

ODU Magazine™

Mid-Summer Fishing 2012

**Secrets to
Catching
Big
Walleyes**

**Big
Cats**

**MightEE Worm
Wins By 9 1/2
Pounds On
T-Bend**

**780 SMALLMOUTH
BASS CAUGHT IN SEVEN
DAYS**

**HOT GULF ACTION ON
DEEP WATER RUNS**





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© Kathy Barker



What a difference a year makes; this is what I had to say this time last year.

"We have all heard of those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer, well guess what, they're here. 70-degree mornings and 90-degree days are no fun for anyone, even the pros. Already I have seen water temperature in the mid to upper 80's and one gentlemen that I was talking to said that he had seen them in the 90's. Let's take the time to protect yourself, your fishing companion and the fish from this heat.

It's shaping up to truly be a long hot summer."

This year on June 16th, I fished a USA Bassin Tournament on Kerr Lake, and we started the day off with 51-degree temperatures and ended the day with a high of 75. What a pleasant change, but to say the least summer fishing is still hard.

Make sure you have plenty of sunscreens for yourself and your loved ones and plenty of liquids in your system (you know what I am talking about WATER). One of my old clients' had a very true saying "Stay Hydrated or Die" that may sound a little extreme but there is a lot of truth in that statement. Please double-check your live wells, and your aerator system. That one fish you end up saving could be big bucks in your pocket.

Please do me a favor whenever possible take a kid fishing. Remember they are our future, and you will never regret putting a smile on their face.

Please enjoy the Outdoors,

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Secrets to Catching Big Walleyes

By Jason Mitchell

Large fish will characteristically push smaller fish off of a spot. And bass fishing is probably the best example of this. Not all docks, for example, are the same. Some docks have a better scour hole from a big motor powering up on a boat lift. Docks with wheels or tires might have the better structure below the dock that attracts fish, for example. A particular dock will produce a large bass and a few weeks later; the same dock will hold big bass providing the spot has had a chance to rest. Some rock piles to just have the complexity and all the right ingredients to produce several big muskies. Some particular holes or logjams in a specific stretch of a stream always seem to produce the largest steelhead or trout. There are lots of spots to fish on most water but regardless of species, there are magical spots that just seem to produce big fish. Walleye fishing is no different but walleye anglers often look at structure very differently than anglers targeting bass or some other species but there are lessons to be learned that can make walleye anglers more effective at finding big fish. Walleye anglers are typically programmed to look at bigger spots than anglers targeting other species. We have a tendency to search and look over an entire point, for example that might protrude out a hundred yards before dropping off into deeper water. Since walleyes often form fairly large schools on the more noted fisheries, it takes a huge spot to effectively hold a large school of fish.

Jason Mitchell with a big walleye caught by focusing on good cover within a piece of structure. Fishing jigs and rigs straight up and down over snaggy cover is one of Mitchell's top tactics for putting big walleyes in the boat. When fishing snaggy cover, Mitchell prefers to fish heavy long shank stand up jigs like the Northland Tackle Rocket Jig because the minnow, leech or crawler can be either thread hooked or double hooked for extra durability in heavy snags. Photo courtesy of Northland Fishing Tackle.

Typically, a school of walleyes will use several pieces of a particular piece of structure so it pays to fish though a spot. There might be a few fish holding off the deep break of a spot, a few aggressive fish on top and fish scattered in between. I have seen so many scenarios. However, were big fish will own a specific spot. There might be walleyes scattered all over a

specific piece of structure but the bigger fish will gravitate towards a particular piece of the structure until those big fish are caught and that then gives small fish a chance to rule that roost. Usually, the first fish on the spot will be the biggest and if the fish start getting smaller, it is time to give that spot a rest and let a few bigger fish move in. Now what kind of spot attracts big walleye? The basics to that question are not that much different to what bass anglers appreciate when dissecting lily pads or what musky anglers look for when searching for the perfect shallow bay that combines cabbage, sand and rock before dropping off into deeper water. Whenever you can combine several features that intersect into a boat length of an area, which is the sweet spot. Abrupt transitions that provide options are good but throw in the good cover into the mix and that often creates the magical big fish location.

Now what is cover to a walleye? Walleyes relate to gradual tapering sand and gravel bars not to mention expansive flats. Walleyes obviously have a different preference to structure and cover compared to many other species of fish but huge walleyes, in particular, gravitate towards cover, and that has something many walleye anglers overlook, especially on rivers and natural lakes where there is characteristically a lot better cover. My favorite big fish

locations over the years are sang, difficult to fish and sometimes feature either wood snags, log jams, large round rocks or best-case scenario... all of these elements on an attractive piece of structure. The mystique of these big fish locations is that on most waters, there is not an over abundance of these spots. You have to spend a lot of time on the water to find them. So look for walleyes on structure but look for some type of cover on that structure to target the bigger fish.

Large round rocks are probably the most available cover option on many fisheries. The whole piece of structure might be good and hold walleyes but the piece of the structure that combines some good cover will often produce the biggest fish. Now what constitutes large, round rock? Some rocks can almost be too big in that they don't form the holes and crevices but rock that are perhaps four yards in diameter and height or smaller are typically the best. Multiple rocks this size form deep crevices and shadows where big fish like to lie. On the Canadian Shield for example, there is no shortage of huge chunks of rock but the smaller



Don't overlook marker buoys for precisely working small pieces of snaggy structure.

Small buoys like the Northland Tackle Hot Spot Buoy attract less attention and force the boat operator to work closer to the buoy which enhances boat control in tight spots.

Photo courtesy of Northland Fishing Tackle.

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round rocks provide the optimum cover versus one large rock that is the size of a house. Too small of rocks, say bowling ball size or smaller don't provide the crevices or hiding spots. Another excellent cover option on some bodies of water and particularly on rivers are wood snags. Again, complex snags that offer excellent cover in the form of root balls or long spindly branches coming off of larger logs are better cover than a three-inch diameter straight log laying at the bottom. These types of locations just described sound like a snag waiting to happen and that is what many of my favorite big walleye spots are... lots of snags waiting to happen. These locations are very difficult to guide over, for example, when I have people who don't have the touch to keep from getting hung up or can't retie lines. Regardless of depth or type of structure, the snaggiest piece of that structure often holds the largest walleyes.

These sweet spot locations are typically small and often isolated. With that being said, there are some situations where you can troll over and around these types of snags but the locations often are small enough to dictate a precise up and down vertical presentation to keep the hook in front of fish with some efficiency. On rivers or shallow structure, pinpoint casting or pitching into the cover might be an option. When fishing cover below the boat, boat control is paramount. Now obviously, a GPS is a tool that is irreplaceable as far as not only remember the locations but also finding the x again. Another tool that is often overlooked or forgotten by anglers who use GPS is an old-fashioned marker buoy. When working tight locations at crawl slow speeds. A buoy can be more productive than a GPS plotter in that you have something visual in the water you can look at, and it becomes much

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The image shows four professional anglers standing in front of a blue boat. They are wearing white and blue uniforms with "LUND BOATS" and "MERCURY" logos. The anglers are holding various trophies and large stacks of cash. The trophies include a "WALLEYE" trophy, a "2012 CHAMPION" trophy, and a "CANADIAN INVITATIONAL" trophy. The boat behind them has "MERCURY" and "YAMAHA" logos. The text "CONGRATULATIONS & THANKS FOR YOUR DEDICATION!" is overlaid at the top.

