



9th Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament

Location: Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille, Ft. Myers Beach

Purse: 100% of the entry fees from 2020 & 2021 will go to the tournament winners (5 place settings)

All sponsorships and gifts go to support the charity (“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society) to support conservation efforts at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Thursday, May 13, 2021

Captains Only Check-In 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Due to covid-19, the tournament organizers will be working to keep social distance guidelines and mask wearing protocol in place during the check in and captain’s meeting. There will not be the traditional silent auction or chance drawing as another step to keep participants safe. This event is **ONLY** open to captains or their designee. **All signatures must be received by Tarpon Tournament Headquarters no later than May 12.**

Thursday, May 13, 2021

Mandatory Captain’s Meeting 7:30 p.m.

(The captain of each team or his/her designee from the team **MUST** attend this meeting. If no one is in attendance the team will be pulled from the tournament)

Friday, May 14, 2021

Tournament 6:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Friday, May 14, 2021

Silver King Awards Night 5:00 p.m.

Due to covid-19, the Awards Night will be limited to invited guests and teams in position of placing in the tournament. Tarpon Tournament Headquarters will contact potential winning teams by 4:30 p.m. on May 14, 2021. Tournament organizers will be working to keep social distance guidelines and mask wearing protocol in place during the Awards Night event.

Tournament Rules & Regulations

Tournament Entry Fee

Pre-Registration is \$1,000 per boat/team with up to 4 anglers. Each additional person is \$150 with a maximum of 6 anglers per boat. Once officially registered, all entry fees are non-refundable. 100% of entry fees are awarded as prizes the evening of the tournament.

Each person on the boat must be entered in the tournament. No non-competitors are allowed on the boat during competition hours. **Licensed guides** may fish as anglers.

Check-In/Captain’s Meeting – May 13

****Captain Check-in opens at 6:30 p.m. and closes at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 13, 2021.** Tournament Headquarters will be working to keep social distance guidelines and mask wearing protocol in place during this event. There will not be the traditional silent auction or chance drawing as another step to keep participants safe. Check in is **ONLY** open to captains or their designee. **All captains (or designee) MUST attend the captain’s only meeting at 7:30 p.m. Masks will be required.**

****Schedule, invitees, and itinerary of the Captains are subject to change based off the discretion of the tournament committee.**

The captain or a designated crew member must check in at table to receive tournament credentials, captain’s bags, t-shirts, and other tournament related materials. Rules will be printed and placed in each angler bag to review the night prior to the tournament. It is important that all participating anglers review the rules again prior to the tournament. They can be found at dingdarlingtarpontourney.org.

All angler entry forms and liability releases must be completed and received by Tarpon Tournament Headquarters prior to tournament check-in. Anglers without signatures will be unable to participate. Check-in hours may be extended at the discretion of the tournament committee. **Any changes** to the participating anglers on the team (names and/or additional anglers (up to a total of 6 per boat) must be made **no later than May 12, 2021**. No signature, no participation.

Fishing Boundaries - This is a boat tournament. All boats must leave from designated marker and those with possible wins must return to tournament headquarters to qualify for prizes. Boundaries are unlimited for the area Gulf and Bays, **including the Caloosahatchee River**. However, there is to be **NO CANAL fishing**.

Outside Communication - Other than for emergencies, there is to be **NO outside communications** with other tournament boats/anglers or non-competitors during tournament hours of 6:45 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. by any form of communication, including phones, texts, boat radios, all social media platforms etc. This is a competition among the paid participants and not their friends helping in other boats. A call history log may be requested. The only communication allowed is with tournament headquarters.

Drone Usage - **Drone usage is prohibited** by all participants during tournament hours of 6:45 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Truth Verification Test - **Winning captains and/or their team members may be required to submit and pass a truth verification test prior to being presented any prize.** Failure to submit to such test automatically revokes all claims to prizes and disqualifies the Captain and crew from the tournament. Your entry in this tournament implies expressed approval that you and all anglers and crew members will submit to a truth verification test if requested by the Rules Committee.

