

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: Team Fish & Chips takes off for a day of tarpon fishing in the 2015 tourney.

Logo attached

European fishing journalist team returns for ‘Ding’ tarpon tournament

Four journalists from Scotland, England, and Denmark will return to fish and cover the seventh annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament on May 11, 2018. Already the overseas jibes have begun between the European “Fish & Chips” team, which last fished the 2015 tournament, and its U.S. counterparts.

"It's a real shame our American friends have to fly a team across the Atlantic to show them how to catch tarpon," joked Paul O'Hare with BBC Scotland.

“Good to see the tournament sold out so quickly when the locals heard the ‘European Dream Team’ were on their way back,” quipped Jim Patrick from the UK, who writes for the daily *Sun* newspapers. “We wouldn't expect anything else! Our American friends showed us a great time before, but we hope they're ready to bring their A game to the water in May. They're gonna need it!”

In 2015, the team took fifth place, despite having never fished for tarpon before. "We upset the odds in 2015 and are confident we can do so again," jibed O'Hare. “Bring it on!”

Joining O'Hare and Patrick, teammate Paul Fenech is features editor for the UK's *Sea Angler Magazine*. Niels Lagergaard Pedersen from Denmark writes for the monthly *Fiske Avisen*. The combined circulation of the team's news and fishing publications exceeds 2.3 million readers.

“We just hope their writing is better than their fishing,” jested Team Sportfisha, which beat Team Fish & Chips to first place in 2015. “Looked to us like the Fish & Chips were down. I hope they’re brushing up their skills for handling a real fish.”

The European team’s participation was made possible through a partnership between the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau and the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

“The reporters are all avid anglers, but their first experience with tarpon was in 2015,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director and event organizer. “They proved themselves that year. The international element makes the tournament just that much more exciting.”

DDWS sponsors the tournament along with title sponsor Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille and other local businesses and individuals. The tournament is unique locally because it pays out 100 percent of the entry fee as tournament awards. Registration this year for the 55 boats filled within two hours.

Tournament proceeds benefit wildlife and conservation education at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

“Last year we raised \$80,000 for the refuge as a result of sponsorships, donations, and auction proceeds,” said Miller. “We’re so grateful to Doc Ford’s and our other sponsors for this huge effort in our behalf.”

For more information on the tournament, please visit www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org. Anyone interested in becoming a tournament sponsor should contact Sarah Lathrop at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

Sponsors for the 2018 tournament include: **Title Sponsor:** Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille; **Champion Sponsor:** Nimrod, Raiser’s Edge; **Premier Sponsors:** Mark & Gretchen Banks, Diversified Yacht Services; **Presenting Sponsors:** Custom Tees, Gasparilla Vacations, Joseph M. Kelley Plumbing & Heating, Stockyard Bricks; **Platinum Sponsors:** Captiva Diva, Congress Jewelers, Mabry Brothers, Inc., Organized Chaos, Suncoast Beverage Sales; **Gold Sponsors:** Andrew Thompson Co., Fort Myers Marine, HighTower Advisors, The Historic Bait Box, Island Condo Maintenance, Jensen’s Marina, Law Office of Christopher G. Hill PC, Law Office of Janet

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ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge's mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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