

## **Redbone History . . .**

**By: Captain Ted Wilson**

Fall is a wonderful time in the Florida Keys. It signifies cooler temperatures, a slow pace around town and promise of a great season to soon begin. It also signifies Redbone time. The Redbone is the final contest in the Florida Keys' prestigious three-tournament Redbone Celebrity Trilogy that raises funds for cystic fibrosis research. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mercury Cheeca Redbone Tournament was held November 2 - 4 in Islamorada and it was again a huge success.

Mo Smith of Cordova, Tenn., captured the title of tournament grand champion with eight bonefish and five redfish released during the two-day event. He practiced his fly and spin techniques before the tournament by casting into hula hoops in a lake back home before making his way to Islamorada. Smith was guided by legendary guide Captain Mark Krowka.

"Mark's just an outstanding guide," said Smith. "He's the reason we won."

Smith was a very busy man at the awards ceremony. In addition to the Redbone victory, he also was named the series grand champion, an achievement that has never occurred in the history of the series. He was also named grand champion of the Florida Keys Outfitters Cheeca/Redbone one-day, one-fly Superfly tournament, which precedes the Redbone itself, with five bonefish. Smith walked with eight trophies, including a pair of Rolexes (one stainless steel for Redbone itself and the other platinum for the Series win).

Smith's road to the Winner's Circle was far from direct. He had been scheduled to back up primary angler Kal Blumberg, the 2004 Series Champ. Kal's brother, Joe became suddenly ill and desperately needed a liver transplant. Kal was a perfect match to give two-thirds of his liver, so life-saving surgery was performed. Happily, both the Blumberg's are recovering perfectly. On short notice, Smith enlisted the help of Frank Delucas, a former Superfly Series Champion himself.

Last year's grand champion, John Timura of Islamorada, returned to win the team grand champion title with fellow Islamorada resident George Proenza. Proenza was also first runner-up angler in the tournament. Timura caught seven redfish and two bonefish, while Proenza scored with six redfish and four bonefish. Their guide was Captain Brian Helms.

The Redbone's celebrity grand champion was artist Jorge Martinez of Miami, who released three redfish and three bonefish guided by Captain Bou Bosso. Ironically, he received his own artwork as his trophy.

Grand champion lady angler was Linda Denkert of Islamorada, who was guided by her husband, Captain Dave Denkert. She released three redfish and one bonefish.

First runner-up celebrity was Bill Hurst for two redfish and three bonefish. A Miami native, Hurst is renowned for his 1996 season pitching for the Florida Marlins. His guide was Captain Dale Perez.

The first runner-up team award went to Smith and Frank Delucas of Plantation, Fla. Delucas added three bonefish and two redfish to the team score.

The spin/plug division champion title went to Adam Vasquez of Washington, D.C., who fished with Captain Chris Jones.

Bob Rich of Islamorada won the fly division championship with guide Rusty Albury.

Mike Myatt of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., released the most redfish.

Jim Bokor of Tavernier released the largest bonefish with Captain Eric Herstedt.

Steve Hamblin of Braselton, Ga., released the largest redfish with Captain Tim Walsh.

Joe Viar of Alexandria, Va., was runner-up in the Superfly with three redfish. He fished with Captain Andy Thompson.

Anglers on 67 boats released 68 bonefish and 173 redfish during the two-day Redbone tournament.

Tournament founder Gary Ellis said the event raised more than \$100,000. He anticipates that a cumulative \$1.5 million will be raised this year to fund research.

“We’ve inspired this country to go fishing and have fun with a higher purpose: to catch a cure for cystic fibrosis,” said Ellis.

While there are over 27 Redbone affiliated tournaments per year throughout the continents, the millions of dollars that have been raised by these events, still has not brought a cure. The money has aided the CF Foundation to produce 30 drugs to help treat the disease (more than any drug company). For more information please contact Gary or Susan Ellis at 305-664-2002 or e-mail [WWW.REDBONE.ORG](http://WWW.REDBONE.ORG).