

Vic Ordija wins the 2018 Marco Sportfishing Club Triple Crown Tournament

By Victor Ordija

After placing several times in the top five positions during the past eight years, Vic Ordija won first place in the Marco Sportfishing Club Triple Crown Tournament. Vic was awarded a cash prize of \$450 by catching a Tarpon, Redfish and Snook during a 4 month period which began on the 1st of July 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 eight 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 4 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.

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 ft Tarpon (66 points) regardless of the size of the fish caught. Every inch is worth one point. This rule which was implemented five years ago did not make catching a Tarpon less difficult, but increased safety for the angler and reduced stress 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. This year Red Tide had a negative impact in the Marco Island waters which is believed to have limited the number of Tarpon and Redfish that were present. Snook numbers, fortunately, were excellent and a record number of above slot fish were caught. Awards were presented to the winning anglers at the club's general meeting which was held on December 6, 2018 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 Vic Ordija caught a 38" Redfish and a 39" Snook for a total of 220 points and a cash prize of \$450.00. Also, Vic has his name engraved on a perpetual plaque that hangs in the Marco Island office of Morgan Stanley.

In second place is the 2016 first place winner Allan Bristow with a 32.5" Redfish and a 39.75" Snook for a total of 210.5 points and a cash prize of \$400.00.

Third place went to last year's Triple Crown winner Ed Brown with a 30.5" Redfish and a 41" Snook for a total of 208.5 points and a cash prize of \$350.00.

Fourth place was taken by Jay Jones with a 31.5" Redfish and a 39" Snook, 207 points and a cash prize of \$300.00.

Rounding out fifth place is Kevin Krygier with 206.5 points. Kevin caught a 34.75" Redfish and a 35.5" Snook which earned him a cash prize of \$250.00.

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 to be awarded to the anglers that caught the largest Snook and the largest Redfish provided that the anglers were not eligible for the top five awards.

This year Jim Mueller surprised everyone by catching a 40 inch Redfish and a 39.75 inch Snook earning Jim a total cash prize of \$350. Jim would have been this year's winner if he had managed to land a large Tarpon which he

battled for almost an hour. Unfortunately, the leader broke before the fish could be brought to the boat and recorded as a catch.

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, many participants have expressed a significant improvement in their fishing ability.

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.