



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

# The IGFTO Observer

*A Newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers*

Volume 11

Edition 2

## First Ever Youth Career Day An IGFTO Sponsored Event

By Steve Hargett



*Aqua Inspiration attendees and volunteers. IGFTO President Steve Hargett is front and center.*

After months of planning, the International Game Fish Tournament Observers, Inc., (IGFTO), Junior Achievement-Costa Rica, and Marina Pez Vela hosted the first-ever Youth Career Day, entitled Aqua Inspiration. The event kicked off on Wednesday June 1st, 2022.

### **Kickoff Dinner Hosted by IGFTO**

Twenty team members and volunteers met at the Runway Grill in the afternoon of June that day for a walk-through of the planned events. Then they were treated to a dinner hosted by the IGFTO.

### **Critical Career Building Skills Taught**

The next day, personnel from the IGFTO and Junior Achievement-Costa Rica met all student and school administrative participants at the Liceo de Londres School (London High School). Everyone was presented with an event shirt. During the following three hours, students were instructed on critical career building skills

such as team building, communication, self-presentation, and leadership.

### **Students Met Experts in Fisheries Related Fields**

On Thursday morning, June 3rd, 72 junior and senior students arrived at Marina Pez Vela for a day of career opportunity. The students were divided into small groups and rotated through these “stations” accompanied by chaperones. These stations were staffed by the respective experts in their field. They rotated through these stations every 20-25 minutes.

They learned about marina operations including boat yard repair and maintenance. They met with representatives from the Costa Rica Coast Guard, as well as the Costa Rican Fisheries Federation (FECOP) where they learned about marine conservation and biology. They also received information about sport fishing including opportunities to become a captain or mate. They were taught various fishing techniques, and learned about opportunities in environmental stewardship. The day ended with lunch and a raffle of donated prizes.

### **A Resounding Success**

The event was a resounding success. This was evidenced by the enthusiasm and participation of the students. Many stations reported incredible attentiveness and insightful questions asked by the students.

### **Thanks to Volunteers, Sponsors and Donors**

Recognition needs to be given to all the volunteers, sponsors and donors, without whom the event would not have been nearly as successful. Thanks to Marina Pez Vela, Junior Achievement-Costa Rica, Quepos Tackle Shop, Unlimited Dive Shop, FECOP, Carmine Galati and Galati Yacht Sales, Greg Angel and Sea Angel Fishing Team, Team Ohana, Frank Mejias and IGFA, Adios Sportfishing, Crocodillo Sportfishing, Kelly Dawn Fishing Team, Runway Grill, and all the staff at Colegio Londres School.



*Aqua Inspiration, the first Youth Career Day, took place at the beautiful Marina Pez Vela in Quepos, CR.*

Story by Art McDonald

Michael Mata fell in love with offshore fishing the first time a friend took him shark fishing. That was a number of years ago. He had fished inshore and near-shore, but he didn't venture offshore until he was 18 years old. He was quick to succumb to the lure of game fishing, the peacefulness, and the camaraderie. He found that the food and drinks were just different 50 miles in the middle of the beautiful ocean with no one around – sound familiar?

He obtained his USCG 6-Pack License at the age of 20 and thought (like most of us) that he could use it to charter his boat – perhaps to make some extra money – but quickly found out there was no money in chartering. After long New Jersey runs, the cost of fuel and bait, and the wear-and-tear on his boat and himself, it took the fun out of it.

He did share one memorable experience on an overnight tuna fishing excursion 100 miles offshore on a friend's 33-foot boat. The ride out was uneventful, but that night the wind picked up and the water became extremely rough. In spite of having caught 27 large tuna and one swordfish, just about everyone on the boat got seasick! Conditions worsened with waves crashing over the tower and into the cockpit. The ride home should have been 3 hours, but it took more than 11. As fate would have it, they ran out of fuel two miles from the beach. They hailed the Coast Guard to assist and added to the call “do you guys have any beer?” – True fishermen!

Michael worked for Merrill Lynch in Red Bank, New Jersey as a financial advisor for 11 years, but got the call to move west and settled in Las Vegas, where he has resided for the past 15 years. He started an ATV Tour Company called Las Vegas ATV Tours, and also opened an eyelash salon. He has a five-year-old daughter, and spends half his time in Las Vegas and half in Costa Rica where he owns residences in Jaco and in Herradura. His love of fishing has him offshore almost 100 times a year in Costa Rica, Cabo San Lucas, Panama, and New Jersey – but most of the time in Costa Rica because he says, “I'm a fair weather fisherman these days!” AMEN!

He has owned several boats and participated in several big-game tournaments (Cabo, Quepos, North Carolina, Virginia White Marlin Open, and more. He has had his share of adventures along the way. When you meet Michael, ask him about fishing the FADS off Costa Rica, or the epic trip when he captained a ten-day trip from Los Angeles to Cabo San Lucas – fishing all the way. He enjoys playing poker (after all, he lives in Las Vegas), camping, hiking, traveling, collecting cars, and is also involved in charity and non/profit work. He also says he can't catch a freshwater fish to save his life.



*Michael Mata with a fresh caught yellow fin tuna.*

## **YOU MAKE THE CALL**

By Art McDonald

You are attending a Blue Marlin tournament in the Caribbean. IGFA rules prevail, but there are some additional rules in this tournament which are not common in others. This tournament focuses on individual achievement in addition to team participation. One of the rules is that each hour, on the hour, anglers must rotate rod positions in a clockwise manner in order for each angler to have access to the coveted “pitch bait” position (usually right corner).

At 10:58 am, two minutes before the anglers must rotate positions, the captain yells from the bridge “Blue Marlin left teaser.” The anglers race to their positions, and the fish disappears for 10 or 15 seconds – now the marlin has switched over to the right long, then races back to attack the right teaser, which is being

rapidly brought back to the boat. The pitch-bait angler, on the right side, pitches a rigged mackerel – and the observer notes, “11:00 am, switch” – right before the marlin inhales the mackerel and before anglers could rotate positions.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE OBSERVER DO?**

**Answer:** This is an actual situation that occurred in the 2021 San Juan International Billfish Tournament and led to a great deal of confusion. Technically, the observer was correct in pointing out that, under the strict interpretation of the tournament rules, a switch should have been made – albeit it would have been, virtually, impossible to accomplish. This is a prime example of why **the observer is not a judge**. The matter was brought to the tournament director, as well as a panel of selected judges, who ruled that no infraction had occurred. The tournament judges ruled “even though a switch was called for, the angler was engaged in the baiting of the fish, which did not violate the spirit of the rules.”

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## Industry News

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### **Welcome New Members**

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the IGFTO:

Richard Appen, Hutchinson Island, FL

Butch Carlson, Port St. Lucie, FL

John Charos, Deerfield Beach, FL

Esteban Cordero, Puntarenas, CR

Ron Duffee, Davie, FL

Keith Shay, Cocoa Beach, FL

Robert Smith, Turnersville, NJ

Carolyn Stash, Deerfield Beach, FL

Angelia Swanson, Key Largo, FL

Brandon Watkins, Quepos, CR

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