

Big Halibut Coming to Port Valdez, but not all with Derby Tickets

VALDEZ – A Tucson man broke into the overall standings and took home the weekly 1st place prize in the Valdez Halibut Derby. While George Thul's 216.1 pound flatfish is a nice size, it's a 77 inch halibut caught by someone else that really should be making headlines. On July 2nd, weigh-in clerk Ron Woods said he weighed in a 217.5 pound halibut for eight year-old Jared Lees of Fairbanks. Jared was fishing with his family in a 24-foot boat, when line started screaming off his reel. Jared Lees weighs 51 pounds, so his Dad Jerry stepped in to help. They knew it was a monster fish and asked Woods to weigh it even though they didn't have a derby ticket. The fish was 77 ½" long. If the Lees had a derby ticket the fish would have landed them the 1st place weekly prize and launched them into second place in the overall standings. "We come to Valdez often and the fishing is always great", Jerry Lees said. "Sometimes we purchase derby tickets". Mother Becky Lees added, "I wish we had bought a derby ticket this time".

Weigh-in clerk, Bonnie Woods, said she and her husband Ron personally witnessed a total of four fish that measured more than 77 inches long this week. One of the halibut was a whopping 82 inches long. So, Steven Fitch of Fairbanks still leads the derby with a 220.5 pounder. The weekly 2nd place winner is Eric Umphenour of North Pole with a 153.7 pound halibut he caught aboard *No Excuses*.

Halibut are not the only big fish coming into Valdez. The lingcod season opened July 1st and lots of anglers hung their sizeable catch up for others to admire. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game suggests anglers try large jigs for catching lingcod and fish off points and underwater rocky outcrops. Anglers have also been delighted this week by wildlife far larger than halibut. Breaching whales have been sighted in the Sound and thrilled anglers as they put on displays close to halibut fishing grounds.

The pink salmon are in and anglers have been catching them off boats, at Allison Point and the Valdez docks. Eagle's Rest RV Park is hosting a 4-day Pink Salmon Tournament July 6th, 7th, 8th & 9th. The tournament requires pre-registration by July 5th and boasts cash prizes for anglers catching the highest combined weight over a 4-day period. There will be an adult division, women's division and children's division for kids twelve and under. Participating anglers will weigh in two fish each day of the tournament and the person with the top eight heaviest pink salmon. For more information on the *Eagle's Rest RV Park Pink Salmon Fishing Challenge*, call 835-2373.

Derby tickets for both the salmon and halibut derbies are \$10 each and are good for one day of fishing in the derby. A season ticket for either species is \$50. Participants of the derby will also get their names put into a drawing for a truck from Seekins Ford. For more information on the Valdez Halibut Derby or upcoming silver salmon and women's derby, go to www.valdezfishderbies.com.

HALIBUT DERBY – OVERALL LEADERS - WEEK#6

| | Name /address | | Weight | Date | Charter |
|-----|---------------|----------------|--------|------|---------------|
| 1st | Steven Fitch | Fairbanks, AK | 220.5 | 6/19 | Lady Luck |
| 2nd | George Thul | Tucson, AZ | 216.1 | 6/29 | North Country |
| 3rd | Rich Piech | North Pole, AK | 195 | 5/30 | No Excuses |

HALIBUT DERBY- WEEKLY WINNERS – WEEK #6

| | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|----------------|-------|------|---------------|
| 1st | George Thul | Tucson, AZ | 216.1 | 6/29 | North Country |
| 2nd | Eric Umphenour | North Pole, AK | 153.7 | 6/29 | No Excuses |

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