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easier to hold the boat or slide up and down through a really tight spot that is less than the length of the boat. For dissecting snaggy cover like this, small or hard to see the marker buoy can sometimes make you more productive because it forces you to sit tighter to the buoy. Black buoys, for example, can often enhance your boat control because it forces you to pay more attention. My favorite buoys these days are the little Hot Spot buoys made by Northland Tackle. As soon as I saw these little buoys, I thought, "now why didn't somebody come up with something like this a lot sooner. "

Before using the structure scan options on our sonar, I typically used a bottom bouncer and short plain snell to learn more about the spot. With the bottom bouncer, I could tell how large the rocks were, how they were shaped, what the wood felt like, where the rocks started and where the crevices were. Bottom bouncers transmit an incredible amount of information helping the angler to visualize the spot. Now with structure scan, I can do a drive by of the spot and

pick out key pieces of cover and actually move the cursor around to save an exact way point. Besides fishing vertically with bottom bouncers and short snells, other rigging and jigging presentations work well. A traditional egg sinker fished right

below the boat and just a touch off the bottom works really well. Below the egg sinker, tie a short two to three-foot snell of ten to fourteen-pound fluorocarbon with just a plain size four or six VMC live bait hook. I like the egg sinker as it doesn't seem to get wedged as much between rocks as traditional walking sinkers and I like the durability and abrasion resistance of fluorocarbon for this type of fishing. Hook size can depend on bait, but I like to use larger hooks and heavier line just for wrestling big fish up away from the bottom. Typically, I go plain jane on the snells as I know I am going to be retying often and losing tackle. Jigs are another good option but for really snaggy conditions, I like to find bottom with the egg sinker and hover over the spot with the sinker a few feet up off the bottom. Whether you use jigs or rigs, maintaining boat control so that you are straight up and down is crucial. When I do use



Snaggy boulders and wood often attract huge walleyes like the fish the author is holding. Learn the spots and fine tune locations by either using a traditional bottom bouncer or Structure Scanning Sonar.



jigs, I typically use larger or heavier jigs that fall straight up and down below the boat and make a good thunking noise on the rock or wood. There are definitely times when thunking the bottom seems to trigger fish but too light of a jig just doesn't hang straight below the boat enough to cut down on snags. If possible, try to keep the jig or weight in the cone angle of the electronics. Often, the jig or weight will show up as a line across the screen and when you jig, your sonar will look like a heart beat monitor. You need pretty flat calm conditions usually to keep the jig or weight in the cone angle but having that coordination really helps if possible.

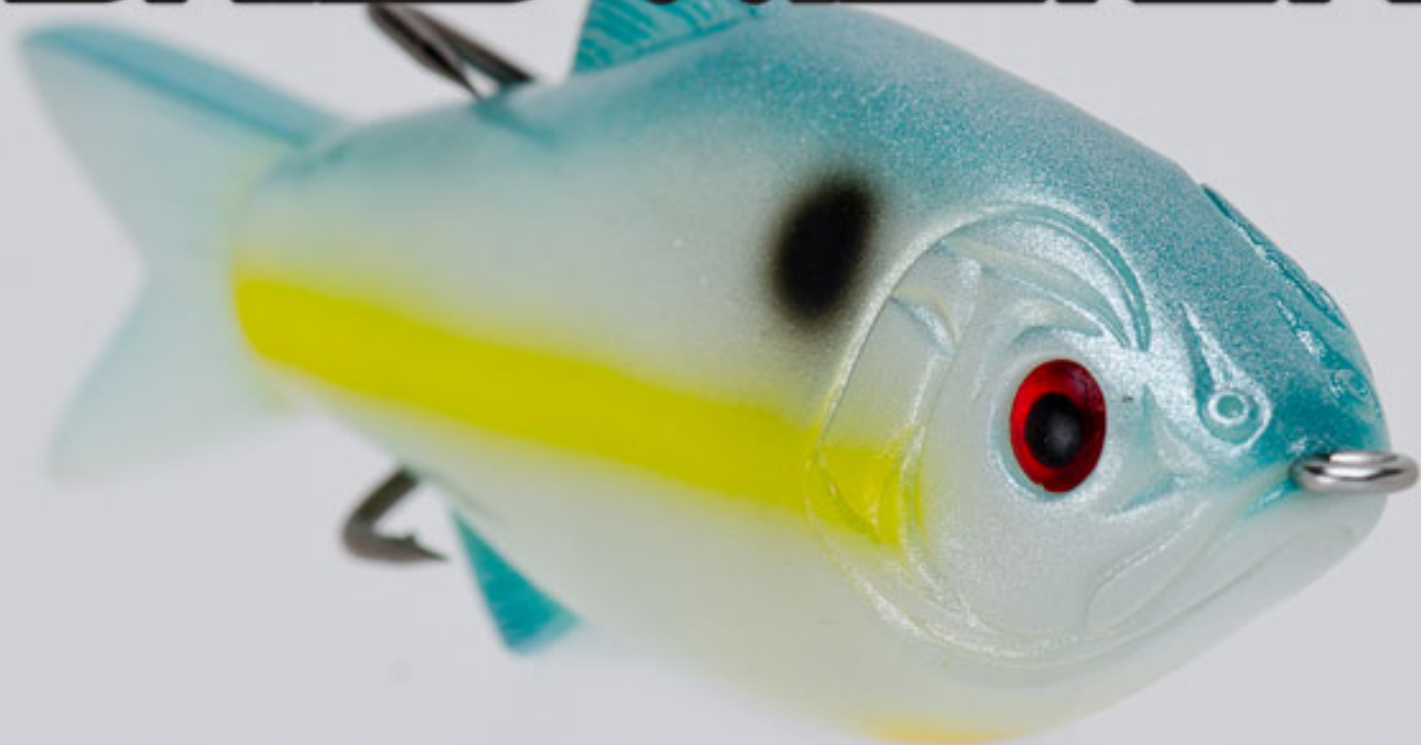
Obviously, large walleyes show up in a lot of different locations through the course of a year, and this is by no means the only way to target large fish. Many walleye anglers, however, avoid the snaggy locations, and I believe they are sometimes missing out on opportunities to stick big fish. As you study the structure, this season and find schools of fish, make a concentrated effort to identify any type of cover on that piece of structure and fish it. Be prepared to lose, tackle and give these locations sometimes. Many of the biggest walleyes I catch each season are right in the thick of these snags. In fact, I don't know how many large fish I have caught over the years where I raised the rod tip and thought I was snagged again only to feel the snag do a head shake, and the result was a really large fish. Many walleye anglers appreciate structure but start appreciating cover on the structure, and you will catch bigger walleyes.

The author, Jason Mitchell hosts the popular outdoor program, Jason Mitchell Outdoors that airs across the Midwest on Fox Sports North and Fox Sport Midwest. Before hosting the television show, Jason Mitchell earned a renowned reputation as a top walleye guide on North Dakota's Devils Lake often guiding well over two hundred and fifty days on the water and ice each season making him one of the busiest and most successful guides in the industry.

The graphic features the text 'Fishin' with a Mission' in large, bold, white letters with black outlines. A colorful, multi-colored ribbon is tied around the word 'a'. Below the text is a yellow button with a blue play icon and the text 'BUY A DECAL AND HELP OUR CAUSE!'. Underneath the button is the website 'www.mylittlebuddysboat.com'. At the bottom is a photo of a boat with a motor, decorated with colorful patterns and text that includes 'Autism Awareness' and 'FISHING WITH A MISSION'.



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The Secret Technique of Long Lining

By Lawrence Taylor

Professional bass anglers are a secretive group when it comes to how they catch their fish. Sure, they'll go into great detail about what rod, reel and lure they caught them on, but they dance around the subject of "how," especially if it's a new technique.

Although the long lining technique has been around for awhile, few professional bass anglers saw its true potential. That was before a number of Bassmaster Elite Series anglers used it to catch heavy limits of big bass on it in a recent tournament.

The technique of long lining allows a deep diving crankbait to achieve depths unattainable with a long cast and retrieve. It even gets a deep diving crankbait deeper than with a long cast and utilizing the technique of kneeling and reeling, when an angler makes his cast and positions himself on the edge of the boat while shoving the rod tip deep below the surface. In the past, kneeling and reeling with deep diving crankbaits was the only technique that allowed anglers to achieve super-deep depths.

Another significant factor when long lining to attain these depths was the introduction of fluorocarbon fishing line for crankbait fishing. Although it's popular among anglers when pitching or flipping, its inherent properties of limited stretch and sinking characteristic prompts deeper cranking depths with increased sensitivity when fishing a deep diving crankbait.

