

Fisherman casts lot with Lady Luck – twice

In same fishing hole, Mihalski's catch wins him prizes in 2006 and this year

Somebody once said it's better to be lucky than good.

I always thought that would have been somebody who wasn't very good. Now I'm not so sure. Anthony Mihalski is my test case.

Mihalski is a cattle auctioneer by trade, a fisherman by choice. He loves it.

And he loves one spot at Port Mansfield, a lot. It's made him lots of money, and the only way to explain it would be luck.

"I'm one of the luckiest guys ..." Mihalski says. "I once won \$35,000 on a \$16 bet in Las Vegas with a royal flush."

What's that got to do with fishing?

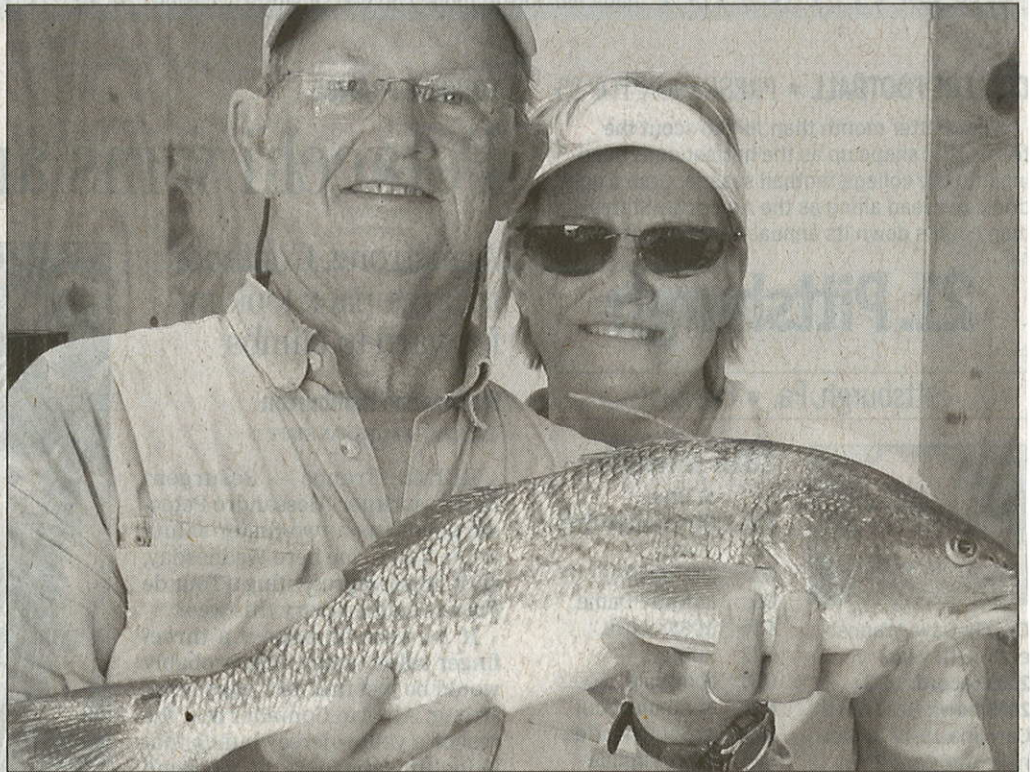
I'll tell you.

Mihalski, who lives in San Antonio, probably had better odds of drawing that royal flush than he did of catching a tagged redfish that won him a new truck, boat, motor and trailer in the Coastal Conservation Association's annual summer fishing tournament.

The Houston-based group tags redfish and releases them up and down the coast. The first five tags that are turned in win the grand prize truck-trailer-boat-engine. Mihalski did just that, catching one of the tagged fish from among millions of redfish and trout swimming in Texas coastal waters.

But there's more to the story.

This isn't the first time he's won a prize in the con-



COURTESY OF ANTHONY MIHALSKI

Anthony Mihalski and his wife Harriet show off the tagged redfish Anthony caught recently near Port Mansfield. It was worth a truck, boat, motor and trailer.

@ statesman.com

Keep up with all things outdoors on Mike Leggett's blog, No Limits, online.

test. In that fishing hole. And the tagged fish that won him the big prize this year, wasn't even the first tagged fish that he and his wife Harriet caught that day. Did we mention all those fish came from the same fishing hole?

"Back in 2006, I caught the largest trout weighed in for the Lower Coast," Mihalski says.

"It was 30.5 inches long and weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces." That was good for a boat and motor from CCA. According to the rules,

Mihalski was ineligible to win any prize again until this year.

With renewed eligibility, he's been fishing his favorite hole regularly.

"I took my daughter out that morning, and we caught fish," Mihalski recalled. On the way back in, Mihalski says he saw that the wind and weather had gotten exactly right. "I told my wife we'd go for an hour and catch a winning fish."

When the couple got set up on Mihalski's magic hole, Harriet cast first. She caught a tagged redfish. "Her fish had a CCA tag but the tag was broken off," he says. "We couldn't read it." They released the fish but it wasn't

doing well and decided to keep it for dinner that night. That redfish went into the ice chest.

"Then I made a cast, and we could see the tag on that fish," Mihalski says. "It got real exciting. Those were the only two fish we caught." With the redfish in the boat, the Mihalskis rubbed off the algae that had grown on the tag, saw that it was a 2010 fish and immediately pulled anchor and headed for home with their fish worth a cool \$70,000.

Mihalski had to travel to Houston to take a CCA-required polygraph test. He passed. Of course, he passed. Who could make this stuff up?