Truth verification may be required for the following reasons:

- A formal complaint is filed against a captain or team by another competitor.
- Any one of the three judges or consensus of the judges determines one is needed.

Fishing & Boating Laws - Competitors must obey all local, state, and federal laws while participating in this tournament, including the no wake laws in all areas. (www.myfwc.com) All anglers are responsible for knowing and abiding by the rules of the tournament and by the state and federal laws governing safety and fishing in this tournament.

Please ensure that all anglers have **current fishing licenses**.

NO jig fishing will be allowed.

Circle hooks are required for natural bait (dead or alive). (*According to the FWC, research shows that circle hooks improve catch rates and reduce hooking mortality which results in positive impacts on fish*).

Spanish Mackerel: In speaking to the FWC, they can be used as bait and each will count towards the 15 fish bag limit (if caught the day of the tournament) There is also a whole condition requirement, which means the whole fish must be used as the bait and not cut into small pieces. Please review FWC for other rules for bait to ensure compliance.

Boat Identification - All boats must leave from designated markers by water on the day of the tournament. No trailering. Each boat will be assigned a boat number. This boat number must be displayed to the official tournament start boat upon departure and during all fishing hours. **Tarpon Tournament Headquarters will contact potential winning teams by 4:30 p.m. Any teams in a possible prize position MUST return to tournament headquarters by 5:00 p.m. to check in.** All other non-prize teams need only call to acknowledge they are off the water and finished with the tournament. **If any winning teams do not return to tournament headquarters after the tournament, they will not be eligible for prizes. All teams are required to call in their catch status with verification of a photo or video.** Each team must fish from their official registered boat for the duration of the tournament. If a mechanical issue arises and necessitates a new boat, call tournament headquarters to inform of the change. During the Captains Meeting, each captain will need to register their hull number. Please use tournament team boat number when checking in or out via cell phone.

This is a Catch, Release, & Care Tournament

- **All Fishing must be done from the boat.**
- Fish caught and counted for the tournament must be an adult tarpon, at **approximately 45 to 50 pounds or more**. Because this is a catch, release, & care tournament, anglers will not be weighing or measuring the fish, but a best estimate by the anglers and photos will be taken into account.
- **A Tarpon will be judged as caught** when the angler or one of the team members touches below the leader knot (NOT the double line) and secures a photo or video **with the wrist band of the team number showing**.
- If an angler is eligible for an individual award and wants to go for that award (*senior, female*), the Tarpon must be hooked and caught by that one person. No other person may touch the rod, reel, or line until the leader is at the boat. At that time, another person may touch the leader only for the purpose of releasing the catch.
- Circle hooks on natural bait (dead or alive) are required in this tournament. Any angler determined to have caught a tarpon using a baited (natural bait) J-hook will be disqualified.
- The fish must be released alive to be counted. No points will be awarded for any boated Tarpon.
- **Maximum of 6 lines allowed in the water at one time.** This includes rods being used to catch bait. All fish must be caught on rod and reel.
- **Bait** - Artificial and live bait will be allowed. Circle hooks are required for natural bait (dead or alive).
- **Add-Ons** - Once the tournament has started, **NO** items and/or people will be allowed to be transferred to any vessel in the competition. This includes, but is not limited to, bait, equipment etc.
- **Leader** - Any size leader material may be used. The leader may be no longer than 6 feet from the main line and/or double line.
- If a rod is broken while playing a fish, the fish may still be landed and counted.
- The use of gaffs on a tarpon is not permitted. Jigging is not permitted.
- Ties will be broken by the time the 1st tarpon are caught by the team.

Validating the Catch

Reporting. To qualify for points each release must be called into Tournament Headquarters immediately and be acknowledged by the Scorekeeper. **Call in numbers will be in the angler bags** and handed to the captains at the mandatory meeting.

In order for your fish to count in tournament standings, each boat must call in their catch, time of catch and send a photo or video to the scorekeeper with the wrist band showing. **Teams who may be in a winning position, will be contacted by Tarpon Tournament Headquarters. Contacted teams must be back at Doc Ford's FMB with their phones and photos/video no later than 5:00 p.m.** (unless a late hook up and then it is 5:30 p.m.)

