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Mares Founder Ludovico Mares Honored as a 2026 Early Pioneer by the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame

GRAND CAYMAN, Cayman Islands – September 8, 2026 – Mares proudly celebrated a defining moment in its history as company founder Ludovico Mares was posthumously honored with the 2026 Early Pioneer Award by the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame.

The prestigious recognition celebrates Ludovico's pioneering contributions to diving equipment and the lasting influence his vision continues to have on the global diving community. Rachael and Michael Steidley represented Mares and HEAD Watersports throughout the Hall of Fame's Induction Week in the Cayman Islands and formally accepted the award on Ludovico's behalf during the ceremony on Friday evening, September 4.



The week's activities extended beyond celebrating diving's past. Inductees, including Mares representatives, Rachael and Michael, spoke with more than 200 high school students across Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac, sharing the remarkable story of how Ludovico's ingenuity, resilience and passion for the sea grew into one of the world's most recognized diving brands.

Using the story of Ludovico's first mask—built from circular glass and a car inner tube to help him fish more successfully and support his family—the presentations showed how he transformed real-world problems into practical innovations. Students were then challenged to consider how their own ideas, talents and passion for the ocean could help shape the future of diving.

"Accepting this recognition on behalf of Mares was both an incredible honor and a tremendous responsibility," said Rachael Steidley, Marketing Manager for SSI North America. "Ludovico's legacy is not simply something we look back on with pride. It challenges us to continue approaching the future as he did with curiosity, courage, resourcefulness and an unwavering passion for the sea. Sharing that message with more than 200 young people made this week even more meaningful."

Ludovico founded Mares in Rapallo, Italy, in 1949 at the age of 50. From one small workshop came products, patents and innovations that helped shape modern recreational diving. His practical understanding of divers and their needs became the foundation of a company whose equipment would ultimately be used and trusted around the world.

Mares' technology has advanced far beyond the glass and inner tube used in Ludovico's earliest mask, but the purpose remains the same: to make the underwater world safer, more accessible and more enjoyable for everyone who feels drawn to it.

The Early Pioneer Award represents more than an acknowledgment of one man's accomplishments. It recognizes the enduring impact of a philosophy that transformed personal experience into innovation, hardship into enterprise and a passion for the sea into opportunities for generations of divers.

"On behalf of Mares, HEAD Watersports, our colleagues around the world and the generations of divers who have benefited from Ludovico's vision and innovation, we are deeply grateful to the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame," Steidley added. "This recognition ensures that Ludovico's remarkable life, pioneering spirit and place in diving history will never be forgotten."

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