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Sharks Guaranteed in Star Island Tournament

Capt. Michael Potts

And these sharks cannot bite you! Going on right now, if it is still Friday, June 17 or Saturday, June 18, is the 25th Annual Star Island Yacht Club Shark Tournament. Boats will be weighing in until 6 p.m. on Friday and 5 p.m. on Saturday. Every year the Tournament has seen some pretty big ones, and tournament rules are designed so that all except a few big ones are released unharmed. Here are the minimum weights: Mako is 125 pounds, Thresher and Hammerhead are 150 pounds, and Blue Shark is 250 pounds. Besides that, all other species of shark must be released. In the 2010 Tournament, over 350 sharks were released unharmed, and of those brought in, 750 pounds of meat were donated to the Long Island Council of Churches food pantry. Nothing is going to waste here!



I scanned some past Tournament brochures and found some interesting trends. In the era of the 90s, almost all the winning sharks were Makos in the mid to high 300-pound range. The largest in the Tournament ever was the 609-pounder caught on the Susie E in 2001. Since then, almost all of the Tournament winners have been Threshers in the mid 300-pound range. The largest Thresher was the 467-pounder in 2005. In 2004, the largest shark was a 345-pound Thresher followed by a 344-pound Mako. A similar close year was 2007, with a 374-pound winning Thresher followed by a 372-pound Mako.

The Star Island Shark Tournament is very tempting to fishermen because it is one of the first tournaments, and with many boats participating, boasts a large prize kitty. Although Star Island offers a hefty \$50,000 in prizes, most of the winnings are from the calcuttas (or side bets), which were around \$475,000 last year. How much a participant is eligible to win is proportional to how much they are ready to gamble. The entry fee of \$800 covers the Tournament prizes. The completely optional calcuttas of \$200, \$500, \$1,000 and \$2,000 are split up several ways over each day of fishing. The \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$20,000 calcuttas are "winner takes all" over the two days. This format creates the opportunity for many winners and big winners. In 2006, the biggest overall purse of the Tournament's history was just under one million dollars!

Next week, on June 24 and 25, the Montauk Marine Basin hosts its 41st Annual Shark Tag Tournament, and on July 9 and 10, Montauk's own Boatmen and Captains Association holds its charity tournament at Star Island Yacht Club.



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