

# Pete Maina

## Outdoor Personality is just an 'Average Guy'

Terry Bitz of Outdoor Convergence

Pete Maina is one of the few Wisconsin outdoor personalities that have become well known outside of the relatively small confines of our state. He is often recognized as the long haired rock and roller type who loves muskie fishing. However, if you ask Maina, he will tell you he is just an average guy who loves the outdoors.

Born in Chicago, but raised since the age of four in the Hayward area, Maina has become one of the most well known muskie anglers in the nation. His fishing success back in the 1980's and 90's caused muskie anglers to stand up and take notice. His subsequent work as a muskie lure manufacturer, followed by a stint in magazine ownership, numerous appearances on Wisconsin's Waters and Woods television show, then co-hosting his own fishing television program, have expanded his notoriety across the United States and parts of Europe.



Maina's conservation work on behalf of the fisheries in our state earned my respect when I first met him in the early part of this decade. I also learned early on that he was not shy about voicing his opinion on a given subject. Whether it is conservation issues or politics, Maina is known for his willingness to take a side on an issue even when it is not convenient or popular to do so. While his direct approach may turn off a few people, many others respect his opinion even when they do not agree with it.

"I am far more black and white than most people and I think it's the best way to be"; Maina said in a recent interview with this reporter. "Political correctness is disease that needs to be eradicated."

**Pete Maina holding a very large and legal sized muskie that did not get killed.**

While he is not afraid to speak his mind on an issue, Maina says he is willing to change his opinion. He specifically mentions his mindset towards harvesting fish. As a young guide, catch-and-release was a foreign concept.

“I killed every single legal fish that came into the boat”; said Maina.

However, that changed as it became clear to him that our fisheries were finite resources and that harvesting top of the line predators such as muskies were detrimental to the resource.

Even though he is an advocate for catch and release fishing, he still enjoys keeping some fish for the table and spends a lot of time hunting as well. Maina says that he doesn't eat out much and prefers to eat wild game that he has harvested.

“It's safe to say there is very little purchasing of meat in the Maina household”; he said laughing.

Despite his work in the fishing industry, Maina says he probably enjoys hunting more than fishing.

“I enjoy hunting more than fishing, partly because I have not turned hunting into a job”; said Maina.



**Pete Maina (Right) holding a fish caught on Green Bay while filming with Mark Zone (Left)**

Despite his love for hunting, it's fishing that continues to be his calling card. What drives Maina to become involved in new businesses in the industry?

“Maybe it's a bit of ego, but it's more or less the challenge”; said Maina. “You feel like you can do something better or improve on it”.

The desire to improve the hooking percentages of jerkbaits was the reason Maina started the Musky Mania tackle company back in the 1990's. At the time there were no hard plastic muskie jerkbaits on the market. Maina theorized that a plastic lure would slide through a fish's jaws easier than a wooden version, increasing the odds for solid hook sets. His first product was a lure called the Burt. He has since sold the tackle business to instead focus on the media end of the industry.

It's the focus on percentages while fishing that Maina credits for his success as a muskie angler.

“As I have aged and matured, what hit me were the percentages”; he said. “You are only going to get x amount chances (to catch a fish) and you want to take advantage of those chances. It’s the little things, the boring stuff”; he continued. “It’s things such as boat control, sharp hooks and learning to fish structure.”

While many anglers view Maina as a celebrity, it’s that average guy attitude and accessibility that likely makes him popular with the fishing public.

“A lot of guys can catch a bunch of fish”; said Maina. “I am just an average guy. Someone who loves hunting and fishing, and happens to make a living in the fishing end of it.”