

How to Promote a Fishing Tournament

YAMAHA OUTBOARDS

Japan

INTRODUCTION

Yamaha Outboards has prepared this guide to help you in promoting your club's fishing tournament. It also includes ideas on additional activities and a few tips on enlisting the support of manufacturers in promoting your event.

PLANNING STARTS EARLY

As soon as your club sets the date for your tournament, it is time to assign a responsible person to handle the publicity and promotion of the tournament. It is a big job, and the person will need to form a committee to help with all of the details.

Once the committee has been formed, individual assignments should be made. If at all possible, don't have the same person who is responsible for publicity also be responsible for selling advertising in a tournament program or soliciting sponsors. The functions are separate, and should remain so. The committee needs to consider the following:

1. Advance publicity.
2. Tournament on-site activities.
3. Follow-up publicity.
4. Creating a turn-over file.

MAILING LISTS

Before you can contact the press, you have to know who they are and where they work. Chances are, you'll already be aware of who the outdoor writers are in your area, and which media they work for.

Assign someone to work up a list of the media that you feel are most likely to give exposure to your tournament. Be sure to include the Chamber of Commerce, State Tourism and Game and Fish Departments. If given sufficient time, they may be able to include information of your tournament on their calendars, which they regularly send out to the media.

As you begin to compile the names and addresses of the press, check to see if there is a state or regional outdoor writer's association. These are professional associations with members who write about outdoor recreation. If so, obtain their member's addresses and add those to your list. Check with the individuals for their interest and deadlines.

Categorize your list into weekly and daily newspapers, radio and television stations (don't forget cable television stations), and magazines. Compiling the

mailing list is hard work, and often the success of your publicity efforts can hinge on the quality of your list. Since you'll be sending out more than one press release, it's a good idea to have the addresses typed on labels that can be machine-copied. If you have access to a computer, use it to create a mailing list.

Be sure you add other fishing clubs to your mailing list. They can alert their members to your tournament. After you have compiled your mailing list, it's time to alert the press about your up-coming tournament. There are two tools you'll use repeatedly: The press release and the telephone. The press release will be your "silent salesman" and you'll use the telephone to make your many calls to the media.

THE PRESS RELEASE

A press release is a notice to the media written in journalistic style containing certain essential information about your event. As basic as it seems, there have been clubs that have sent out publicity releases about events or tournaments without including dates, contact information, entry fees, or other important information. The reporter needs this information for his or her story to make sense to the reader. If you don't include the basics, you lessen your chances of getting publicity. A press release should include the following:

1. Contact information—be certain the name, address and telephone number (home or work) of the publicity coordinator is included in the release. Place it either at the top or the bottom of the page, just be sure it's easy to find.
2. Date your release—if you plan to send several releases about your upcoming event, then a date will help you and the media. The date tells them the release is current.
3. Be certain the information is appropriate—A press release telling about your tournament isn't the place for everyone in the club to get his name mentioned. What's important is to list what's going to happen and when.
4. Type and double-space the release--there should be no errors or strike-overs, for these mistakes tend to confuse and could delay your publicity. Double-check your work, then have someone else double-check it before you mail it. Pay particular attention to addresses and telephone numbers.
5. Be brief—try to keep your release to no more than one page in length. If you can't, then be sure you include the word "more" at the bottom of the first page, and number the following pages. This technique helps the media. Try not to break a paragraph from one page to the next. Important information can get lost if the pages get separated.
6. Keep paragraphs short and to one subject-- The first paragraph, or the "lead," should be brief and to the point. Put your most important

information in the lead—tournament name, date, and location. You can add additional information in the following paragraphs.