Long lining is similar to casting and reeling for deep, offshore bass with the exception of presentation. When casting and reeling, an angler finds the school of bass and moves off to the side and makes a long cast overtop, bringing the crankbait through the school. That may include the technique of kneeling and reeling to keep the crankbaits in the strike zone longer. When long lining, however, an angler locates the school of bass or even individual bass on his sonar unit, turns and makes a cast, then loops around the bass with the line overtop of





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them while using the trolling motor (or even the big motor) to move away while the reel is still disengaged, taking out almost all of their fishing line.

When first engaged and reeling, the angler cranks 30- to 40-yards of line as fast as possible then slows to a normal, steady retrieve. To achieve maximum depths, anglers will often use the knee and reel technique at the same time.

The secret is out, but there are still a lot of questions about how to catch fish long lining. It wasn't hard to find a professional bass fisherman willing to share the details. Bassmaster Elite Series pro Timmy Horton has utilized this technique for several years on Pickwick Lake and Lake Fork to catch deep, offshore bass.

"Long lining crankbaits doesn't work on every lake; in fact, it's rarely productive on lakes with a lot of standing timber like Beaver Lake in Arkansas or Table Rock Lake in Missouri because you are always hanging up in the trees. Reservoirs like Pickwick Lake in Alabama or Bull Shoals Lake in Arkansas are great example of lakes to long line on. You are really looking for barren lakes with little offshore structure or cover," Horton said.

Another crucial factor when long lining is water clarity. Horton likes to be able to see at least 3- to 4-feet deep or more when long lining.

"Water clarity is important because I am getting my crankbait down to depths of 25- to 40-feet deep and keeping it in the strike zone for long periods of my cast," he said. Horton also considers the thermocline if one is present. "I will try to keep my deep diving crankbait in or just above the thermocline when there is one. Bass will be located right there."



Locating the bass is the key to success when long lining. Horton uses his outboard engine to drive the boat around watching his sonar unit for schools of bass.

"The key is finding schools of bass, not schools of bait fish," he said. "Even though there may not be any bait fish present, bass will eat a crankbait when you reel it by them in deep water. After finding a school, I use the trolling motor to set up my long cast and retrieve."

One advantage that professional angler Horton has that makes a difference when long lining is experience on the water and being able to read his sonar unit.

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"Bass that are located offshore on barren structure have a unique look on a sonar screen. They set up in a way I can tell that they are bass down there," said Horton.

Like most professional anglers fishing the Bassmaster Elite Series, Horton uses high-quality sonar units that feature both down imaging and side imaging along with broadband sonar when graphing for fish.

Your tackle selection can make a difference in long-lining success.

"For me it all starts with using the right lure," Horton said. "Bass will really key in on shape and size. The Bomber BD8 or BD7 not only have the right shape and size, but will dive to extremely deep depths when long lining."

Rods make a big difference in getting that depth, as well as reducing fatigue from cranking all day long. Horton uses a 7-foot, 4-inch Timmy Horton Signature Series rod. The extra length and softer tip allows him to make a longer cast and reel in deep diving crankbaits without the fatigue that goes along with deep cranking. As for fishing line, Horton uses 12-pound Silver Thread fluorocarbon spooled up on a 6:4.1 gear ratio Lew's reel. Unlike other reels he uses when fishing a crankbait, Horton will not use any backing when long lining.

The secret is out, long lining is in and it's proving to be a great way to catch bass deep on barren lakes when nothing else will.



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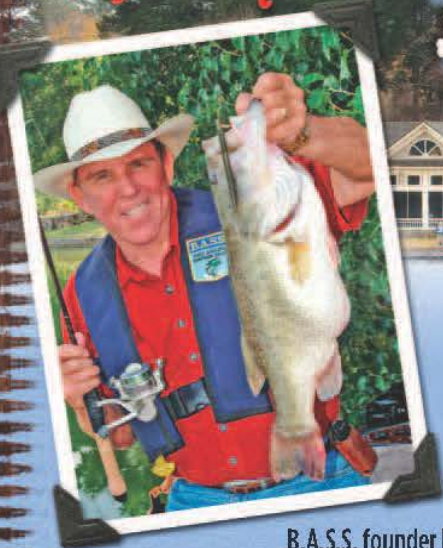
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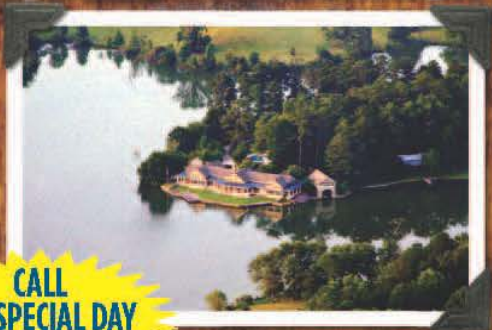
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An Alabama Black Belt Adventure

First Bite, First Love

By Ray Scott

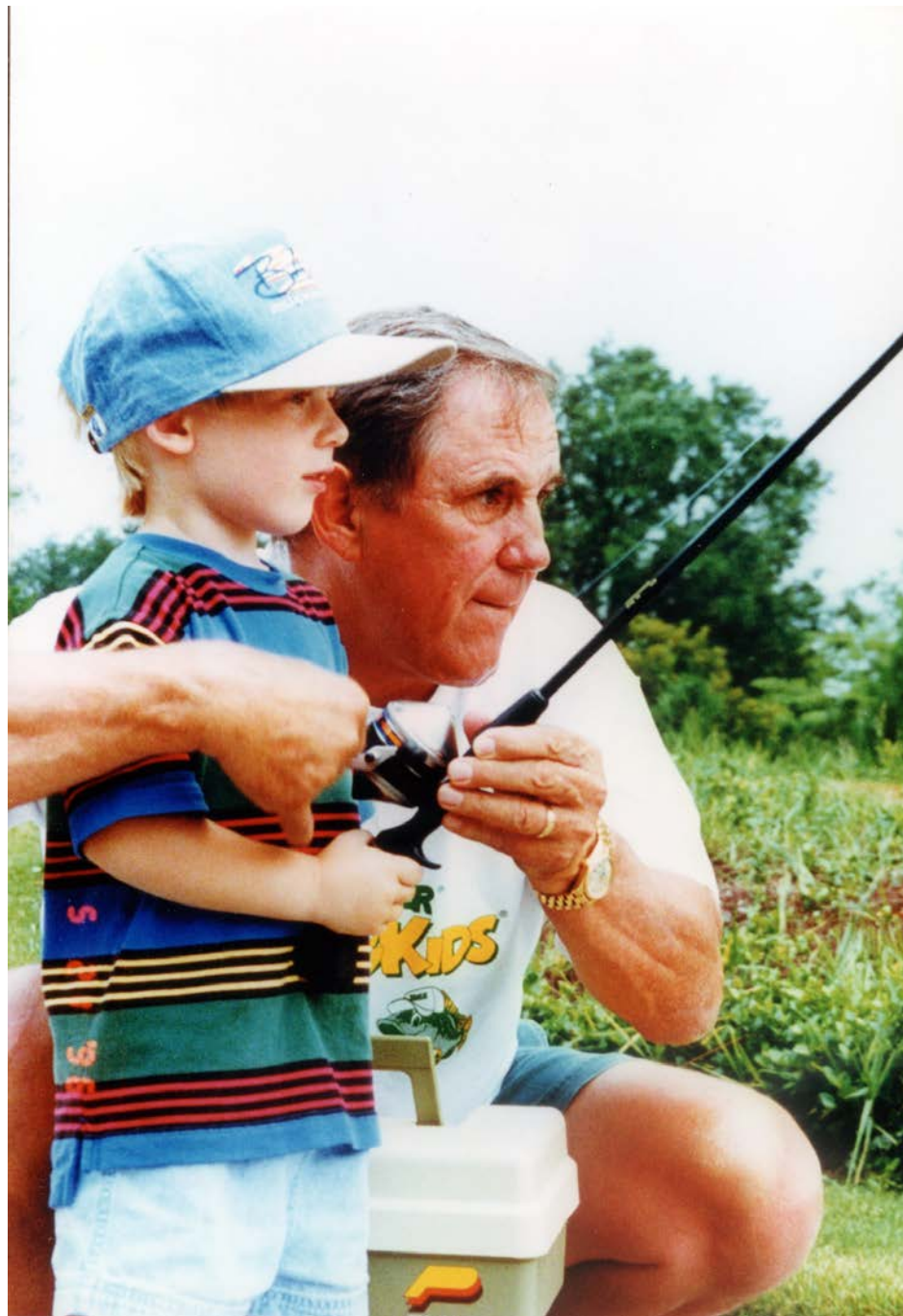
I remember my first bass like it was yesterday.

