

IGFA Decision on the All-Tackle World Record Muskellunge

On February 6, 2009, the World Record Muskie Alliance (WRMA) received the following email from the International Game Fish Association (IGFA). This is Jason Schratwieser's response to Rich Delaney's questions regarding the decision on Mr. Johnson's record. (Dania Beach is two hours ahead of Chicago time).

From: Jason Schratwieser [mailto:JSchratwieser@igfa.org]
Sent: Fri 2/6/2009 4:09 PM
To: Delaney, Richard
Subject: RE: Cal Johnson Muskellunge Record

Mr. Delaney,

I can understand that the WRMA is displeased with our decision on this, but I am afraid it is final. Your report has been vetted at the highest possible level at IGFA. Again, we simply do not feel that the Photogrammetry analysis is sufficient for us to rescind this record. I do appreciate the time and passion that your organization has put forth on this, but we are resolute in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jason Schratwieser
Conservation Director
International Game Fish Association
300 Gulf Stream Way
Dania Beach, FL 33004
954-924-4320
www.igfa.org

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

-----Original Message-----

From: Delaney, Richard [mailto:rdelaney@bsd2.org]
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2009 4:15 PM
To: Jason Schratwieser
Cc: Delaney, Richard
Subject: Cal Johnson Muskellunge Record

Dear Jason,

We at the WRMA are puzzled by the news of the IGFA's decision to uphold the All-Tackle Muskellunge record on the grounds that the governing rules committee, "...did not feel that the fish's

weight could accurately be refuted with the methodology presented in the report.”

Given that this is nearly the identical verbiage used in your initial rejection letter, we are led to conclude that the IGFA followed one of two, mutually-exclusive paths in arriving at its decision:

- The IGFA chose to ignore the findings of the peer-reviewed photogrammetric analysis contained in the WRMA’s report.
- The IGFA disagrees with the findings of DCM Technical Solutions regarding the actual length of this particular fish.

Photogrammetry is a science that has been validated by countless scientific journals. Dan Mills is a nationally-recognized expert in the field of photogrammetry. The work he completed with regard to Mr. Johnson’s muskellunge passed a formal peer review before being forwarded to the IGFA.

Given the highly specialized nature of the field of photogrammetry, it is hard to imagine that an internal IGFA committee would have the resources available to independently arrive at *any* decision regarding the “methodology” contained in the Johnson report.

Jason, you are correct in assessing that we put a tremendous amount of work into this report. In recognition of the more than two years of effort our organization put into making this research available to the IGFA, we’re hopeful that you can extend to us the professional courtesy of answering how this portion of our report was addressed by your committee in order that we may be able to better understand how to make our research more accessible to a general audience.

We remain steadfast in our belief that much like the weight of a person, the approximate weight of a fish can indeed be reasonably determined using photogrammetry, two-dimensional photographs and the resulting dimensional measurements. The professionally rendered photographic evidence of Mr. Johnson's muskellunge clearly falls well short of the claimed 60.25" length and therefore, by way of extension, well short of the claimed 67 lbs. 8 oz. weight.

Furthermore, it would seem such an egregious discrepancy in reported length would necessarily invalidate Mr. Johnson’s

original sworn affidavit, thereby making it incumbent upon any self-respecting “governing rules committee” to immediately disqualify Mr. Johnson’s muskellunge on this basis alone. Jason, if you would be so kind as to direct your response to the above email, it would be very much appreciated. As always, we ask for complete confidentiality regarding your ruling to allow us ample time to fully explore our options.

Thank you,

Rich Delaney
President,
World Record Muskie Alliance
rdelaney@bsd2.org

Laser Technology

Although the WRMA was obviously disappointed with the IGFA ruling, we were equally as disappointed with the explanation from Jason Schratweiser, who apparently was speaking for the entire organization.

JS 2-13-09 "No, we do not have staff that are experts in the "science" of photogrammetry. We don't have doctoral level physicists onboard either, but would still have the justification not to accept laser technology as a method to estimate the weight of a fish.

This comment by Jason Schratweiser regarding supposed "laser technology" clearly reflects how uninformed his position is because laser technology has absolutely nothing to do with photogrammetry. It certainly appears to be an unwitting admission to the lack of research conducted by members of the IGFA with regard our report.

