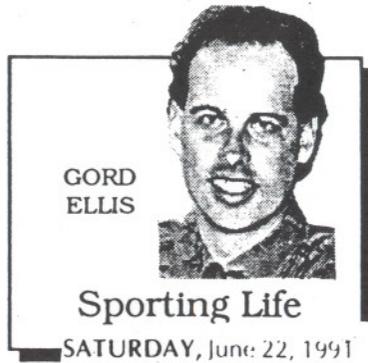


Fishing boat said to put 'live' back in 'live release'

“CATCH AND RELEASE fishing tournaments continue to increase in popularity across Canada and the United States at a rate that is almost unbelievable,” says Bob Izumi, arguably Canada’s most well known tournament fisherman. Izumi, who spoke on the future of tournament fishing to the Outdoor Writers of Canada recently in Niagara Falls, Ont., also said that he expected that the growth of catch and release tournaments would not peak in North America for at least ten years. Izumi also said that the U.S. sports networks are rapidly developing tournament fishing into a TV friendly spectator sport along the lines of the PGA golf tournaments and he expected that we would see live televised competition between bass pros within the next year.

Now this expansion of tournament fishing may excite those people who thrive on competitive fishing, but there have been some hard questions asked recently about what the long-term effects on fisheries these live release tournaments are. Last year, during a mid summer walleye tournament on Rainy Lake, the people at In-Fisherman who sponsored the event had a public relations nightmare on their hands when they found out that the mortality rate of the walleye they were releasing was 97%. The fallout from this tournament was enough to make the state of Minnesota set up strict guidelines about when and where live-re-

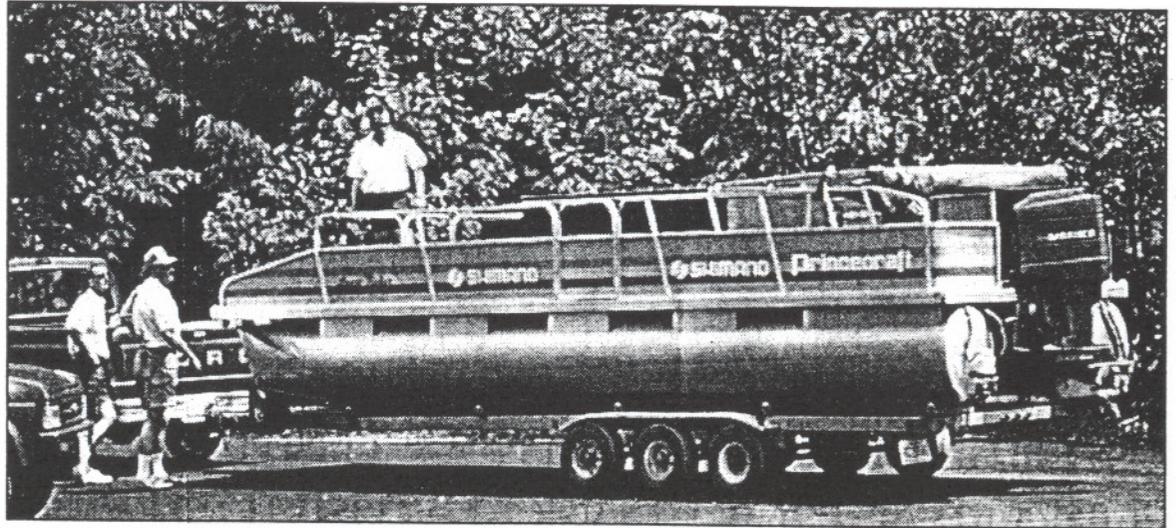


lease tournaments could be held. It also made everyone in the industry more aware just how delicate the line between competition and unwitting slaughter could be.

As part of a campaign to improve the survival of fish caught in these tournaments, Shimano of Canada has designed a state of the art live-release tournament boat. According to Phil Morlock, the director of Shimano’s sport fisheries initiative, the boat was developed to minimize mortality rates of fish resulting from handling stress during Canadian tournaments.

“We feel it is essential to the future of the fishery resource that tournament fish are released in good health and are in areas of the lake which provide immediate access to preferred habitat,” said Morlock. “This live-release boat eliminates the major causes of dockside release mortality and virtually ensures that fish mortality is nil.”

The boat, which was on display at the OWC conference, is a very impressive piece of engineering.



Shimano photo

Phil Morlock, left, shows Bob Izumi, in boat, and Steve MacDonald one of three live-release tournament boats

The 24-foot Princecraft pontoon boat has a modified design which supports the 360 gallon onboard water tank. The tank itself is divided into three compartments by a baffle system which provides stability in rough water. Each compartment is serviced by a compressed air aerator system and has an individual 10-by-16 inch trap door for releasing fish at several locations. A 2,000 gallon-per-hour pump supplies water to the tank from an intake pipe six feet below the lake surface. Recirculating pumps keep the water fresh in the tank when the boat is moving and a chemical solution is added to the tank to relax the fish and help replace their protective slime.

The ship itself is powered by a 100 h.p. Mariner outboard and

has five Voyager marine batteries on board to power the air and water pumps which provide life-support for the fish. One main control panel, complete with sonar, regulates the system.

The design of this boat is the result of two previous prototypes designed by Tom Brooke and Don Lloyd of Shimano, Canada, Ltd., and Dennis Guilmette of Altra Marine Products in Princeville, Que.

“The 1991 model uses all the best features of the two previous release boats and is the only one of its kind in North America,” said Brooke. “By releasing fish near deep water dropoffs after they are relaxed, we are able to match temperature and habitat requirements to eliminate stress factors.”

In situations that may require a lot of travel from weigh-in area to release site, the boat may be transported fully loaded on its tri-axle trailer. The tanks are covered to shade the fish and to minimize water loss from splashing and the self-contained battery system keeps the life support system operating constantly.

In co-operation with Altra Marine, Shimano has built three live-release boats for 1991; two for use in Canada and one for the States.

“Tournament sponsors and anglers share responsibility for returning fish to the water in the best possible condition,” said Morlock. The Shimano live release boat combines the best science and engineering to accomplish that result.”