As a matter of fact that memory is more vivid than my first kiss in junior high.

At seven I was already a seasoned fisherman. I don't know exactly when I started taking off on my bike – cane pole and can of worms in hand – to find any wet spot where I could catch bream.

I was in heaven when my family would go to a fishing club north of Montgomery called Bridge Creek. For a small annual fee of about \$25, we could use the lodge, picnic grounds and small lake. I was the only fisherman in the family so I know my parents did it in great part to accommodate my growing passion for angling.

One day, shirtless, and barefoot, I followed the spillway behind the dam where the water formed a small pool. I threw out my worm and cork and was happy to see the cork go under. But the



Ray instructs his oldest grandson, Weston Epperson, on his first Zebco 33 baitcaster. Now a college student, he remains an avid fisherman.

pressure on the line was unlike any other I had felt. As a matter of fact I almost lost my pole. I held on and watched in amazement as a fish leaped out of the water. It looked like shimmering silver in the spring sunlight. It also looked huge to this seven year old. In reality it was probably six or seven inches.

I couldn't wait to take this strange creature to show my mother. She wasn't exactly sure what it was either but suspected it might be a bass. When Dad arrived at the scene he confirmed it was indeed a bass. There were congratulations all around; apparently this was a special fish. I was not only proud, I was in love.

I knew in that moment, bream might be nice (and tasty for sure) but bass was the fish for me. The die was cast. That experience altered the rest of my life.

We took the bass home and in a wonderful ritual, Mother scaled the little guy, rolled it in cornmeal and dropped it in hot grease in a black skillet.

I honestly don't remember how it tasted. It didn't matter because in our house my father had a rule that you ate what you caught or killed. I'm sure it was good, because Mom could make anything taste good in that big black iron skillet. More than anything it was a special ending to a very special experience.

I can't tell you how many anglers, big tough grown men including top pros – maybe especially top pros – caught the bass bug from a single experience or just a few experiences with someone who took the time and effort to take them in hand and introduce them to the wonders of fishing and the outdoors.

I think especially of the day one of the greatest anglers of all times, Rick Clunn, took the stage after one of his four Bassmasters Classic wins and recounted how, in diapers, he would follow his father along a creek bed, looking for fish. His father was gravely ill at the time of his triumph and Rick wanted to express his gratitude to the man who helped put him on the path of his greatness. There were a lot of teary eyes in that huge audience of fellow fishermen; and I'm sure many were thinking back to the individuals who encouraged their own angling journeys, especially for that remarkable fighter, the black bass.

This all brings me back to one of my favorite subjects: Getting kids involved in fishing. And to share a philosophy I learned the hard way with my own kids.

Keep it simple and as best you can, keep it active.

You don't need a bass boat or fancy equipment. Rick Clunn and Ray Scott and many others started on the banks. Start with a cane pole, cork, crickets and worms for bream. For bass, a spincast combo, hooks, sinkers, floats and the live or artificial bait of your choice is the only investment required to get started.



I can't stress the simplicity factor enough. As a parent, you know the attention span of a child can be no farther than you can cast your favorite topwater lure. So the mission and goal is to simply get a fish on the hook no matter the species, including bream, carp and catfish.

Above all, make the trips entertaining and keep the atmosphere loose and low key. Don't set expectations high. The most important thing is to catch something – anything – regardless of size.

If the bite is too slow, have a back-up plan. Pack a lunch or have a barbecue at a state park lakeshore or a local picnic area. Go hiking and share your enjoyment of just being outdoors together, taking in the gifts of nature. What a great opportunity to bond, especially for fathers and sons. It can change a kid's life...It did mine.

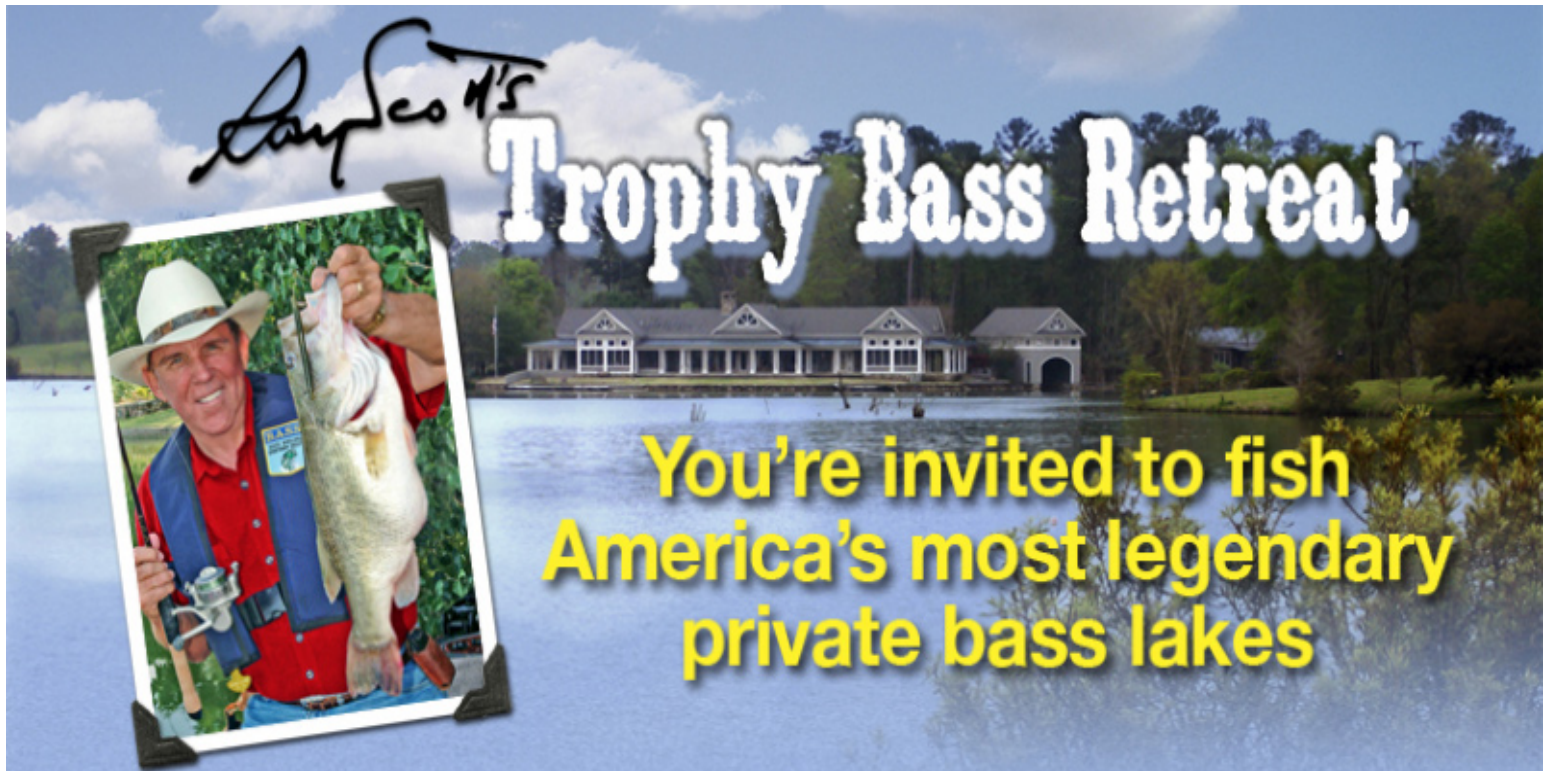
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Randy Smith, The Best Tournament Bass Fisherman

By O'Neill Williams

He was the best tournament bass fisherman I ever knew, and when a fully rigged boat was to be awarded as first prize, you could almost always bet that Randy would be standing with the winner's trophy in hand.

