

The IGFTO Observer -  
Newsletter

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Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

# The IGFTO Observer

*A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers*

Volume 6

Edition 3



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## Best Baits



Featured Member is a Master  
What's the one thing all of us see, almost without fail, on the docks of just about

every sport fishing mecca in the world?

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## IGFTO Supports Burn Center in Nicaragua

Individual Members Donate to Worthy Cause.



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## Best Damn Baits You Can Buy

Featured IGFTO Member Mark Pumo, by Art McDonald



What's the one thing all of us see, almost without fail, on the docks of just about every sport fishing mecca in the world?

Empty containers of Baitmasters Baits! There's a reason why, as, simply put, there are NO BETTER PROCESSED BAITS anywhere! Period – end of sentence!

Baitmasters is the domain of its creator and owner, **IGFTO** member Mark Pumo. All of us have read about Mark in an extensive article which appeared in the May, 2017 issue of *Marlin Magazine*.

<http://www.marlinmag.com/baitmasters-talk-marlin-and-sailfish-baits>). If you haven't read that article, be sure and find it... An extensive tutorial on the nuances of bait type (Greenbacks vs Bluebacks), brining, processing, and rigging. Be that as it may (and there's a lot of good stuff there), what about Mark?

Born and raised in South Florida (Miami), Mark has been fishing since he could walk and carry a fishing pole. His family loved boating and his father even raced E-Class boats (similar to Jersey Skiffs) at the Miami Marine Stadium, and his older brothers both fished and dived. Every summer was spent in Islamorada at the Tropical Winds Resort on Windley Key. Starting at the tender age of 4, Mark would search the banks of the harbor and jetties from sunrise to sunset with his fishing pole and bag of cut bait to catch snapper, grunts, barracuda, and the occasional lobster hiding under the seawalls.

As he grew, his brothers would take him out to the Gulf Stream in their 16' Fibercraft powered by a monster 33HP Johnson outboard – in the 1960's this was a fairly average rig. They would troll rigged Ballyhoo and catch Dolphin &

Wahoo. After a morning of fishing, they would come inshore and catch lobster that would be stacked up in old sunken ice boxes. When he was six years old he took his first trip to Bimini on his dad's boat, where he stayed on South Bimini at Buccaneer Point. They caught dolphin and deep dropped for Yellow Eye and Queen Snappers.

Growing up this way, Mark knew he wanted to continue the outdoor boating life. As he grew his outdoor activities included fishing and diving and also water skiing, baseball and soccer.. Summers had him working cutting grass and construction until he left for college.

After graduating from Florida State University (FSU) in 1983, he returned to Miami to work in the beginnings of the computer industry and selling medical equipment. During this time, he bought a Sea Craft (23') and fished some of the local tournaments and even went to Bimini a couple of times on it. One of the things he noticed was the lack of availability of good bait at the local tackle stores. Baits were either freezer burned, thawed and refrozen, or ruined by poor packaging.

Virtually unheard of at that time was any kind of brining or blast freezing that Mark ended up incorporating in his business – including a special brine that has taken years to perfect (including some scientific input). An opportunity presented itself and, with a strong desire to start a business, and a little bit of money saved up, Baitmasters of South Florida, Inc. was created in 1993. After the first 5 years Mark had arranged enough bait fishermen to provide an excellent supply of quality baits, and he took it from there.

Baitmasters became the market leader and, with the development of the internet and online selling, Mark was the first to seize the power of the internet in selling an assortment of unmatched rigged and unrigged baits online – a presence still unmatched! Simply put – Baitmasters Baits are the BEST – ah, but I repeat myself!

Fast forward – in the last 24 years, Mark has fished in Venezuela, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, and the Bahamas. He's done it all... from ice fishing for Rainbow Trout, to Blue Marlin fishing, but his favorite type of fishing is bottom fishing for grouper and snapper, because "you're always busy and you can eat your catch." He plans to attend several IGFTO Tournaments in 2018 – look for Mark and if you have any questions about bait, or the business, he's the guy to talk with!

## IGFTO Members Support Nicaraguan Burn Center

*Individual members donate to charity through IGFTO*

Aproquen is a not for profit burn center located in Nicaragua. In 2016 it reached its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary having provided more than half a million health services free of charge, including 35,000 surgeries. Each year individual IGFTO members support Aproquen by making donations earmarked for the charity. Some of these donors also participate in the Flor-de-Cana International Tournament held at



Marina Puesta del Sol in Nicaragua. Aproquen sent president Steve Hargett this letter of appreciation following the 2017 tournament:

*Dear Mr. Hargett,*

*Hope this finds you well. I wanted to confirm we have received the generous donation of \$1,650 that was made by the International Game Fish Tournament Observers. We thank you for being part of our work and transforming the lives of Nicaraguan children.*

*Thank you for supporting Marc Stanley's Pelese Challenge Initiative and your continued commitment. We will be sending you a tax deductible letter for this donation.*

*I wanted to take this opportunity and share with you our [2016 donor impact report](#). YOUR continued support enabled us to provide 11,191 outpatient visits, train 219 medical professionals and host 5 medical missions for leading US teams in 2016.*

*Thank you!  
Congratulations on a great tournament!*

*Best wishes,  
Evelyn Murillo  
Development Director  
Aproquen*

## **Flor de Caña International Billfish Tournament**

*by Observer reporter, Jay Aigner*

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual Flor de Caña International Billfish Tournament was held August 23-26, 2017 at Marina Puesta Del Sol. The word is out that the Pacific coast of Nicaragua is the new hot spot for billfish in Central America.