7. A headline will help—Type in a short headline at the top of your release. It helps the editor quickly identify what your release is all about. Use all capital letters. Example:

YAMAHA
GRAND NATIONAL
BASS TOURNAMENTT
BEGINS NOV. 6

7. If you use photography in your publicity, there are certain requirements. Identify the people in the photograph from left to right. Don't write on the back of the picture unless you are using a felt tip pen, and then write only in the margin. Captions should be attached with rubber cement to the back of the photo. Don't use glue, paper clips or staples.
Although color photography looks great, some publications might not be able to use color. Send only black and white photos to print media, and color slides to television stations. Make certain you protect the photos you mail with a stiff cardboard insert and indicate on the envelope that it contains photos. Bent or creased photos aren't likely to get used.
8. Use your club's letterhead for your press release. It will add credibility to your effort, and looks more professional. Make certain your copies are of good quality. A release that can't be read means you will not get exposure.

A MEDIA KIT

Sometimes a single press release is not adequate to promote your tournament. It is to your benefit to provide as much information about your club, its activities, and the nature of the tournament. Don't pre-judge what the media will not need or use. Your information can be kept in files for future use. A complete press media kit may be the right tool to help you and it should include:

1. Background sheet
 - what your club or group is all about.
 - details of the tournament.
 - club history.
 - largest or most fish caught.
 - previous winners.
 - tell how much has been raised (if a charity benefit) .
 - list of key personnel and contact information.
2. Schedule of events
 - include a tournament entry form--Depending upon the type and format of your tournament, your information will vary. However, it should include name, time, date, location, and directions to the tournament site.

- include a map if possible. Offer use of an escort, sometimes lakes and marinas can be hard to locate.
 - name of marina or tournament site.
 - weigh-in time.
 - awards ceremony time.
 - the leader of each function.
3. Press release--keep it to one page. It is not necessary to name everyone on every committee. The media are not interested in that angle. They will want information about the event.
 4. Other information to include
 - information on prizes offered.
 - number of contestants expected.
 - any unusual entries—father & daughter; youngest or oldest entry; most distant entry; and so on.
 - list of participating organizations. For example, the tournament might be for area bass clubs, women or men only, or Boy's Clubs.
 - a story on the tournament site might be appropriate.
 - you can offer information about area fishing. Perhaps there is a new development that might make an additional story. If you can offer additional story ideas, you're increasing your chances of coverage.
 5. Photography from last year's tournament
 6. Include press ID pass and parking access permits--Unless your event is new, you probably have some photographs from last year's tournament. Use good sharp black and whites for print media and color slides for television. If you do not have photographs and are awarding fishing-related prizes, then the manufacturer will probably have appropriate photography showing the product in use. Ask for as many copies as you think you'll need. They will be eager to help.

Indicate where parking will be available, and ensure that it is as close as possible to the main activity area.

TIMING YOUR PUBLICITY FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT

As soon as your club confirms the date for your tournament, send out a brief news release stating that the club has set the date for its annual tournament. Give date, location, and a telephone number for further information. Although this release will not be your only publicity effort, this early alert enables publiciations with long deadlines and calendars to include the information. Further, if you're mailing the release to other clubs, it may enable them to set a date for their activities so as not to cause a conflict. Here are some common deadlines:

Morning papers - Night before publication

Afternoon papers - As late as mid-morning day of publication

Weekly papers - Usually two days before publication date

Sunday papers - Early Saturday afternoon

Wire services - As appropriate

Magazines - Up to 3 months before publication date

Television - Contact assignment editor early in the week of event

Radio - As appropriate for spot news. Otherwise, 20 days for calendar listing.

Do not rely on this guide for exact deadlines. Each medium has different needs. Call the ones you are interested in and ask for specific deadlines.

Consider the lead time required, and work accordingly. Daily papers will probably not use your material more than two weeks in advance, and the same is true for weeklies. Broadcast media can't be expected to provide your publicity earlier than a week before, except for the outdoor-oriented shows. Even so, expect your publicity closer to the actual event. Some taped shows operate as far as five weeks in advance, so make certain you know your local deadlines.