Photographing your catch - While touching the leader, a teammate must photograph or videotape the leader touch and the tarpon. The time the fish is caught must be called in or texted as well. **The wristband and team number, which will be provided at the captains meeting, must also be visible.**

Digital cameras must be provided by the Angler and/or Guide. These cameras can also be from cell phones. A photograph on the digital camera's screen, of the leader touch and fish caught, must be sent via cell phone. Please be sure all phone batteries are completely charged before the tournament. If the photo is taken by a smart phone, then the photo can be sent directly via email or text to the scorekeeper. You must receive confirmation that it was received.

Fishing Hours - 6:45 a.m. to 4:00 pm. **Lines in the water no earlier than 6:45 a.m.**

On the day of the tournament (May 14) tournament boats will meet at **Marker "2"** (red) which is near the

Sanibel causeway CSpan bridge (Gulf Side) to check in with the official tournament boat (*Diversified Yacht Services Boat*) for scheduled departures. Boats will be called in order.

At 6:15 a.m. (approximately), boats will be called in order of their registration numbers given during the Captain's Meeting and they can then head to their first fishing location. Lines in the water can begin at 6:45 a.m.

Any teams who **DO NOT** arrive to the tournament boat BEFORE 7:30 a.m. will not be eligible for prizes.

Each line must be removed from the water by 4:00 p.m. unless your hook-up time prior to 4:00 p.m. has been registered with the tournament official by cell phone and acknowledged. The deadline for final post check-in will be 5:30 p.m. sharp.

Numbers to call on tournament day will be announced at the meeting **and all anglers will be given laminated cards with the numbers which will be in the captain's bag.**

For safety reasons it is IMPORTANT that ALL captains check in at the end of the tournament by text or call, letting the tournament know you are off the water.

Protests - This is an honor system tournament with each angler being responsible for his/her own performance. Any person witnessing a rules violation has a right to file a protest, but there will be a \$250 cash deposit for any protest. If the protest is upheld by the committee, the money will be returned. If not, the amount is forfeited and goes directly to the charity. All protests must be submitted in written form to the Tournament Rules Committee by 5:00 p.m. on the day of fishing that the proposed infraction occurred.

Once the awards presentation begins, all results of the tournament are considered fair and final. All decisions made by the Tournament Rules Committee with regards to protest or truth verification examinations are final.

Weather - There is no weather committee. Determination to fish is at the sole discretion of the captain and crew, who assume all liability for their decisions.

The Tournament Rules Committee reserves the right to call the tournament for any weather related or safety related issue. **Five teams entered** in the tournament will be contacted by the tournament committee to get their input on the weather and majority decision will rule. If Friday, May 14 is determined "not fishable", the tournament may be held Saturday, May 15. Entry fees are non-refundable.

Prizes/Awards

Female Anglers: Female anglers will compete in the regular tournament above with no separate cash prizes. However, a prize and special recognition will be given to the non-professional female angler with the most catches.

Senior Anglers (Age 60+): Senior anglers (male & female) will compete in the regular tournament above with no separate cash prizes. However, a prize and special recognition will be given to the non-professional senior angler with the most catches.

Amateur Team: For any team with NO professional anglers or guides will compete in the regular tournament above. However, an additional prize and special recognition will be given to the amateur team with the most catches. Anglers/guides who have received financial compensation for tourney participation or chartering during the last year (since May 14, 2020 to present) are considered professional and will not be eligible for the amateur team prize.

Awards - 100% payback on entry fees

Grand Champion - 45%

2nd Place - 25%

3rd Place - 15%

4th Place - 10%

5th Place - 5%

All cash and merchandise awards will be made to the tournament entrant(s) and a valid SSN is required to receive awards. Anglers must be present at awards ceremony to receive awards. If no fish are caught in any of the five possible place settings, the prize winnings from those will be rolled into the 2022 tournament.

Rules updated: April 17, 2021