Charles Randy Smith was born in Manchester, Georgia and made the waters of Eufaula, West Point, and Barletts Ferry his own. We met in the mid '70's. I entered in a regional bass tournament at Barletts Ferry one spring. Informed by the locals that my best finish could only be 2nd place because of this Smith guy, meeting him became a priority. I made it a point to do so after the weight in. Oh, by the way, Randy finished 1st, well ahead of the other 130 fishermen, O'Neill 29th.



Anyway, he was small, lean, and weathered with sky-blue eyes and slightly bowed legs, and weighed in at about 150 over a 5'9" frame. He would have been taller except for those legs.

Over the next few months and years, we became friends and fishing partners, traveling the local circuit, building up time on the lakes searching for recognition and sponsorships.

I have never seen anyone as sharp as Randy with spinner baits or with top water plugs. He was a master. The list of his victories is too lengthy to chronicle here, but I know he won 6 or more boats and several state championships in his career. He overflowed with confidence, was deliberate, prepared, and could always seem to "figure'em out". He once weighed in an incredible 12 bass catch in a one-day tournament at Eufaula that tipped the scales at just over 88 pounds, a 7.33-pound average, with a 12-pound kicker. Think about it.

Nevertheless, Randy carried more than heavy stringers. Vietnam had been in his history when we first met, but came to the fore during most of our trips in the last few years of his life. The jungles in his mind became dense and dark. Alcohol smoothed the dreams and clouded his memory but made him bothersome and misdirected. He lost his job and soon most of his friends, fading listlessly into despair and loneliness.

It was in 1995 that the single car accident took his life. His jeep left the road in a curve near Clarks Hill Lake. Thankfully, he was alone. It would have meant a lot to him that he had hurt no one. When he died at 48, and we put all of his worldly possessions in the trunk of a relative's car. Seems a shame, doesn't it? All the trophies had long since gone.

Randy's demons, shouldered back from Vietnam so long ago, had finally worn him down. It took over 25 years, but they finally got him, a decorated war hero and my fishing buddy. I still miss him.



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Summer Brings Hot Gulf Action On Deep Water Runs

By Capt. Bill Miller

Summer's mostly calm weather provides frequent windows of opportunity for making long offshore runs to the deep Gulf of Mexico hotspots where the big fish live. The trips can cover 50-100 miles, but it's more than worth the time.

The mix of offshore sportfish species includes giant grouper of multiple species, red snapper, mangrove snapper, amberjack, sailfish, tuna, wahoo, marlin and more. You'll often encounter a diverse mix of species on any given trip, but to best focus your efforts, plan for one of two



Photos by Capt. Bill Miller

basic options – bottom fishing and trolling for pelagic.

On the Bottom: Fishing in 150 feet and deeper requires heavy tackle. Seven- to 8- foot rods on 4/0-6/0 reels loaded with at least 50-pound braid or mono is standard. Out past 150 feet, I like electric reels. They require a little more rigging for the wiring of the reels but it will save you lots of back-breaking work make reeling in fish and checking baits much easier.

Capt. Travis Palladino, a deep water expert, recommends 100-pound mono on 6/0 electric reels. Leaders made of 100- to 150-pound mono or fluorocarbon are preferred and federal regulations require circle hooks for all reef fish pursuits. I would start with a 10/0 and, if the

fish are finicky, you can downsize your hook and leader.

Top dead baits include Spanish sardines, squid and my favorite – Boston mackerel. Deep water experts prefer Bostons because they are large baits with very oily flesh that releases a lot of scent into the water. If you go with live bait, big pinfish are hard to beat. Other productive live options include blue runners, big threadfins and scaled sardines.

One of the most active ways of catching deep gulf bottom fish is by working butterfly style jig on light rods specially-designed for this type of vertical presentation. With high-speed reels carrying 65-pound braid, you drop the slender lure to the bottom, jig it up 20 to 50 feet, drop it back down and repeat. Sometimes, just bouncing the jig at the bottom works, but tipping the hook with a piece of cut bait can increase your bites.

Whatever tactics you prefer, you'll want to maximize your time and trip expenses by targeting some particular bottom structure. Springs, wrecks and rocks offer the most potential, so set your course for these sites of opportunity.

Rock-N-Troll: Now, for best results on pelagic trolling trips, anglers will usually check the satellite imaging maps and look for Loop Current eddies and temperature changes to target their efforts. Billfish, tuna, wahoo and dolphin will gather most consistently in the warm water and along current seams.

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Freshly rigged baits like ballyhoo, mackerel, squid and mullet work very well, but trolling lures requires less prep and maintenance, while allowing you to cover more ground. Keep a mix of lures in your spread, so you have baits that appeal to whatever rises to take a look. Some experienced billfish anglers will troll hookless lures trying to tease billfish close to the boat before pitching a freshly rigged mackerel or ballyhoo back to the excited predator.

Safety note: Whether you fish the bottom or troll for pelagic, safety is always first priority when traveling far offshore. Make sure all your equipment is working properly, all of your safety gear (including a life raft) is up-to-date and you have an EPIRB that has been tested. File

a float plan to let someone know where you will be and carry a satellite phone for added security – especially outside of cell phone range.

Remember, far offshore runs can give you some of your most incredible big-fish tales, but the most important thing is making it home safely to tell them.

For fishing videos, catch photos and lots of angling resources, visit www.fishingwithbillmiller.com. For fishing charters in the Tampa Bay area, call (813) 363-9927.



Photos by Capt. Bill Miller

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Illinois bass pro Chad Morgenthaler has partnered with EPCO Products Inc., maker of the SNAPPER Remote Control Boat Latch, a device that allows virtually any boat and trailer combination to exercise the launch and retrieve efforts with minimal effort and with maximum security.

"It's a really cool addition to all kinds of boats, but especially bass boats," he said. "As someone who has left a boat on the ramp before, believe me, the SNAPPER captures your boat and locks it on in wind, current, any conditions you can encounter. It doesn't matter if the ramp is deep or shallow, the SNAPPER will get the job done and it's a lot cheaper than fiberglass work."

The SNAPPER is easy to install and easy to operate. A simple push of the button on a remote control key fob is all it takes for the device to release or capture the boat. That'll make any angler quicker off the ramp and faster to the fish, even when launching alone. You'll never have to wade in again. Additionally, it's theft proof, tested for impact resistance, and will secure up to 10,000 pounds.

"We're happy to have Chad on the team," Said EPCO Sales Manager Dwight Creger. "He's worked diligently with us to design a pivot plate that will hold the SNAPPER Boat Latch in the correct position every time."

"It's a privilege to work with a longstanding pillar of the marine industry like EPCO," Morgenthaler concluded. "The fact that they sought out my input is a real honor."

The SNAPPER Boat Latch will be especially helpful for physically-impaired boaters. EPCO is a proud sponsor of Paralyzed Veterans of American and the National Bass Anglers Association.



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780 Smallmouth Bass Caught in Seven Days

By Jake Bussolini

To most adults, if you mention the number 780, they might think that you were talking about your credit rating. I recently returned from my spring fishing trip to Ontario Canada where Ron Jurcy and I fished Kiskutena Lake, a relatively small lake about 50 miles

northwest of International Falls Minn. This was our third trip to this amazing lake and certainly the best in terms of our catch rate of smallmouth bass. Kiskutena is about three miles long and about one mile wide and has mostly rocky shorelines and a load of small islands. Both of these features make the lake ideal for smallmouth bass. To make the lake even more exciting, it is also loaded with Muskies that seem to co-habitat with the bass. In the early spring you can also catch a lake trout or two, before the water warms and the Lakers go deep.

Our experience has shown that the real risk of Ontario fishing is the weather. Wind is almost always present and there seems to be the ever-present threat of rain. This year the conditions were perfect with calm waters in the early morning under clear skies. As the days progressed the sky clouded over and a few showers were spread across the lake. The heavy rain, however, came at night and was no threat to the fishing. Every morning we could have our coffee looking out at this beautiful lake, just waiting for us to hit the water.

