



Tournament Rules & Regulations

8th Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament

May 2, 2019 Captain's Meeting & Auction 5-9 p.m.

May 3, 2019 Tournament 6:45 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Purse: 100% of the entry fees will go to the tournament winners

All sponsorships and gifts will go to the charity ("Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge) to support conservation efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Tournament Entry Fee: Pre-registration is \$500 per boat/team with up to 4 anglers. Each additional person is \$150 with a maximum of 6 anglers per boat. Once officially registered, entrants fees are non-refundable. Deadline for entry is April 22, 2019.

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 – Team check-in **opens at 5 p.m. and closes at 9 p.m. on Thursday, May 2, 2019.** All participating anglers are invited to attend the Captains Dinner. Check-in table located at Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grill, Fort Myers Beach, FL.

The captain or a designated crewmember must check in at table to receive tournament credentials, captain's bag, t-shirts, and other tournament related materials. Only one designated team member will attend the captains rules review meeting. The remaining members can stay outside and enjoy the auction, food, and entertainment. Rules will be printed and placed in each angler bag to review the night prior.

Please complete all angler entry forms and liability releases from all anglers prior to tournament check-in if possible and have ready when approaching table. Anglers without signed sheets must be in attendance that night to officially sign. Check-in **hours may be extended at the discretion of the tournament committee.** THERE WILL BE NO TEAM REGISTRATIONS FOR THE TOURNAMENT AFTER April 22, 2019. **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 1, 2019.**

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, **NO CANAL** fishing is allowed.

Outside Communication: Other than for emergencies, there is to be NO sharing of tarpon information among tournament boats/anglers or non-competitors during tournament hours of 6:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. by any form of communication, including all social media platforms. This is a competition among the paid participants and not their friends helping in other boats.

Truth Verification Test: Winning Captains **WILL** 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.

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. 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 result in positive impacts on fish).*

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 starter upon departure, during all fishing hours. **Any teams in a possible prize position MUST return to tournament headquarters by 5 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.** All teams must fish together from the official registered boat for the duration of the tournament. If a mechanical issue arises and necessitates a new boat, the team should call tournament headquarters to inform of the change. During the captains meeting, each captain will need to register the team's 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 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 wristband 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 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 tarpons are caught by the team.

Validating the Catch

Reporting - To qualify for points, each release must be called in to Tournament Headquarters immediately and be acknowledged by the scorekeeper. **Call-in numbers will be in the angler bags.**

In order for your fish to count in tournament standings, each boat must call in its catch and time of catch and send a photo or video to the scorekeeper with the wrist band showing. **Teams that may be in a winning position must be back at Doc Ford's FMB with their photos/video no later than 5 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 be visible.**

Digital cameras must be provided by the Angler and/or Guide. These cameras can also be cell phones. A photograph on the digital camera's screen, of the leader touch and fish caught, must be sent via cell phone or shown to the scorekeeper at the end of the tournament. If the photo is taken by a smartphone, then the photo can be sent directly via email or text to the scorekeeper, but you must receive confirmation that it was received.

Fishing hours: 6:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Lines in the water at 6:45 a.m.**

6:15 a.m. (approximately) Boats will be called in order of their registration numbers given during the captain's meeting, which will be based upon date and time of official paid entry.

On the day of the tournament (May 3) 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. Any teams NOT arriving to the tournament boat BEFORE 7:30 a.m. will not be eligible for prizes.

6:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lines in the water at 6:45 a.m.

Each line must be removed from the water by 4 p.m. unless your hook-up time prior to 4 p.m. has been registered with and acknowledged by the tournament official, either by radio or cell phone. 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.**

For safety reasons it is IMPORTANT that ALL captains check in at the end of the tournament either by boat, radio, or phone, to let 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 the 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 5:30 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 3, is determined "not fishable," the tournament may be held Saturday, May 4. 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: 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 2018 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%

Awards: *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 the awards ceremony to receive awards. If no fish are caught in the five possible place settings, the prize winnings will be rolled into the 2020 tournament.*

Rules updated: October 1, 2018