

TO: Stewart Campbell
FROM: Billy Pate

In response to your request when we met in Costa Rica in early March, here are suggestions for consideration in regard to Fly Fishing Rules.

Suggested Fly Tackle Rules Changes and Additions

1. One meter shock leader – to make skill more important than luck. The angler willing to spend lots of time and money presently has the advantage because of luck, rather than skill most of the time *on the take*. The bill of billfish and the teeth and rough skin of a Mako shark, and the jaws of a tarpon sucking in a fly while coming head on toward the fly fisherman and swallowing it down over 12 inches can cut the tippet easily in two. The longer shock leader would give skill an advantage over luck and chance.
2. Gaffs and Nets – Use the same wording for the fly class as is presently used for the regular class. There are serious dangers using gaffs without a rope attached. I was slammed down on the gunwale of the sportfishing boat when I gaffed a marlin world record for a friend. I thought all my ribs were broken. They were sore for 6 months. I have had tarpon guides pulled out of my boat four times gaffing flyrod caught tarpon. They were all in areas where there were giant sharks that I have seen cut a 150 lb tarpon in two. I don't want to see my friends killed by sharks. I also saw a mate who had gaffed a flyrod hooked blue marlin and had been slammed down on the gunwhale. He had four broken ribs.
3. Use the same harness wording for fly tackle that is presently used for general regular class. I have fought a tarpon for 12 hours. I fought another one (184/8 lbs) for 7.5 hours that was still strong enough to pull my guide overboard when it was gaffed. I also fought a blue marlin for 7.5 hours. Fighting fish that big and strong is entirely different from the fish that were being caught in 1963 when the Saltwater Flyrodders of America drafted their rules which were later adopted by the International Game Fish Association. Using the harness allows the back muscles to take part of the load off of the arms while fighting fish over 100 pounds for many hours.
4. If the Gaff and Nets Rule is adopted for the flyrod class I would suggest two new rules to give a fair advantage to the fish. These two rules were part of the rules that applied to the International Billfish Fly Tournament that I put on in Costa Rica for 13 years. First, no fish may be gaffed until 2 minutes after hookup, in order to give the fish a chance to realize he is hooked. Second, no chumming after hookup to bring the fish close to the boat for gaffing.

I have some flyrod records in the record book that would probably, in the future, be affected by the adoption of these 5 suggested rules.