We have learned throughout past trips to Kishkutena Lake, that the only way to fish the lake is to have the boat driver troll, while maintaining control over the boat in the winds. The other fisherman casts the shorelines for the bass as the boat moves slowly along. We alternate fishing positions each day, to ensure that we both have a shot at the casting. The boats available are 16-foot Lund's boats equipped with 9.9 Yamaha motors. These motors can troll down slow enough to accommodate effective casting. At a comfortable casting distance from the shoreline, the boat is normally in about 10 to 15 feet of water, ideal for trolling for the bass located slightly deeper in the water column.

It didn't take long for the action to start on the first day. On the second cast, I landed the first bass and from that point on it was a fish every four minutes.



There were periods when we were landing bass every two minutes, to the point where my wrist couldn't hold out from the stress. The first fish caught was not a monster, about 1-½ pounds shown below. All of our fish varied in size from about ½ pound, all the way up to a 19 inch 5 pounder that Ron boated, shown below.



Kiskutena bass have always reacted well to crank baits, so that is what we used. The fish were always around rocks, and the cranks that we selected seemed to react well to the rocky bottom structure.



We tried other types of plastics and spinners, but the best results were achieved with crank bait lures. There was one stretch of time that I used only one crank bait that caught over 200 bass. I decided to retire this lure, feeling that it had done its job. This amazing lure is shown below.

One of the biggest challenges of Kishkutena lake is the ever presents of large Muskies. The lake has many grassy coves that are ideal for the Muskies, but we have found that they are always a threat even when casting and trolling. During this visit, our Musky catch was a little low boating only 18 of these monsters, but the ones that we did catch were between 36 and 40 inches long. One of my Musky catches is shown below.

In most cases, we caught Muskies around rocky points such as the one shown here.

It was, however, not unusual to have a big Musky hit as we cast towards the shorelines for bass. This often resulted in loss of the lure and the fish since we were using no wire leaders to protect the line from the razor-sharp teeth of the Musky. The co-habitation of the two species of fish is what makes fishing this lake so exciting. We had two cases where a good-sized bass was being retrieved and a huge Musky came up and grabbed the bass. In both cases the Musky won the battle.



I have found from my past fishing experiences that musky fishermen normally use large lures for this fish. In this case I caught all of my Muskies using a small split rap crank bait lure such as the one shown below.



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There were several things that I learned about smallmouth bass from this trip. I found that in windy situations, the most active fish are found along the rocky shorelines on the windward side. The action of the waves and the rocks seems to excite the fish, and their bite is more aggressive. It's a little tougher to fish for them in these conditions, but the results warrant the extra work. The second thing that I noticed on occasion was that in the early-morning hours,

the best bite came on the shaded shorelines and not on the ones covered by the sunlight. Most of the volume catches that we made were around the many islands in the lake, rather than on the main shorelines. I concluded that this was because the islands provided quick access to the deeper water if the fish needed that.



I am also amazed that the smallmouth bass and the Muskies co-habitat with each other. As my fishing partner Ron has stated, they get along well until the Musky gets hungry and then the cooperation stops. The bass never learn



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of the threat because there are never any witnesses left behind.

Another fact that we proved once again on this trip was that the early morning and early evenings are not necessarily the best times to fish. For a long time now I have written in my books that early-morning fishing is a myth. I believe from my

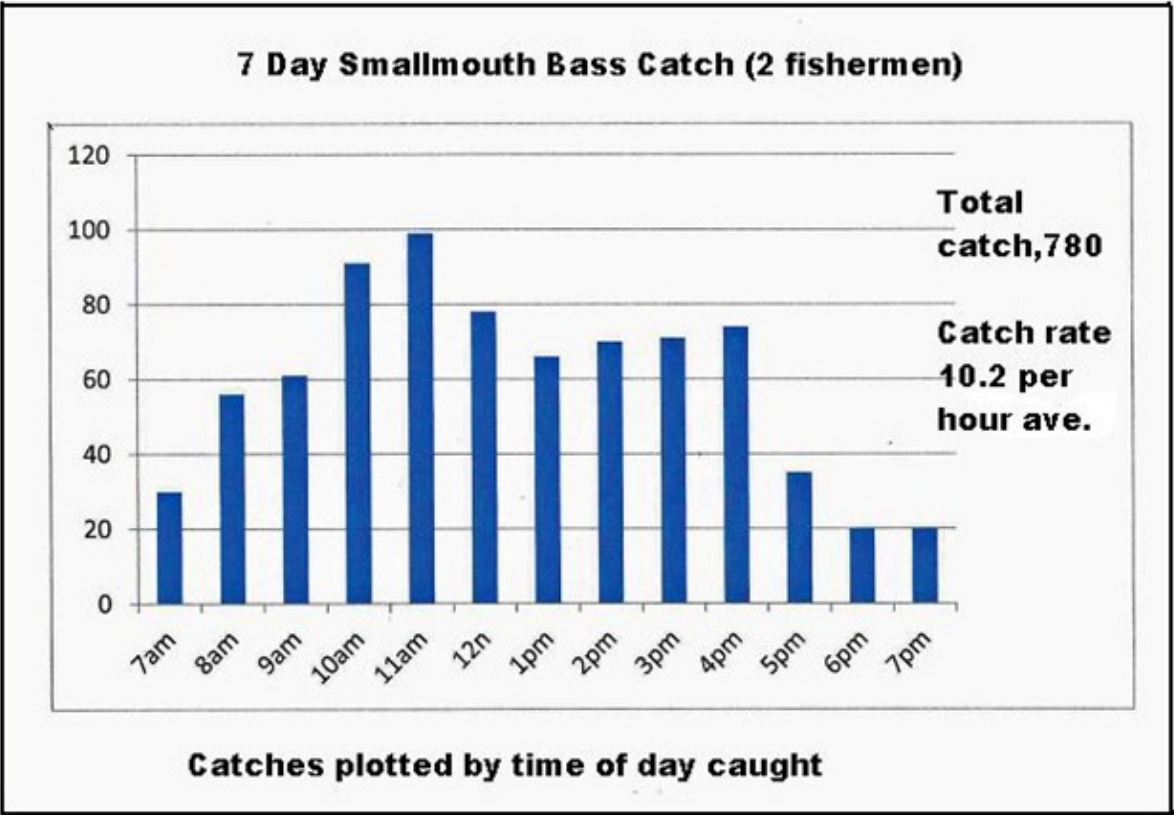
findings that fish will bite all day long, as long as you understand the effect of the sunlight and adjust your fishing techniques accordingly. The entire 780 fish catch is plotted below, showing the times during the day that the fish were caught. Using this rather large sample size of catches, it is obvious that fish can be caught throughout the day, at all hours, regardless of light or rain conditions.

At the end of a wonderful week of fishing our outfitting host Northwest Flying Inc. in one of their four airplanes picked us up.

Kishkutena Lake is one of three active lake facilities controlled by Northwest Flying Inc. This organization, owned by Jack Pope and operated by Jack and his son Shane Hope was purchased by the Hopes in 1992. Jack Hope was in a partnership with this organization since 1987, and took over full responsibility in 1992, operating it as a sole proprietorship.



Northwest operates four aircraft, a Cessna 180, DeHavilland Beaver, DeHavilland Otter and a Beach 18. They employ three pilots in addition to Jack and Shane, who also do much of the flying, as well as managing the entire operation. They start their season in May and usually end in October, and they transport thousands of fishermen each year not only to their



outposts, but also to several other fishing facilities in the surrounding area.

We have found Northwest Flying to be one of the best operating outpost organizations throughout the Ontario region. As a pilot myself, I appreciate the excellent condition of their aircraft as well as the skill and professionalism of their pilots. They are located in Nester Falls Ontario, an easy drive from the border crossing in International Falls Minn. I have also used a newly paved runway at the Nester Falls Airport, for those who have access to a private aircraft as I did. For those fishermen interested in more information, they have a web site at NorthwestFlying.com.

Much of the material gathered from this fishing experience will find its way into my future books. My four previous books about freshwater fishing can be reviewed on my web site www.jakestakeonfishing.com where my blog can also be accessed at www.jakesfishingfacts.blogspot.com.

Jake Bussolini's latest book "The Catfish Hunters" has been widely reviewed and acclaimed as a "must read" for all fishermen. That book can also be reviewed on the above site.



