



ROB KRAMER began his term as the IGFA's sixth president in October 2002. Before joining the IGFA he worked for Florida's Division of Marine Fisheries where he distributed fisheries research data to the fishing public and represented recreational fishermen on various regional and national fisheries management bodies. Rob is also the founder of Fish Florida, a non-profit organisation that provides fishing opportunities and conservation information to Florida's citizens.

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A release for the record

A new IGFA record category requiring anglers to release their catch alive is stimulating interest in techniques for live measurement and best release practices. As IGFA President Rob Kramer explains, some surprisingly big fish are already making the grade.

In speaking with anglers around the world, I am often confronted with the statement, "I do not seek world records because I believe in releasing all my fish". It is a common misperception that a catch must be killed to be eligible for an IGFA world record. Not only is this incorrect for most existing records based on weight, but the IGFA has recently added an entirely new record category, based solely on length, that actually *requires* anglers to release the fish alive to qualify.

Current IGFA Rules state: "*Fish weighed only at sea or on other bodies of water will not be accepted.*" However, this rule does not preclude one from transporting a fish to a place where it can be weighed on terra firma, then released back into the water alive. IGFA Rules require compliance with all local and national laws, so you need to make sure this is allowed in your locality before attempting. While, for obvious reasons, this would still be impossible for some species such as large tuna, sharks and billfish, there are still many big fish that are caught, weighed and released alive. The largest to date is a 385lb lemon shark caught off Key West, Florida by renowned record-holder Dr Marty Arostegui. After being caught in accordance with all IGFA rules, the fish was placed in a custom-made, live-well 'coffin' and transported to an IGFA certified scale on shore. Having successfully weighed the shark horizontally in a sling to minimise damage, the big fish was carefully placed back in the water, properly revived and released in good health.

On January 1st of this year, the IGFA proudly launched the new All-Tackle Length record category that makes 60 freshwater and 67 saltwater species eligible for new world records. This new record category *requires* the fish be released alive. Since

these 127 new world record vacancies became available, the IGFA's World Records office experienced a flurry of new competition.

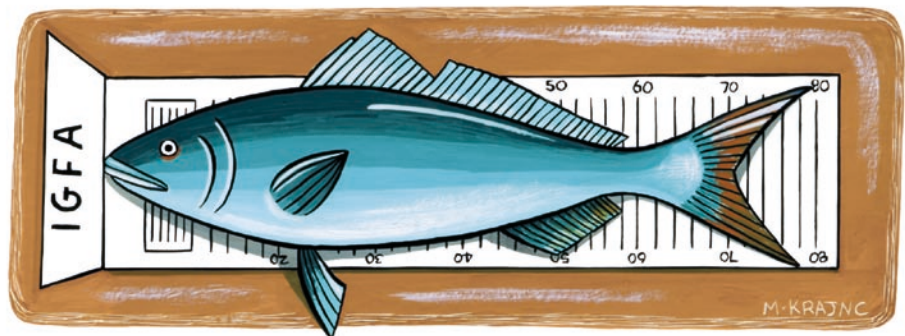
For a record to qualify, in addition to following all IGFA angling rules during the fight and capture, two things must happen. First, the fish must be measured at the site of capture and released so that it can swim away on its own and in good condition. To facilitate a healthy release, IGFA also provides a document that includes tips on best release practices and prohibits fish entered for length records from also being submitted for traditional weight records. This serves as a deterrent to keeping the fish out of the water any longer than necessary.

Additionally, the fish must be weighed on an official IGFA Measuring Device. The IGFA requires the use of this specially designed tool to both ensure standardisation

(with double line and leader still connected, if used) to be submitted along with the application.

Aside from the influx of submissions for the new record categories, the IGFA has already received a number of good suggestions on possible improvements or further expansions to the 'live release' concept. Specifically, many anglers have requested the addition of line class categories and expanding the list of eligible species. Based on the level of excitement, these requests are certainly possible in the future. For now, however, the focus at IGFA will be to promote the current program and identify and address any unforeseen issues that may arise, as more and more of these records are submitted.

With the rapid advancements in technology, it is quite easy to imagine a day when we point a camera or similar device at a fish and through the use of laser technology (similar



of measurements and provide a 'fish friendly' surface upon which to place and photograph the catch. The full length of the fish on the measuring device, clearly showing both the tail and the position of the mouth against the nose stop must be submitted with the application. To purchase your Official IGFA Measuring Device visit the IGFA online store at: <http://store.igfa.org/Category/21-igfa-world-record-tools.aspx>. As with all other IGFA records, a line sample is still required

to bar-code readers) we will be able to determine the exact weight and dimensions of gamefish while they are still in the water. Until that time, we encourage all anglers to practise good fish handling and release tactics. If you are looking to finally get your name in the IGFA World Record Book and release your fish to fight another day, now is the time. To find out more about IGFA's new All-Tackle Length category, go to: www.igfa.org/Fish/All-Tackle-Length-Rules.aspx 🐟

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