However, let us assume for the sake of argument that the WRMA report actually did contain some form of laser technology. It would outwardly appear that the IGFA is unwilling to consider *any* technology to help maintain their records program.

Rejecting any useful information or technology, especially one as precise as photogrammetry, exhibits a lack of due diligence for an organization as well funded and mighty as the IGFA. The WRMA is of the opinion that if records are to be kept they should be able to be confirmed accurate by *any* means or technology.

Mr. Hayes All-Tackle Smallmouth Bass Record

The WRMA graciously reminded the IGFA of the strong similarities between our report and the methodology used by them to reinstate the smallmouth bass record. The following quotes and other information are readily available on the Internet regarding the IGFA decision process for the reinstatement of Mr. Hayes smallmouth bass record.

"(IN 2003 the IGFA refused to accept the evidence presented to them and refused to recognize the Hayes fish as the record)."

"(Update: 2004 The IGFA says it will not reopen the case under any circumstances. It does not recognize any fish that there is any controversy over)."

"(Update: 2005 Ron Fox, assistant director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, brought evidence to the IGFA that convinced them to reinstate the record. Some of the most compelling evidence is the length and girth measurements of the Hayes smallmouth bass)."

"Further investigation also found that the dimensions of Hayes' fish would make it very unlikely to weigh 8 lb 15 oz when you compare it to Mr. Gorman's record with its dimensions of 26 ¼ inches in length and 21 ½ inches in girth. Based on this information, the IGFA decided to reinstate David Hayes' catch as the All-Tackle smallmouth bass record, said Schratwieser."

Incredibly, it was only after Jason Schratwieser was taken to task in the media that he finally agreed to have the Hayes smallmouth bass record reinstated, and dimensions must have played a key role in authenticating the weight. It is very puzzling that the IGFA is not willing to consider a peer-reviewed report documenting fish dimensions that were grossly exaggerated in the case of the muskellunge after this reinstatement was based on dimensions in the smallmouth bass case.

Obviously, there would have been no reason for Mr. Johnson to exaggerate the measurements of his fish if it actually weighed as much as claimed.

IGFA Mission Statement

The International Game Fish Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping.

"the promotion of responsible, *ethical angling practices through science*, education, rule making and record keeping." The WRMA is of the opinion that the IGFA did not adhere to their mission statement when they discounted the scientific proof (and a mountain of collateral supporting evidence) pertaining to the muskellunge record.

The IGFA mission statement certainly mandates proper research into *any* science or technology they are not familiar with, especially before rendering a decision as important as this one.

Summary

The WRMA is supremely confident that the Johnson Summary Report has met the scientific standard necessary to rescind this record. Although the WRMA cannot be certain what the correct record should be at this time, we are certain it is not Mr. Johnson's 1949 muskellunge. We are of the opinion that the IGFA protocol to remove or reinstate a record should always be consistent, and of course accurate.

The WRMA goal, as always, is simply to have and maintain a legitimate muskellunge record for future generations. We remain confident that the scientific and mathematical research contained within this report exceeds the protocol already set in place with similar decisions made by the IGFA recently.

JS 2-13-09 "I will tell you that during its 70 years of existence IGFA has seen record protests such as this come and go. We have no issues whatsoever with other organizations keeping separate and/or different records, but it is our extensive history and credibility that allows IGFA to be universally regarded as the world's keeper of records. Good luck to you sir."

Faced with this rather shocking e-mail from Jason Schratwieser, in utter frustration, the WRMA has abandoned a working relationship with the IGFA. We are confident the IGFA has received their share of record protests over the years, however, we are just as confident they have never received a protest the likes of this one either.

It is our sincere hope that concerned journalists and industry professionals alike will not simply turn away from this desecrated muskie record. Sadly, it is apparent that the media will need to hold the IGFA just as accountable with the muskie record as with the smallmouth bass record before the IGFA will consider taking any affirmative action.

Sincerely,

Rich Delaney, President WRMA
Jerry Newman, founder WRMA
George Will, chief researcher WRMA