



## Weather the Big Question for the 7th Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tourney

So....what is your prediction for the weather on May 11, 2018?

Based on recent weather patterns and the history of this tournament, it is anybody’s guess. That is the date of this year’s Tarpon Tournament and make note that it is on a Friday this year. In January when I wrote my first blog we were having some really cold temperatures which was unusual based on the last several years. Then in February we had record high temperatures which really confused the fish. In fact, there were reports of a few Tarpon hookups during February which is really unusual. Just a few weeks ago I was coming back from fishing on some near shore reefs and we saw large bait pods stretching from Bowman’s Beach all the way to the Sundial. I saw more birds working that bait, rafted up and resting on the beach than I have seen in years. There were pelicans, gulls, and LWBs (Little White Birds) in the mix. We stopped and watched the frenzy for a while and lo and behold we saw two tarpon roll. Probably local fish that came out of the River to explore the area, no doubt turned on by the 72 degree water temperature. Weather is always the main factor that can change the whole face of this tournament and sometimes evens the playing field.

This year we are once again honored to have a European team of journalists entered in the field. Scotland, England and Denmark are represented and they have jobs with some impressive news organizations. I was going to say something nice about them but they’ve started some trash talk claiming they’ve come back to show us Americans how to fish for Tarpon. They did pretty well in 2015 coming in 5th, although I do believe they had some Cracker Guidance aboard for that trip. They have gotten a little “cocky” (they would probably say “cheeky”) after lucking into catching one Tarpon, no doubt residing in the lower part of the gene pool of its species. Because of these guys a few new rules had to be added: 1) There will be no bag pipe playing while approaching a pod of tarpon- out of courtesy to the other teams. 2) Driving your boat on the left side of the Inter Coastal Waterway is strictly prohibited. (The Coast Guard has also been notified). You’ll be able to recognize these guys as they will be wearing kilts and knickers and those weird little hats. I think they call them Peaky Blinders. Give them a wave as you pass them.

The Masters Golf Tournament has its green jacket. Well, the “Ding” Darlin & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament has its.....jacket too! Designed by Marty Harrity, I would describe it as “PInk” but I guess the official color is “Salmon” adorned with a Tarpon pattern. They are quite “fashionable” and very appropriate to be worn at local eating establishments. Each winning team captain will receive one this year. Marty will be modeling one of these highly sought after jackets at the Captain’s meeting. Rumor has it that Marty is going to throw in a pink Cadillac to the winning team captain next year.

Best of luck to all the teams.