

Pat and Tom saw it differently. Haverstraw Bay is fished exclusively with a sliding sinker rig. (Although on the south side of Croton Point where the water is only four feet deep lures of all types are used for catching stripers). Further, in the past three years bunker, the main food fish of the oceans, began showing up by the thousands in Haverstraw Bay. Since this is also the main diet of striped bass it is relatively easy to catch large stripers, as long as the bait is fresh.



Mike Adams and son, Jake

Cole Pritchard, left, Jay Bourekas, John Vargo, kneeling, Rob Dollbaum holding striper, Jeremy Hobolic, Matt Reilly



That is the last part of the equation in this successful big fish contest. It just so happens that these men are the sons & grandsons of commercial fisherman who fished in Verplanck during their lifetimes. With the knowledge and skills handed down by their fathers, and a bait license from the NYS DEC, you can place a 75-foot bait net in Haverstraw Bay. The minor problem is that there is a "lift period" that requires even bait nets to be taken off on Friday morning and then allowed to be put back on Saturday evening at 6 PM.

The lift period was created during the early forties when the river was lined from shore to shore with

stake nets as well as drift nets in the main shipping channel. That effectively blocked any fish from migrating upstream to spawn. So a lift period was established to allow some fish to pass. The lift period has no beneficial use to anyone any more as there are no commercial nets for shad or striped bass in the Hudson River. The few licensed bait nets are a spit in the wind in regard to blocking shad or bunker from spawning in the Hudson River.

So that is why so many children and adults are so effective in catching stripers in the Haverstraw Bay Classic. This event will continue to grow year after year.

There were many volunteers that should also be recognized especially Lisa and Jessica Goetius, and Mike Bubolo, who assisted in the photography of the event, Mike Feminilla and other members of the Cortlandt Yacht Club.

For the first time, The Cortlandt Yacht Club invited Pat and Toms contest to use the Cortlandt Yacht Club house and grounds as well as their docks for the event.

It turned out better than anyone could have ever imagined. The result is in the collection of photos from this year's event.



James (Butchey) Gilmore, cooking fresh striped bass.



Tom Colandra on left John H. Vargo in center with surprise gift, and Pat Harbolic on right, Sunday evening, April 29, 2017