Prior to the start of the tournament, Observers were treated to a tour and tasting at the Flor de Caña distillery. After the kickoff and back at the dock after fishing, we enjoyed good food, beverages and rum. And at the final night awards banquet was filled with fun and camaraderie.

The 3-day event drew boats, Captains, crews and anglers from the U.S.A., Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala. A total of 33 boats competed in the tournament's two categories: Centenario for large sportfishers and Gran Reserva for smaller boats. The Centenario division was won by "Fish Tank" and the Gran Reserva champion was "Conga". A total of 793 Billfish were released, including 12 Marlin.





**Jay Aigner, observer assists George Crawford, Sr., angler/observer to release a Pacific sailfish during a private charter the day before the Flor de Caña Tournament.**

One of the benefits of IGFTO membership is traveling to the most prolific Billfish locations in the world. Opportunities for fishing prior to, just after tournament dates are exceptional. A few of us flew in early to charter two days of fishing with local Captains. We fished with Julio Castaneda on the boat *4-Tuna* and Bubba Carter on the vessel *Tijereta*. Both days were filled with Sailfish releases and a Dorado kept for a delicious "fish fingers" dinner prepared by the marina restaurant staff.

## **You Make The Call**

*By Art McDonald*

You are an Observer in a major Blue Marlin Tournament – ALL fish MUST be **released** in accordance with IGFA rules which include the knot connecting the mainline (usually a double line) to the leader touching the rod tip – OR the mate touching the leader. A legal hookup has taken place and the angler is in the fighting chair. At a certain point in time the leader knot/swivel comes within view and the mate re-positions himself by going from one side of the cockpit to the other – crossing between the footrest of the chair and the transom. As he (the mate) is going through this process, the angler has taken a pump on the rod and, in coming down to gain line; the rod inadvertently touches him (the mate) on the shoulder. Does this constitute a violation of the IGFA Rules.

**Answer:** The accidental, inadvertent contact between an angler and another individual with the rod does NOT constitute a violation of the IGFA Rules – UNLESS the angler has, in some form or fashion, been assisted during the process – in other words resting the rod on the individual to relieve stress on the angler. It would be in the interpretation of the Observer as to whether the angler was aided by this touching.



## Welcome New Members

We're pleased to welcome 6 new observers to IGFTO during the third quarter. We ask all new members to consider how they might use their special and unique talents to help make IGFTO a stronger, better organization. Volunteers are always needed. Please contact any director.

### Member No.

323	Kevin Lanier, Port St. Joe, FL
324	Craig Cassella, Wallingford, CT
325	Rich Engels, Hollywood, FL
326	Gary Delisle, Tequesta, FL
327	Michael McCorkle, Islamorada, FL
328	Jeff Pursely, Islamorada, FL

### Spread the Word

Many new IGFTO members learn about observing from our membership. Step one for most members is to apply for and take the IGFA Observer Training Course. These courses are scheduled by the IGFA several weeks in advance of the program.

When you speak with friends and family about the incredible fishing you experience as an observer, encourage them to go to the IGFTO website and subscribe to our mailing list. Then they will always be notified when and where the next Observer Training Course will be held.

There's no obligation and no expense to subscribe to our mailing list and they will be sure to be notified about the next opportunity to attend a course..

## Observing Highlights for 2017

As of the end of the third quarter of this year, IGFTO sent 100 observers to seven billfish tournaments in Florida and Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Our observers participated along with 216 boats in releasing a total of 3,991 billfish. Among these were 3,581 sailfish, 380 blue marlin, and 30 white marlin. Our observers spent 2,000 man days at these tournaments and received high marks for their professionalism from their captains. Thanks to all for helping make IGFTO observers the most respected in game fish tournaments.

Attending the most tournaments was Sine Mate with 5 tournaments under her belt. Next were IGFTO president Steve Hargett and director Terry O'Neill with

4 tournaments each. Then Karen LeCompte, Director Art McDonald and Michael Sampsel participated in 3 tournaments each. Thanks to all for their dedication and hard work.

## Upcoming Tournaments for the 4th Quarter

### San Juan International Billfish Tournament - 2017

San Juan, Puerto Rico

December 7-10, 2017

Observers not needed due to hurricane Maria

### PCCA El Salvador International Billfish Tournament 2017

Costa del Sol, El Salvador

November 8-11, 2017

### Stuart Light Tackle 2017

Stuart, Florida

December 7-10, 2017



## YETI Donates Tumblers to IGFTO

YETI Marketing Manager Evan Russell and IGFTO President Steve Hargett met at the ICAST fishing show in July. YETI, known for their unique coolers, agreed to donate 50 tumblers for IGFTO fundraising efforts.

Here is a prototype of the new IGFTO tumbler which we expect to appear in our [Ship's Store](#) soon.

We're here for you.

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*International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the “catch and release” of bill fish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.*

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