BAD WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Whether or not fish bite better in the rain is a debate among experts, but one thing is certain—if you have bad weather, you're going to have problems. You need to be prepared for this contingency. If you are threatened with bad weather, you need to be ready to contact the media as soon as a decision can be made on whether or not the tournament will occur. Have your media list ready, so you will not accidentally leave someone out. Those media that you will want to contact are local or area radio, television, and area daily papers.

YOUR TOURNAMENT ENTRY FORM

Your entry form can be a very effective publicity piece for you. It should contain all pertinent information and be sized so that it will fit in a standard business envelope or designed as a self mailer. Put it to work for you. Distribute your form to:

1. Clubs
2. Marinas
3. Boat dealers
4. Tourism offices
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. Tackle stores
7. Gas stations
8. Motels or resort
9. Fishing guides

Check with promotion-minded dealers to see if they would include the form in the bills they mail out. Ask retailers if they would promote your tournament in their advertising.

Ask other clubs and tournaments preceding yours if they would pass out

your form at their event.

POSTERS

Posters are one of the oldest forms of advertising, and are very effective. However, the big drawback is they have to be seen in order to be of use. Ask store managers for permission and then place the poster in the window. By doing so, you know it actually was put up, and not set aside and forgotten by a busy clerk. Take along tape.

Ask retailers to enlist the aid of marketing representatives who call on them. They travel large territories and can help in distributing your posters and entry forms.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

If your tournament has been in existence for some time, you may have some slides already on hand. Ask to visit some of the service clubs in your community to show the slides and talk about the tournament. Pass out entry forms at the conclusion of your talk. Keep it brief. Most clubs have a tight schedule. Your appearance there may help in getting new members for your club.

CABLE TELEVISION

Chances are you have local cable television stations that can use information about the tournament on their "cable bulletin board." Check in early to find out their needs. Ask if they have any interest in taping your tournament for delayed broadcast.

TOURNAMENT ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

Tournament Press Facility

An organized effort at assisting the media at your tournament site will make your job and that of the press easier, and it will result in better exposure of your tournament.

Designate an area for the press. It can be a tent, RV, or other suitable facility. Have a place for the press to work—tables, chairs, etc. Ensure that there are appropriate refreshments on hand. Be ready at least two hours before you expect any press. This lead time will give you the opportunity to correct any problems that arise.

Designate a parking area for the press. If they are on deadline, the last thing they need to do is drive around looking for a place to park.

There should be someone on hand full-time to assist and keep the press room organized.

Prepare press ID and VIP tags. Keep unauthorized people out of the press

area. Sponsors' representatives and VIPs should be given access but not spectators.

Have at least two typewriters available. Make certain the ribbons are fresh and have plenty of plain paper available. If possible, install a telephone and a copy machine.

Keep a scoreboard with results and progress.

Your publicity coordinator should prepare tournament results as soon as possible after weigh-ins or award ceremony. If your tournament is a multi-day event, it's especially important to provide daily results to the media.

Have additional press kits available. Although you may have sent out kits, have several available.

Have a press boat available to take the press out for photos. Check with the different media the day before to see if they want to use the boat.

Have adequate communication equipment for your needs, either CB or portable walkie-talkies. Amateur radio clubs might want to get involved with your tournament. You can designate a particular CB channel in your entry form to enable contestants to check in with you if necessary.

Ask around to see if there are any other activities going on around your tournament. If there are, there is a chance the press might get mis-directed on the way in.

If you are giving away souvenirs such as caps or shirts, make certain you have plenty of them. These are highly desirable items, and have a tendency to disappear. It's better to have a few too many than not enough.

Press Conference

In many cases, the writers will approach the winners for interviews and photographs on their own. But, if you think you'll need to have a press conference, here's a checklist:

1. Designate in advance where the press conference will be held. Make sure the media receives the information.
2. Check out the facility for lights, speakers, electric outlets, and sound system. Make certain there is someone around who knows how to repair the systems. If something is going to break down, you can be certain it will happen just before you need it.
3. Know where the light switches are. Check in advance that they are operating.
4. Have press releases with the results or standings available.
5. Try to hold the conference inside where you can have better control over noise, lights, weather.
6. Provide refreshments.
7. If there's a telephone in the room, turn it off. A ringing telephone or

someone calling in results during the press conference can be very distracting.