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Big Cats In The City

By Chris Jenkins

Show me a big fish, and I will chase it. As a fisherman, most of us have a preferred species to target. However, when the species happens to be really big, we can be swayed to cinch the knot and pursue those of another feather. I think it's fair to assume that we have all threaded a night crawler on a hook at some point and done battle with a catfish or two. Rarely do we remember, but there comes a time when we move on to test our skills against a more formidable adversary. That is to say, that most of us do. Some, on the other hand, are born to tangle with these creatures of the deep.

Personally, I am smitten over Largemouth Bass, but when I started seeing photographs of giant Blue Catfish emerging from the James River a decade ago, I could not ignore the calling. It was roughly the year of 2003 when I called Chris Eberwien of Eberwien's Catfishing to book a guided trip. I still remember that hot steamy night in July when I landed my first catfish in excess of fifty pounds. Over the years Chris and I caught and released many Blue cats on the James River that dwarfed that initial fifty-pound mark. It quickly became apparent to me that Chris is one of those people that have a "sixth sense" when it comes to finding these obese eating machines.

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Just like The Big Bass Posse in California, I noticed Chris had a tight-knit group of fellow anglers who would communicate their success only between one another. This tight-lipped oath allowed them to not only monitor and stay on big fish, but also provide clients with the thrill of a lifetime.

Today, fifty pounds will not even turn an anglers' head when it comes to Blue Cats in the Hopewell area. In fact, the City of Hopewell and surrounding areas became the infamous launch points into big cat city. In 2006 when a 95.11-pound blue cat became the new state record, it was obvious to everyone that the one hundred-pound mark was up for grabs. Unlike most sports, anyone can hold a record when it comes to fishing. Let's face it, you or I will never surpass the likes of Hank Aaron or Michel Jordan, but it is certainly conceivable that we could make the right cast to the right spot at the right time. Well, on 5/20/2009 Tim Wilson made that cast. In doing so he hauled in a 102.4-pound Blue Catfish that further solidified the James River's title as The King of the Cats.

Like the old saying goes, if you build it, they will come. People came from several states away to drag large chunks of cut bait on the James in an attempt to do battle with, and possibly partake in a new state record. Unfortunately, seasoned veterans like Chris Eberwien and the rest of the Big Cat Posse starting seeing the ill effects of all the unwanted fishing

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pressure brought on due to the James's notoriety. It was discussed among the guides and agreed upon that the James needed a rest.

The Potomac River: Attention was then turned upon the Potomac River to fulfill the needs of their paying customers and keep their businesses afloat.

Learning a new river system can be challenging, especially when the river is as large as the Potomac. When very little verbal information is attainable, a good map becomes our best friend and saves us valuable time on the water and potentially from hazardous situations. It's also possible to use our resources and contact the men and women who maintain and protect our waters. That's exactly what I did by placing a call to John Odenkirk of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. John said the Potomac River is literally exploding with the big blues. He said the population growth curve is about two decades behind the likes of the James River, but with a larger and more productive watershed and forage base, the Potomac is well on its way to record status. I also asked John about potential "Hot Spots" for that the average angler might target for these giants. He stated that these fish could tolerate fairly strong salinities, and locating them down to, and even past the Colonial Beach should not be a problem. However, he went on to say that samples the D.G.I F. had been in on suggest that anglers need only venture downriver as far as the deeper bends near Marshall Hall, and Mattawoman to find big fish. He said that even the bridge abutments in the D.C. area harbor some real monsters.

Fish stories are just that, so for an actual Potomac River record, I turned to the assistant director of fisheries' service, Don Cosden. He stated that the current state record was 67.1 pounds, and the fish was caught on 3/23/08.



When I inquired as to the average life span of the blue cat, he directed the question to Catherine Lim, who stated that the oldest blue she had encountered was twenty-four years old.

Judging from my conversation with these three fisheries personnel, and a few reputable guides, the Potomac River is undoubtedly your best chance for not only a trophy, but also a potential record.

If you decide to tangle with these big cats, it is recommended that you use a stiff seven-foot rod, and a sturdy reel that is capable of holding at least two hundred yards of twenty pound plus test monofilament. Due to the fish's abrasive mouth, it is also recommended to use at least a forty pound test leader. I also noticed these guides using flat weights on their rigs. The reason being is that they will lay flat on the bottom as opposed to rolling in the strong current. Unanimously, all the guides I spoke to agree that indigenous, and preferable fresh bait was the key to success. However, these fish rarely pass up an easy meal. Whether incoming or out going, fish a moving tide when these cats are most actively looking for food. During the months of May and June blues can be fickle at times due to the spawn, but once that's complete it's game on! Typically, night fishing proves to be better during the summer months, and is also easier on the angler as well. Every year, the record stands to be broken on this two rivers, so what's stopping it from being your name in the record books the next time you choose to tangle with the Big Cats of the City.

Chris Eberwien's Catfishing Guide service can be reached at (804) 449-6134

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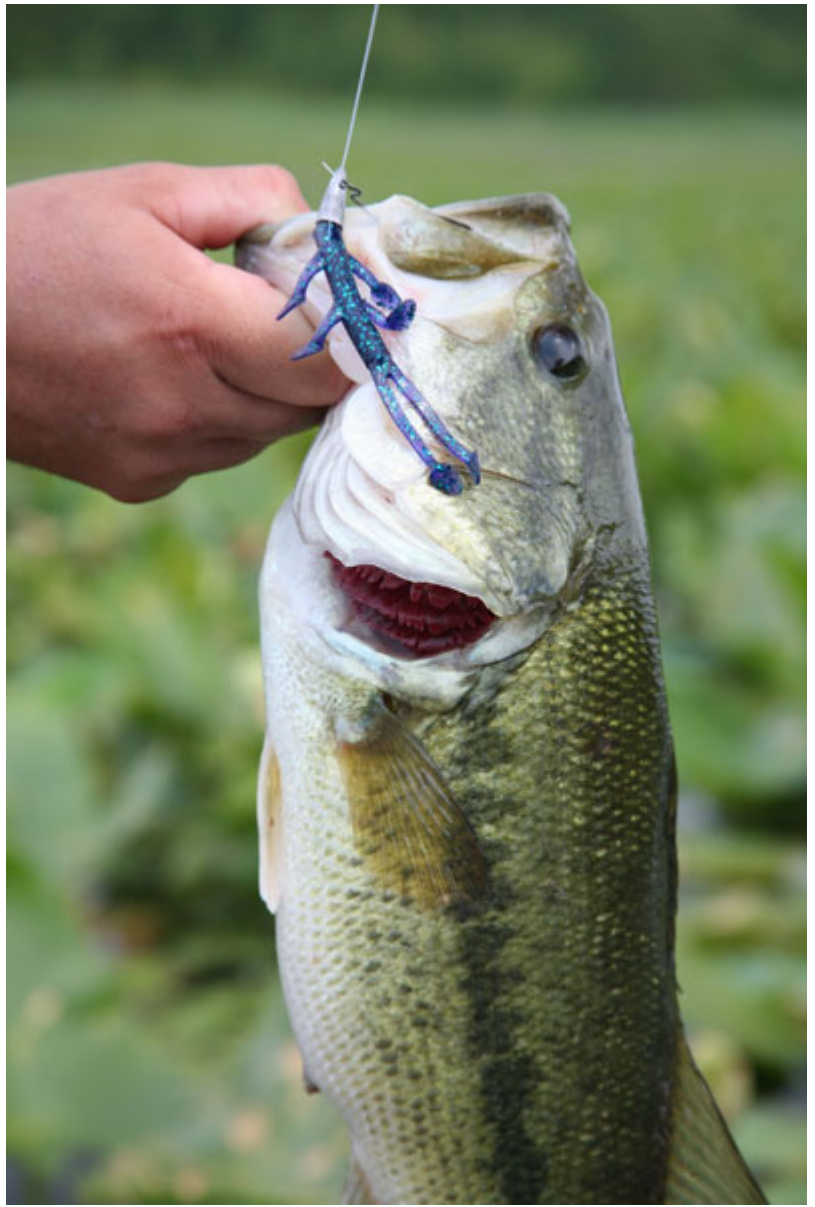
The Hotter it Gets

By Sean Lewis

It's hot, miserably hot, but that doesn't mean you can't catch a few good bass. The trick is to fish the right places with the right lures, and that isn't all that hard to do. First, let's get rid of the idea that the fish are all deep. That's nonsense.

