

Mike Ludwig wins the Morgan Stanley Triple Crown Tournament

By Victor Ordija

Mike Ludwig won first place in the Morgan Stanley Triple Crown fishing tournament and a cash prize of \$400 by catching a Tarpon, Snook and Redfish during a three month period beginning on the 1st of August and ending on October 31th. The tournament which is run by the Marco Sportfishing Club (MSC) requires all three species of fish to be caught by participating anglers and the goal is to catch the largest Snook and Redfish and a Tarpon exceeding 30 inches

The annual contest which began five years ago has evolved into a challenging and competitive tournament which is geared towards the serious angler that can commit a significant amount of time and effort over a three month period. The investment firm of Morgan Stanley has partnered with the Marco Sportfishing Club adding prestige and additional financial benefits so that a total of seven cash awards are offered to the top seven anglers in this year's contest. The standings of participating anglers in the tournament is based on a point system that is calculated on the combined lengths of the largest Snook and Redfish caught and a Tarpon exceeding 30 inches.

An important change that was made two years ago in the contest is the suspension of the requirement that the length of a Tarpon be measured when the fish is brought to the boat. It was determined that an accurate measurement was too difficult and added both unacceptable stress to the fish and additional risk to the angler. Also, the use of a gaff has been prohibited so as to eliminate potential injury to both the angler and the fish.

In order to register a caught Tarpon, the angler only needs to touch the leader and take a photograph of the fish in the water provided the photograph clearly depicts the fish as being a Tarpon. Once the angler successfully registers a Tarpon, he or she is automatically awarded a 5.5 foot Tarpon (66 points) regardless of the size of the fish caught. Every inch is worth one point. While the rule change did not make catching a Tarpon less difficult, the change made registering a caught Tarpon easier and safer for the angler and

less stressful to the fish.

Snook and Redfish that are caught and registered are required to be aligned along a ruler, measured and photographed. For all Snook and Redfish that are caught and reported, every inch is worth two points. It should be noted that while MSC encourages catch and release in the tournament, legal fish may be kept and only fish that are to be eaten should be kept. As anglers caught and reported their catches, their combined points would move them up or down in the standings.

Forty MSC anglers participated in this year's tournament which ended on October 31, 2015. Awards were presented to the winning anglers at the club's general meeting which was held on December 3, 2015 at Rose Hall in Marco Island. All the anglers in the top five places caught all three fish species (Tarpon, Snook and Redfish).

In addition to catching a Tarpon, first place angler Mike Ludwig caught a 40" Redfish and a 35.5" Snook for a total of 217 points and a cash prize of \$400.00. Also, Mike will have his name engraved on a perpetual plaque that hangs in the Marco Island office of Morgan Stanley.

In second place is this writer with a 30" Redfish and a 38" Snook for a total of 202 points and a cash prize of \$350.00.

Third place went to Allan Bristow with a 36" Redfish and a 27.25" Snook for a total of 192.5 points and a cash prize of \$300.00.

Fourth place was taken by Mike Kropp with a 34" Redfish and a 26" Snook, 186 points and a cash prize of \$250.00.

Rounding out fifth place is Ed Brown with 163 points. Ed caught a 29.75" Redfish and an 18.75" Snook which earned him a cash prize of \$200.00.

It was expected that not all anglers would be able to catch all three fish species, therefore in this year's tournament, to maintain participation, a sixth and seventh prize was awarded to the anglers that caught the largest Snook and the largest Redfish provided that those anglers were not eligible for the top five awards.

Al Jennings caught a 33" Redfish and won the sixth award that paid \$150 and Dick Larson took the seventh award by catching a 29.75" Snook that also

paid a \$150 cash prize.

While the Morgan Stanley Triple Crown Tournament is a challenging and competitive contest, it is also very laid back from the standpoint that it allows the individual angler to fish at his or her own pace. The angler can fish at any time; both day or night, anywhere within the backwater boundaries established by MSC and with any other angler or alone. It allows for experimentation by choosing different baits both live and artificial as well as fishing techniques, presentation, etc. The goal is to catch the largest fish with respect to Snook and Redfish and to also catch the elusive and hard to land Tarpon. At the end of the contest, the participant will be a better angler and will gain more appreciation for the unique environment that surrounds Marco Island.

The Marco Sportfishing Club is a non-profit organization comprised of more than 400 fishermen, boaters and outdoor enthusiasts who live in the Marco Island, FL area. In addition to enjoying all the outdoor activities this beautiful Southwest Florida location has to offer, the Club prides itself in its ability to "give back" to the community. Members of the club are active and involved in the community and have been instrumental in organizing and staffing many events that teach local children the joys of fishing and good fishing etiquette. The events and organizations MSC has been involved with include the Marco Island Cub Scouts, Marco Island Historical Museum, National Estuaries Day at Rookery Bay, The Naples Kids Fishing Clinic, Goodland's Birthday Celebration, Naples Botanical Gardens, and the Port of the Isles Kids Fishing Clinic. To find out more about the Marco Sportfishing Club, please go to their website: www.marcosportfishingclub.com.