8. Open the press conference with brief introductions. Briefly give any appropriate information—winner, leaders, how much fish he or she caught, and then open up the press conference to questions. Have the winners or leaders in the front of the room seated at a table. If you are using a lectern, have a sign with your club or tournament name prepared to hang in front, there is not a better place for exposure in photos.

A FINAL WORD ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Assign or hire a photographer to take photos of your tournament. Have him or her do nothing else but take photos. After the excitement of the tournament is over, the only records you're going to have of the event are your photographs. These photos are important for several reasons:

1. They can be used immediately for follow-up publicity.
2. They can be used for advance publicity with next year's tournament.
3. You can make different photos available to the media which might be able to use them at other times during the year, thus giving you additional exposure.
4. Memento photos for the winners are nice gifts.
5. Photos show your sponsors the exposure you gave them, and these same photos can be used when you seek additional sponsors for the next tournament. Some sponsors can make use of the photos in their own sales presentations or publicity efforts.

Be certain that your photographer uses a good 35mm camera and the right film. The photographer can determine which film once you tell him or her how you expect to use the photography.

Make a boat available to your photographer so actual fishing shots can be taken. Posed shots have their place, but candid showing people enjoying your tournament will be of more use to the media.

FOLLOW-UP PUBLICITY AFTER THE TOURNAMENT

So far we've dealt with pre-tournament promotion. Follow-up publicity is just as important. As soon as you have the results and the winner verified, prepare a press release for your mailing list. Do it the same day, if you can. You can prepare the envelopes in advance for immediate mailings.

Make certain any writers or camera crews covering the tournament receive your release before they leave. Even though they'll have their story, your release will be the official word, and can be used for reference. Call your local radio stations with the results. You'll have immediate impact and excellent chances of getting it on the air, since it will be "hot news."

Have your photographer provide you with a contact sheet of his work as soon after the tournament as possible. You want to provide the photos to the print media while the tournament is still news. If you know the papers sent their own photographer, you still should check to see if they have need for your photos. An 8x10 glossy black and white print is the best format to send.

ADDITIONAL PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Make More Prizes Available

Because tournament fishing is becoming so popular, it's becoming more and more difficult to stand out from the crowd, and the number of entrants brings mixed blessings. More entries means a larger and more successful tournament, but at the same time, more entries means higher odds against winning. To counter this problem, you can make prizes available "down the line," not just to the top 3 or 4 anglers.

One way to solve the problem of awards is to offer prizes according to placement. For example, offer a prize to the "Lucky 1st," with prizes given to 1st, 11th, 21st, 31st, and so on. In addition to the top prizes, you could offer the following:

1. Big Fish Award.
2. First angler in with a keeper.
3. Last angler in at weigh-in.
4. Lightest catch.
5. A drawing among those who "strike out" completely.
6. A general prize drawing for all.

If your tournament is structured so that there are shore anglers, offer a special prize for them. Tournaments shouldn't be limited just to those who have boats. Divide your tournament competition into different size boat or motor categories. Many weekend anglers stay away from tournaments because they don't have a big boat. Encourage their participation, and you'll help your organization and sportfishing as well.

Liar's Club

Everyone loves a good fish story. These can be a lot of fun and a good promotion to help generate interest. There are companies which might want to help support this promotion with prizes. It would also be nice to see if they would be interested in having someone do an advance story on fishing and the development of all the modern angling aids. Take them out a few days early with someone who is a savvy angler because not everyone has ridden in a fishing boat or knows all about the equipment. It can make for a very effective fishing promotion.

Student Involvement

Ask for help from student groups. Cheerleaders in uniform are a colorful addition to any event, and they can assist the tournament in providing runners, manning check-in tables, or keeping the scoreboard up to date.

