

First cobia is in



LOG PHOTO BY Jim Wagner

ON THE BOARD: Angler Victor Wright was one excited fisherman Thursday evening after weighing in the first cobia brought to the docks, kicking off the annual HarborWalk Destin Cobia Tournament. Wright's from Gulf Breeze and was fishing on his own 23-foot boat when he caught the cobia.

Catch tips scales at 65 pounds

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Catching a cobia, for a serious fisherman like Victor Wright, is a pretty big deal. It's right up there at the top.

And it's especially sweet when the cobia you catch is the first of the year along the Gulf Coast and officially kicks off the cobia tournament season.

At about 6:02 Thursday evening, with a pinkish purple sunset in the western sky,

Wright and fishing buddy David Shearman guided Wright's 23-foot Sea Fox up to the docks at HarborWalk Marina, zipped open a big white bag and lifted out a hefty cobia.

A few minutes later, dock attendant Ben Pavletic lifted the cobia onto a hook on the scales, and Gabie Hallmark, the weighmaster and manager of the HarborWalk Marina store, officially recorded the nice-sized cobia. The leaderboard shows it weighed 65 pounds.

The cobia is a wily, and deli-

cious fish, one that many anglers hunt for all day and never land. Earlier this week, some anglers out of Destin said they had spotted two of them. That was a good sign that the first catch might be imminent.

Wright and Shearman, who live in Gulf Breeze, began their day in the Gulf at about 7:30 a.m. For hours and hours, they didn't see a single cobia. Then at about 3:30, they spotted one.

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First, Shearman threw his hooked eel at it. And the cobia chased the bait right up to the boat. Then Wright took a shot. Bam. It hit. They were about a quarter-mile away from the Pensacola pier, just outside of the second sandbar.

"It fought like crazy," Wright said.

About 40 minutes later, they had floated to just

off the pier, where a lot of people were watching the two men fight the fish, and finally landed it after it had made one long run, Wright said.

At HarborWalk Marina, Wright and Shearman posed for photos with the cobia and talked about their successful day.

"It's my life," Wright said about how seriously he takes fishing. "And cobia fishing's a big part of it. This time of year ... very important. My favorite type of fishing, for sure."

When he's not fishing, he works at Gulf Breeze Bait and Tackle and runs charters off of his boat, the Bamboo Vic.

Wright said he and Shearman and two other men who also are die-hard fisherman team up as often as they can get off work to go fishing.

Asked what he planned to do with his cobia, Wright quickly replied, "Eat it."

At about 6:30 Thursday evening, family members from Gulf Breeze arrived at the marina to trailer his