



Field Set for 6th Annual “Ding” Darling Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tourney

Les Boyle, Team Boomer Sooners

The popularity of this tournament is evident by how early the first 50 teams were signed up.....which was months ago. This year, the field has been expanded to 56 teams in honor of it being the 6th year of the tournament. That’s the tournament officials’ story and they are sticking to it. Of course this means that the purse is also larger. There will be \$28,000 awarded to the top five teams. But wait....there’s more: only two teams caught fish last year so another \$8,000 is being added to this year’s prize money. The total pot this year is a whopping **\$36,000+**.

Each year weather is the big unknown. For two of the five tournaments, weather has been so tough that it was almost impossible to fish out in the Gulf with the winds being so high. But when the weather gets rough, the rough get going. It calls for a lot of strategy and thinking: “if I were a Tarpon today where would I be.” Last year’s winner Chasin’ Poon did just that and released their only fish early for the win. Team Teaser fought the high seas out front for a while and also released one fish but later than the winners. Fifty boats and only two releases, pretty amazing given the amount of Tarpon fishing talent in those 50 boats. But that’s what makes weather such a key ingredient and sometimes the “equalizer” to this tournament.

There have been reports of Tarpon being jumped for over a month but no big pods of bait or Tarpon reported so far. The “scouts” have arrived but the big migration has not. However, with the apparent warming trend it could get pretty lively real quick. These early fish have been jumped in the usual places-around the causeway, off Sanibel beaches and off Fort Meyers Beach. With less than a month to go, it’s anybody’s guess what the weather will be like. With the tournament starting later this year, Friday, May 19th, there’s a good chance we’ll have plenty of Tarpon around on tournament day.

A lot of the old familiar teams have signed up this year but there are quite a few new ones too. I didn’t see the Brits on this year’s list so I guess we scared them off. At least we won’t have to worry about them running their boat on the wrong side of the channel.

If you haven’t already done it, now’s the time to get your equipment shaped up and to get out on the water and start looking. It’s also a good time to look over the rules to make sure everyone on your team understands them. Remember this is a catch and release tournament so let’s all take good care of the fish.

Best of luck to all teams, see you on Thursday, May 18th at the Captain’s meeting.

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