

Ed Brown wins the 2017 Morgan Stanley Triple Crown Tournament

By Victor Ordija

Ed Brown won first place and became the first two-time winner in the Morgan Stanley Triple Crown Tournament (MSTCT). Ed is awarded a cash prize of \$350 by catching a Tarpon, Redfish and Snook during a four month period which began on July 1 and ended on October 31st. 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 seven 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 four month period. The Compass Group investment team of Morgan Stanley, comprised of David Caruso, Steve Macko and Jason Zapalski, has partnered with the Marco Sportfishing Club adding additional financial benefits so that a total of seven cash awards are offered to the top seven anglers. The standings of participating anglers in the tournament are 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.

In order to register a Tarpon catch, the angler needs to bring the fish to the boat, touch the leader and take a photograph of the fish in the water making sure the photograph clearly depicts the fish as being a Tarpon. The use of a gaff is prohibited so as to eliminate potential injury to both the angler and the fish. Once the angler successfully registers a Tarpon catch, 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. This rule which was implemented four years ago did not make catching a Tarpon less difficult, but increased safety for the angler and is 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. As anglers caught and reported their catches, their combined points would move them up or down in the standings.

Thirty nine MSC anglers participated in this year's tournament which ended on October 31, 2017. Awards were presented to the winning anglers at the club's general meeting which was held on December 7, 2017 at Rose Hall on 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 Ed Brown caught a 35.25" Redfish and a 39.25" Snook for an impressive total of 215 points and a cash prize of \$350.00. Also, Ed has his name engraved on a perpetual plaque that hangs in the Marco Island office of Morgan Stanley.

In second place is last year's first place winner Allan Bristow with a 28.25" Redfish and a 41" Snook for a total of 204.5 points and a cash prize of \$300.00.

Third place went to Vic Ordija with a 32" Redfish and a 36.75" Snook for a total of 203.5 points and a cash prize of \$250.00.

Fourth place was taken by Jim Doench with a 30" Redfish and a 38" Snook, 202 points and a cash prize of \$200.00.

Rounding out fifth place is Gary Costley with 180 points. Gary caught a 25" Redfish and a 32" Snook which earned him a cash prize of \$150.00.

It was expected that not all anglers would be able to catch all three fish species, therefore in order to maintain and improve participation, two additional prizes were 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.

Ron Scriver caught a 39" Snook and wins \$100. The largest Redfish caught measured 28.75" was registered by John Marchetti who also wins \$100.

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.

This year the Morgan Stanley Triple Crown Tournament was expanded to four months beginning on July 1, 2017 in order to take advantage of the increased numbers of Tarpon that are in the Marco Island area and generally remain through August. Additionally, large Snook aggregate in deeper channels during June and July for their annual spawning period. The additional time provided anglers a better chance to catch these elusive fish.

Unfortunately, Hurricane Irma hit Marco Island on September 10, 2017 and had very major impacts on properties and significantly altered the coastal topography and vegetation around the island. The hurricane also effectively reduced the tournament period by about one month and forced the cancellation of the annual MSTC picnic. While most of the MSC membership undoubtedly suffered some damage to their property, the general consensus is that we were very lucky that the drastic projected storm surge did not develop which would have resulted in catastrophic flooding.

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.

