

# BREAKING THE MOLD

A TINKERING ENGINEER FROM SOUTH FLORIDA PUT MOLD CRAFT'S SOFT HEAD LURES INTO SHAPE.



## FRANK JOHNSON

**AGE:** 66

**HOME PORT:**

Lighthouse Point, Florida

**YEARS IN THE BUSINESS:**

30-plus

**MOST POPULAR LURE:**

Wide Range

**TRADEMARK STYLE:**

Johnson always adds a lure, such as Super Chugger or Spooler, to the end of his squid daisy-chain teasers while trolling six knots for white marlin and sailfish.



NEARLY THREE DECADES ago Frank Johnson, an engineer with an aerospace firm, bought a tool-and-die company in South Florida and starting making various tackle products on the side. Among his many inventions were the aluminum Uni rod-butt and roller guides, lure keepers, rod holders and outrigger clips. A mold for a soft-plastic squid followed and two years later, with input from world-renowned skipper Peter B. Wright, the original Soft Head Hooker was born. The rest is angling history.

Today Mold Craft Lures boasts 1,000 products and a long list of sportfishing feats. The current all-tack-

le record for Atlantic blue marlin, 1,402 pounds on 130-class tackle, was taken on a Chugger-bird combination off Vitória, Brazil. The 80-pound-class record blue marlin of 1,190 pounds hit a Senior Wide Range Mold Craft lure.

**THE PERFECT FIT**

Multiple world-record-holder Stewart Campbell caught blue marlin of 1,028 and 1,141 pounds and released three more granders, among his many more notable catches on Johnson's lures. Captains Skip Smith and Trevor Cockle trolled Soft Head lures to set nearly 100 world records on the *Madam o Hooker* and

*Sound Machine*. Other well-known charter boat skippers, including Dave Noling, Paul Ivey, Joe Lopez and James Roberts are all dedicated Soft Head fans as well. To date, at least 33 marlin weighing 1,000 pounds or more have been landed on Mold Craft lures, along with dozens of world records and countless tournament wins. Despite this impressive record, however, Johnson continues to tinker.

"I released a 1,000-pound black ten years ago on a Senior Wide Range and killed a 722-pound bluefin tuna off Cape Cod more recently," Johnson said. "I caught it on one of my spreader bar squid rigs. And Jacko [Frank Johnson, III] and I won the Artmarina Father and Son Tournament using our Tuff Hoo plastic ballyhoo and circle hooks. I've always loved experimenting with new designs. It's how I have

been able to write off my fishing all these years."

Johnson typically starts trolling with a mixed color pattern and switches to lighter or darker shades depending on the response. Green-yellow to mimic dolphin and pink-white are his early picks, but his go-to lure is always a purple-silver-black Wide Range.

"You can go anywhere in the world and catch fish on that lure, especially if bonito are around," he said. "It's my all-time favorite."

## WIDE RANGE

Ask Frank Johnson, and he'll tell you his number-one lure is his Wide Range. It can be trolled at all speeds and does a great job of mimicking bonito.