Why not ask your local high school pep band to be on hand during the weigh-in? Their music will add to the excitement, and provide entertainment for the spectators.

Shoreline Activities

Add a fishing clinic. You can have it in advance to help drum up additional contestants and publicity, or have it on-site to help build a crowd as your tournament gets closer to weigh-in.

Add a kid's division for fishing from the shore. Get assistance from an allied service club if you don't have the manpower. Having plenty of activity at your tournament site makes for a more interesting event and is likely to draw more people.

Offer equipment demonstrations. Your local dealers and the manufacturers will appreciate the opportunity. Not everyone understands fishing electronics, or how to clean fish.

You can arrange to have someone demonstrate the fine art of backing a boat trailer. To the non-boater (and sometimes experienced boater) this process is very confusing.

Give people a chance to get involved by offering instruction in casting or bait-rigging.

Ask the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadron to give a clinic on boating safety. Your state game and fish department can also assist in this area.

Make a table available for free literature from manufacturers and support group.

GETTING MANUFACTURER'S SUPPORT

Ask manufacturer's service representatives to be on hand. Local dealerships can give aid to know there's help available if necessary. Stress to the anglers, however, that the reps are there for emergency service only, and not just to provide free routine maintenance. Check early, since schedules are often made out months in advance.

Look to other manufacturers for support. Start early with those manufacturers who have an interest in promoting fishing. Be courteous and be prepared to tell them what you are doing in the way of promoting the tournament. They'll want to help if they can. If they can't, thank them anyway, and ask when is the best time to contact them for help with next year's tournament.

As you can imagine, there are more good opportunities than there is budget to use. You'll have more luck with manufacturers if you offer them something positive in return for their support. Offer to provide space for a dealer to display his products. Keep track of what your members own and use. Have the tournament contestants fill in a questionnaire on what gear they own and use. Manufacturers are interested in what the anglers are using, and they'll appreciate the assistance.

Make certain the exposure you give sponsors is equal to the value of their support. A smaller amount of support shouldn't receive the same billing or exposure as a major contributor.

Take advantage of any prepared promotional items that are available such as Yamaha's Lunkerbags and promotional tournament signs. Lunkerbags are large plastic bags for use in carrying the live catch to the weigh-in stations. The signs are to give directions to the different stations, such as registration, weigh-in, parking, and so on. You'll benefit, and so will the companies involved.

Check to see if there are any special promotions available that would apply to your tournament. For example, some manufacturers offer cash or equipment to winners using their product. Yamaha, for example, offers a Tournament Bonus program to Yamaha owners who win First Place in an eligible tournament. The Bonus program has hundreds of eligible tournaments. Publicizing this angle in advance can add greatly to the prestige of your tournament and might bring in more contestants.

TURN-OVER FILE FOR NEXT YEAR

Keep good records of all that you have learned in creating your tournament publicity. In doing so, you'll make it easier for the person who has the job next time, and if you handle it again, you'll be glad that you kept all of the information together. Make certain you include all names, addresses, a complete set of press material, names of support people, contacts at manufacturers, invoices for printing and photography, and anything else that might seem important to have. If you can, keep a set of press clippings and tapes of broadcast exposure. You'll be able to judge what is of interest to the media, and you'll be able to show potential sponsors what sort of promotion they can expect from you.

YAMAHA OUTBOARDS AND FISHING

Yamaha outboard motors have been manufactured for over a quarter century and are used by fishermen in over 140 countries, including the United States. Whether the motors are used by commercial fishermen in saltwater, guides in the Florida Keys, fishermen trolling the Great Lakes, or bass anglers thundering across big water, they all want reliability and good performance and

Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute

they get it with Yamaha.

We know that tournament anglers are serious about their sport, and to help out, we've prepared this promotion guide and will send you a supply of tournament signs. We also have a Tournament Bonus Program for Yamaha Owners. Ask your local Yamaha dealer for details.

Let us know about your tournament.

Write: Yamaha Tournament Headquarters

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