

Gallacher celebrates first win at St Serfs Open

Rab Gallacher collected a record £1,250 when the well-known competition angler, who was a member of the Scottish international team which won gold in the world championships on the Baltic in Denmark in November 1998, tempted a 6lb 8oz cod with his last cast in the St Serfs Open.

And the fish came after Gallacher (pictured) and a friend called Kenny had moved from their first mark at Crail Golf Club to another at Roombe Bay, also near Crail, as darkness fell.

The pair only got to the second mark as an angler had quit the six-hour event because of a migraine and Gallacher believes his big cod swam under Kenny's bait and nailed his, a cocktail of cart (innards of a crab), plus a whole mackerel fillet and mussels.

The 52-year-old Fifer beat over 130 competitors to take the top prize on a wild, bitterly cold day with heavy seas on the Fife Coastline between St Monans and St Andrews.

Only 20 weighed-in including the best junior, Blake Ferguson, a 12-year-old boy from Stirling, who bagged a 2lb 2oz cod.

Gallacher had an 8oz weight on to hold his bait steady in the surf and he described the conditions as some of the toughest in the 24-year history of the event.

Anglers from as far south as Whitby and Scarborough, Cumbria and Northumberland, as well as all over Scotland, contested Sunday's match along with two former winners, Chris France and Paul Buddles, and several club champions from Kirkcaldy-based St Serfs who organise the Xmas Open.

Some failed to get to their preferred marks because of the rough conditions which prevailed during the match which is traditionally fished over low water.

Many lost a great deal of tackle in the heavy kelp which was churned up. Casting to precise locations was required.

Edinburgh angler David Cooper won the heaviest bag prize with 8lb 2oz from two fish and he tempted a 6lb cod within ten minutes of the start of the match. The £200 prize continues his good recent run as he has enjoyed recent successes in the inaugural Edinburgh Winter Shore Angling League.

Spare a thought for an older gentleman who hooked into a fish estimated to be around 10lbs in the last hour of the match.

Other anglers saw the fish squirm off the hook as he reeled it up the harbour wall at Anstruther. The man immediately packed up and went home.

Other placings were: 2, S Ballantyne, 7lb 2oz (Ardrossan); 3, R Gallacher, 6lb 8oz (Glenrothes); 4, T Slow 6lb 6oz (Edinburgh); 5, M Horn 6lb.6oz (Kirkcaldy); 6, K Bathgate 5lb 11oz (Edinburgh); 7, B Duffy (Alva) 5lb 9oz; 8, C Cooper 5lb 6oz (Musselburgh), 9, K Lewis 5lb (Dundee), 10, M Thomson 4lb 12oz (North Berwick).

The heaviest cod placings were: 1, R Gallacher 6lb 8oz; 2, D Cooper 6lb; 3, S Ballantyne 5lb 4oz; 4, T Slow 4lb 4oz. They

all won Sonik rods. George Harris, secretary of the St Serfs Club, said the conditions were "quite brutal" at times and he praised the men who took part.