

# capt. mark wisch

Details, Details, Details:

*Gear up  
your rig for  
offshore  
ACTION*



*The total amount of decisions and details that go into any new rig are staggering, but they are all important*

**M**y introduction to West Coast marlin fishing started way back in the sixties aboard our 19' Larson *Intrepid*. My dad was a computer guy and had an East Coast IBM troubleshooter out from Florida to help him with some problems on a new installation.

The guy was a self-proclaimed sailfish expert and had agreed to help us catch our first marlin. On the morning of our trip, he strutted down our dock, carrying a long whippy rod with an old Penn reel spooled with a couple hundred yards of tired looking 80-pound line. I questioned him on the gear and he again told us how he would show us how to catch one of the marlin we had found so frustrating.

A couple of hours later we slowed down off the East End of Catalina Island. Two rigged flying fish went back into the wake, skipping from our homemade bamboo outriggers with clothespins from the laundry line for releases and a rubber band wrapped around for extra tension. We didn't have to wait long for action.

As luck would have it, the marlin tailed up behind the sailfish expert's bait, fol-



The Tiara 3900 Pacific Edge will participate in all the local marlin tournaments this season. The Maximizer outrigger mount pictured here is set in the number three position. A good sonar array is a must.



lowed for a couple of seconds, crashed the bait and took off over the horizon. He grabbed his rod, set the hook with a long sweep back and was totally unprepared for what happened next. The marlin exploded from the water going the opposite direction as the boat and within seconds the expert noted this was no puny sail, but something with some serious horsepower.

He proceeded to thumb the spool to try to stop the fish... BIG MISTAKE! With a howl of disbelief, that thumb got smoked so he switched hands and tried it again with the other for an identical result and another yelp of pain. With two smoking thumbs held high, the reel was instantly emptied with a tremendous CRACK as the line snapped at the spool and the marlin continued to jump towards the horizon at warp speed. We were bummed we lost the fish but couldn't help laughing at the stunned disbelief expressed by our expert. Once we got under control, I marveled at the power, speed and grace of the living neon flash as it headed for parts unknown. I was totally hooked!

All these years later I can still clearly remember that day, the impressions were so

indelibly etched on my young mind. I could not believe the excitement, the adrenaline rush, the anticipation of a dream resolved and the crushing sense of loss as the line parted. Those feelings are as true today as they were then. Nothing has changed. I still hate to lose a fish.

For the next 30 some years, I pursued marlin with a relentless desire. I was very fortunate to grow up tutored by the best of the best in the Long Beach area, guys like Mike Callan, Ed Martin, Paul Albrecht, Charlie Davis, Warren Merrill, Bill Strickland, Bill Lescher, George Williams and many more. These were the best marlin skippers of their day and I learned from them all and put the knowledge to good use. We caught a lot of marlin during lots of seasons. Then one day I just felt it was over and I didn't fish them for most of a decade.

But nothing stays the same. Two years ago a phone call from my friend Rob Webster convinced me to fish the Peskies (Los Pescadores fishing club) tournament with Rob Espinosa on the *Pescabolic* and we caught the first fish of the tourney. We backed it up with a tough one in bad weather on the trip home and all those feelings suddenly flooded back. On the way home I thought to myself, "Oh boy... here we go again." I had no idea how true those thoughts would prove to be!

Today, there is a brand new Tiara 3900 convertible docked at the Crow's Nest yacht brokerage in Newport Beach. It's an awesome rig and uniquely special: the name on the transom is *Pacific Edge*. My task as a newly appointed Crow's Nest pro staffer... get this new model out and about and catch some fish. Well... I can do that.

For the past few weeks, the process of making the boat fish-ready has been in high gear and more bait was the first order of business. I took my saws-all and cut out a big hunk of cockpit console. Then we filled the void with a beautifully designed custom bait tank from my Parker boat partner, Jon Anders of SeaPro marine fabrication. The stock cockpit tank got a reworked coaming and redesigned inlet and drain screens. Up forward, a custom bow tank fit snugly to the contour of the cabin top. My philosophy about bait is very simple... too much is never enough. I think we are going to be okay.

But all the capacity in the world is no good if you get out on the grounds and the

bait dies. Down in the engine room I spent some serious time to put together the pump and plumbing for the new tank. The pump is made by Marine Products and they call it "Little Squirt," although it's anything but as it does over 25 gallons per hour. With a stainless housing and impeller and a newly redesigned motor, this is the ultimate small bait pump. We've also got a newly designed bait alarm fit into the system. Made by Signet, it utilizes the same time-tested technology as their proven knot meters. When the siren goes off in the middle of the night, you may lose some sleep, but you'll save a tank of bait, a worthwhile tradeoff.

Most stock sportfishers have a stainless bow rail that may look good and work all right when picking up a mooring stick or harbor cruising. But when the time comes to cast a bait at a spot of feeders or slide up on a tailer tacking downswell, a little more support goes a long ways toward that secure feeling when loading the rod to make a long cast. So we've adjusted the height of the rail as well as adding a toe rail for extra security. I love being locked in, ready to make that per-

fect cast. That feeling goes a long ways towards building the confidence that allows you fish at the top of your game.

Outrigger technology has come a long way from the homemade riggers I mentioned at the start of this article. Although the principles are the same, the gear is vastly improved and we fish better because of it. On the Tiara, we've got a pair of 18' Pompanette riggers on side mount bases. The bases are mounted to a pair of Precision Maximizers, an additional adjustable mount designed to lower the riggers closer to horizontal. The bases are mounted on the aft wing of the bridge, high enough so as not to restrict access in the mad rush to get forward when it's time to throw a bait.

The advantages of the Maximizers are twofold: the lures or baits are moved farther outside the wake so they are in clean water and the flat angle of the riggers lets you keep the lures closer to the boat. We added a separate halyard and release for a teaser setup so each rigger sports two rigs. A double pulley setup keeps tension on the lines and in turn is fastened to the boat with a heavy duty elas-

if it looks like there are  
no strings attached

there's a catch

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