



Photos by Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer
Crew from the F/V Oppor-Tuna-Ty shot a scene at the Port of Ilwaco Boatyard in August 2017.

‘Battlefish’: Every boat had its own camera guy

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Walker: The producer came down for our tuna kickoff party. We took him fishing.

Brewer: They came to us a couple years ago. There were rumors about a Pacific Graveyard show but “Deadliest Catch: Dungeon Cove” beat it out. They didn’t think we were a good boat at first because there was a rumor that we were sporties (sport fishermen) and not commercial and the series was supposed to be straight commercial.

Walker: But we have a new program, it’s kind of old school versus new school philosophy. Our boat is faster. We go out there, catch all our fish, and bring them back the same day. We provide the freshest albacore in the world to our local community. That’s our goal. None is fresher unless you have a helicopter or a boat that’s faster than ours.

Q: When did the producer first approach you?

Walker: It was the Ilwaco Tuna Club kickoff party two years ago, in June of 2016.

Q: When did filming start and finish?

Walker: The show was filmed during the 2017 tuna season. A lot of things went back and forth like the contract negotiations.

Brewer: There were gag orders. We couldn’t talk about the show, not even a word until today.

Q: Approximately how many days did they film aboard your boat?

Walker: They were on our boat for 41 days of filming. They were down here two months total.

Q: What was it like being in front of the cameras?

Walker: At first it was kind of awkward. But the camera guy just became part of our crew and we just did our thing. You’re mic’ed up all day every day, so you’re just trying not to embarrass yourself.

Brewer: The first week was kind of weird.

Q: Did they pay you? How were you compensated?

Walker: Yeah, they paid us.

Q: How much?

Walker: We can’t talk about that.

Brewer: It’s not millions (Ha-ha). Our face is on TV — that’s the pay right now.

Q: Did they say how much they invested in the production?

Walker: There were rumors of \$11 million. They rented a whole hotel in Asto-



Members of the F/V Oppor-Tuna-Ty watched themselves on TV during an early episode of ‘Battlefish’ at the Ilwaco Tuna Club on Friday.

ria for two months. They spent some money.

Brewer: They had a lot of guys here. Their ground crew alone was 16 guys. Every boat had their own camera guy.

Q: What is the biggest difference between East Coast bluefin tuna — like that featured in the show “Wicked Tuna” — and West Coast albacore tuna fishing?

Walker: They may catch one fish a week that’s an 800- or 900-pounder. We’ll catch 100 or 200 tuna a day. They crank the handle, but our action is nonstop. We’re going up and over, slamming and jamming and fish flying everywhere. It’s chaos. They’re smaller fish but a lot more action.

Brewer: A lot of times they’re anchored up and chumming. We don’t have a hump we can hang on. It’s a big ocean and we have to look for them.

Q: The 2017 season was a tough one for tuna fishermen, right?

Walker: It was a tough year. It’s been another tough year this year as well.

Q: What’s the biggest challenge out there?

Walker: The fishing and the weather. Fishing is never guaranteed, especially on the ocean. There’s just a lot of variables. A lot of guys go to work every day, punch in at 8 and go home at 5 and make the money guaranteed every single day. With fishing we’re going to punch in about 6 and punch out at about 11, and hopefully, make some money — maybe. Every day is a gamble with at least \$1,500 on the table every time we push off. So you better catch some fish.

Q: Are there any fishing superstitions you follow?

Walker: We never like to say “You’re going to lose that fish.”

Brewer: We never comment on a calm ocean.

Because 10 minutes later ...

Q: What’s your record for most tuna caught in a day?

Walker: 280 is our single-day record. That was two weeks ago.

Q: The show was posted Friday, have you had time to watch?

Walker: We watched three episodes last night.

Q: What was it like seeing yourself on TV?

Walker: You can tell we’re tired. We’re all beat up. We look like we’ve been at war.

Q: Is there a particular scene that you’re excited to see?

Brewer: I’m excited about the whole thing, just how they did it. We had seven GoPros on our boat.

Walker: There’s a lot of high-definition cinematography, slow motion, underwater, drone footage — It’s sick.

Q: A lot of the reality shows revolve around drama. Did you anticipate that before filming began?

Walker: One thing we decided was we’re not going to talk trash about anyone. And then one guy just lit us up the first episode.

Brewer: They want drama.

Q: Did the producers try to instigate it?

Brewer: No. We’re natural trash-talkers (ha-ha).

Q: So you were careful to avoid the drama?

Walker: It’s never good business to bad-mouth your competition no matter what the situation is. That’s business 101.

Q: Do you think the show will be a success?

Walker: I think it will. I’ve been talking to the guys from Netflix and Pilgrim Studios and they’re proud of it. Netflix named a “Battlefish” conference room at their headquarters. I think everyone is excited about it.

Damage: ‘We should be working together to determine the cause’

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“There could be (a geotechnical issue), but there’s no credible evidence by someone who’s trained in identifying that,” he said. “At this point, it’s simply a statement on their part.”

The solution could be as inexpensive as taking core samples, establishing the weight limit on the slab that is cracking and possibly replacing it, Kobes said. “If it’s not thick enough, it may need to be thicker, or it could need

steel reinforcement,” he said.

Zupancic’s notice called on the Port to share equally in the cost of geotechnical and engineering studies of the issue and reimburse Lektro if the soils underneath the hangar are shown to be defective.

The Port and Lektro are also at odds about who would be responsible for any necessary repairs under Lektro’s lease, which states the “tenant shall maintain the leased premises and make all repairs necessary for maintaining the property.”

The Port has said Lektro is responsible for repairs to the hangar, while Lektro’s notice claimed the Port is responsible for any pre-existing construction defects or soil issues.

Jim Knight, the Port’s executive director, said he has directed the agency’s attorney to contact Lektro for a scope of work and preferred contractor.

“We should be working together to determine the cause,” he said. “Then we can figure out how the repair should be paid for.”

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