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## Guy Harvey Resort features aquarium



Terry Tomalin, Times Outdoors/Fitness Editor

Thursday, July 17, 2014 4:04pm

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ST. PETE BEACH — Keith Overton didn't know what to do about his skinny snook. The avid angler had caught the linesiders in Tampa Bay and transferred them to his new 33,500-gallon fish tank, but now he watched helplessly as the apex predators slowly wasted away.



SCOTT KEELER | TIMES  
 Keith Overton, an avid angler and the GM of the new Guy Harvey Outpost, caught most of the fish in the 33,500-gallon aquarium, background, at the resort's RumFish Grill. The aquarium was featured on Tanked.

"There was plenty of food in the tank," said the man behind Guy Harvey's RumFish Grill & Bar on St. Pete Beach. "But for some reason the snook just weren't eating."

So Overton, a dedicated snookologist, sat back in the restaurant and watched the custom aquarium that was recently featured on Animal Planet's popular television show *Tanked*.

"I watched the fish at feeding time and noticed that the grouper were far more aggressive than the snook," he said. "Those two species don't usually share the same habitat. But here we had them in the same tank. The snook just couldn't get to the food before the grouper got it."

Grouper are denizens of the deep. They inhabit artificial reefs, wrecks and naturally occurring limestone outcroppings and ledges. Hungry grouper will hit anything that comes their way — dead or alive.

But snook, in comparison, are ambush predators. They are an inshore species, commonly found in estuaries, rivers and creeks, though some will occasionally swim out to near shore reefs. Snook are particularly picky eaters, and to get them to feed, the tide has to be just right.

The two species are as different as night and day, so Overton reasoned they should probably be handled differently. "So we fed the grouper first, and while they were busy hitting bait at the surface of the tank, we dropped food down through a PVC pipe to snook that were hanging out on the bottom," he said. "It worked, and the snook started doing much better."

It may seem like a lot to go through, but Overton has a personal attachment to every fish in the aquarium that is the main attraction at the new Guy Harvey Outpost. After all, he and his friends and family caught most of them.

"We caught 117 fish in four days," Overton said. "But the hard part wasn't catching them. It was keeping them alive long enough to get them back to the tank."

The aquarium, which features many of the species found in Tampa Bay waters, was built by Wayde King and Brett Raymer of *Tanked*. The episode featuring the Guy Harvey Resort aired in June. For the past two weeks, guests of the hotel have been able to get inside the tank and snorkel with fish that many locals take for granted.

"We have got everything ... snook, redfish, trout, tarpon, grouper, snapper, sharks and even eels," Overton said. "We looked at this as an opportunity to really showcase our local fishing scene, which is really among the best in the world."

Harvey, a native of Jamaica who now lives in the Cayman Islands, is best known for his realistic depictions of billfish. His fishing T-shirts are worn by everyone from toddlers to retirees. When the artist dreamed up the idea of an "outpost" bearing his name, he thought they would all be in exotic locations such as Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela. But he decided on a new approach after he heard about the fishing in Tampa Bay.

Last year, after fishing with Overton for a day, Harvey was asked what he thought of the local fishing. "Phenomenal," he said. "There is no other word for it."

Overton was raised in Orlando and grew up fishing Central Florida's largemouth bass lakes and the Indian River Lagoon, a 155-mile-long estuary that covers about one third of Florida's East Coast. After high school, he went off to play football in West Virginia but eventually made his way back to Florida so he could fish.

"I fell in love with this coast," Overton said. "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I've been hoping we could do something like this for a long time so people who don't have the chance to get out and fish like I do can see just how special this place is."

The snorkel tours are offered mornings to hotel guests for a \$25 fee. Participants cannot "dive" down inside the tank; they must remain at the surface. The resort allows only eight guests a day to snorkel to limit the impact on the fish. The tank is temporarily closed to snorkelers. Tours will resume Tuesday.

>>if you go

### Guy Harvey Outpost

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