I have good luck fishing heavy vegetation in very shallow water — especially pad fields — when the thermometer is pushing triple digits. My bait of choice is Wave Fishing's Tiki Monkey. I rig it Texas style with braid and the lightest weight possible. As a practical matter that means something between 3/4 and 1 1/2 ounce.

Flip or pitch it into the heaviest stuff you can find. Shade is the key to this bite. You'll catch more fish in the shade than you ever will in the sun. Most of your bites will come on the initial penetration. If that doesn't happen bounce your Tiki Monkey two or three times and then move on. They're either there or they aren't. Fishing



dead water is a waste of valuable fishing time.

One trick that's helped me with my hooking percentage is to Snell the hook to the line. This gives you a better angle when you set the hook and will almost always result in the hook penetrating the roof of the fish's mouth, from the inside out. In my world that's called a secure hookset.

You'll notice that I use braid with this technique. I don't think that reduces the number of bites I get. They're grabbing my Tiki Stick out

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of instinct, not because they really think it'll be good to eat. Out of fairness, however, I do want to tell you that one time, on the Harris Chain in Florida, I couldn't get them to bite using braid. When I switched to a fluorocarbon leader everything was OK. Make of that what you will.

If you feel more comfortable fishing deep water, try rigging a Tiki Stick on a football head and dragging it along the deeper end of long, main lake points. I don't Texas rig my plastic when I'm doing this. All I use is a bare football head and a Tiki Monkey. For whatever reason, that seems to work the best for me.

The deal here is to drag slowly and never lose contact with the bottom. When you hit a stump, big rock or something else, stop your bait for several seconds. This is when most of the bites will happen.

I don't get real fancy with my colors. Black and blue works fine when the

water has a little color to it. When it's clear I switch to watermelon or watermelon with red flake.

Don't let the heat get you down this summer. The hotter it gets the better the bite. Fish for them shallow. Fish for them deep. But by all means fish for them. You only go around once. Make the most of it.



Angler Recognition Revisited

By Bob Wattendorf, with John Cimbaro



Have you ever heard of an angler that doesn't want to brag about a big catch? Okay, so fishermen (and women) have been known to exaggerate a bit. The big one that

got away has become synonymous with “a fish story,” which is defined as an extravagant exaggeration.

Well, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation, and the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission before it, have sought since 1953 to help anglers document their big catches and to give them bragging rights. The antecedent of the evolving “Big Catch Angler Recognition Program” was a “fishing citation” program run by Florida Wildlife Magazine from 1953-1976. The actual Big Catch Angler Recognition Program began in 1990; at the time, a fish weight was required.

The program was revamped in 1996 with creation of categories for Specialists (five qualifying fish of the same species), Masters (five qualifying fish of different species) and Elite anglers (10 qualifying fish of different species). At that time, a few new species were added along with a youth category representing a size roughly 25% smaller than the adult qualification size. In addition, rules were relaxed to allow anglers to report fish based on length or weight (with either a photo or witness to document the application). The objectives were to recognize anglers, so they feel good about their accomplishments, encourage appropriate catch-and-release, and collect informal data on where big fish were being caught in various locations around the state to share with other anglers. Since 1990, more than 7,500 Big Catch Certificates have been issued—that's almost one per day.

Awards were and still are a full-color framable certificate with the Duane Raver image of the appropriate species, plus a window decal for adults and a 3” pin/button for youth. The Master and Elite certificates were based on the “Go Fishing” largemouth bass conservation tag. Beginning in July 2012 another upgrade to the program is set to take place. In addition to traditional paper submissions a new mobile friendly Internet reporting system will be available to the public, so anglers can submit their catches and photos electronically as well



as get reports on when and where freshwater fishing is at its best. New sponsors such as FishPhotoReplicas.net and SportsmanOnCanvas.com are offering 20 percent discounts to help certificate winners to further memorialize their catch—and avoid the stigma of just another “fish story.”

Several changes in sizes and species are shown in the attached table, which will represent the new standards—based on actual FWC field data from over a quarter million fish—beginning July 1, 2012. Among the changes are new

sizes for Suwannee and shoal bass. Alligator gar, redbfin pickerel and skipjack herring have been dropped. Yellow perch, Mayan cichlid, and jaguar guapote were added. In addition a new series of freshwater grand slams are being added including: Black Bass (for catching a largemouth, spotted, shoal and Suwannee bass in the same year), Bream (for catching any four of bluegill, redear sunfish, spotted sunfish, warmouth, redbreast sunfish, or flier in one day), and Non-native Fish (for catching a butterfly peacock, Mayan cichlid and oscar in one day) slams—see MyFWC.com/BigCatch for details.

The Big Catch Angler Recognition Program will be followed in October 2012, with a fantastic new TrophyCatch program (MyFWC.com/TrophyCatch) for anglers who catch and release largemouth bass greater than eight pounds. Three different tiers will be recognized: The Lunker Club (8.0-9.9 lbs), The Trophy Club (10.0-12.9 lbs) and the Hall-of-Fame Club (greater than 13 pounds).

Anglers will be encouraged to follow catch-and-release guidelines for these big bass (8.0-12.9) and to document the catch with a length, weight and series of photos prior to release. A more thorough certification process will be in place for Hall-of-Fame bass.

As TrophyCatch is developed and executed it will provide reward incentives to encourage



anglers to report and live release trophy bass (more than 8 pounds); create public/private partnerships to protect trophy bass and promote fishing; and support conservation programs.

By documenting verified catches of trophy bass and publicizing them Florida's bass fisheries will maintain worldwide prominence. By using the data on when and where trophy bass are produced, biologists can improve trophy-bass management via habitat enhancement, regulation

management, stocking or other means that are proven to increase catch of trophy largemouth bass while fostering a strong catch-and-release conservation ethic. The excitement of these angler recognition programs will also increase fishing participation of Florida's youth and families and

attract more anglers to Florida while promoting strong conservation messaging. Among the most important outcomes will be to increase public awareness and commitment to protect our fisheries and their habitats.



TrophyCatch will rely heavily on private support, partnerships, and sponsorships, and is expected to evolve in the coming years. It is a hallmark of the long-term Black Bass Management Plan that was created through an interactive process with anglers, researchers, tourism and outdoor communications professionals and fishing-related business representatives. Ultimately the goal of the plan, including TrophyCatch as one component, is to ensure Florida is the undisputed Bass Fishing Capital of the World.

Bass Tactics For HOT, HOT, HOT Weather Walleyes

By Lawrence Taylor

Hot weather and walleyes don't mix? Think again. A walleye is cold-blooded. Like other fish, their metabolism rises along with the water temperature in summer, meaning they need to eat more, not less.

Conventional wisdom, all summer long, demands dragging leeches and minnows on Lindy rigs in deeper water for walleyes. Obviously, it works. Hundreds of thousands of walleye enthusiasts can't be wrong, especially since it's still working after half a century.

But the walleyes conventional anglers target are seldom the most active fish around. Hard to convince people of this, but active walleyes are not on bottom in deeper water. They suspend with the baitfish, or prowl around on

shallow reefs, weedbeds, shorelines, and points. With years of practice, some walleye anglers have become experts at feeding line and timing hooksets for finicky fish that hold minnows by the tail and regularly drop baits at the least sign of pressure. The only way to become expert at it is by missing a few thousand fish.

Wouldn't you rather find walleyes that try to rip the rod out of your hands? The three primary attractions for active walleyes in summer are weeds, rocks, and suspended baitfish. Bass tactics will put you on active fish quicker and put more of them in the boat faster this summer.



Bass-Tactic Walleyes



Active walleyes can be approached like bass.

Put the trolling motor down at the bow and move quickly to cover those shallow-water spots. Few of the best walleye pros use bait between the beginning of July and the end of September. It's not necessary. Walleyes in weeds rise right into the tops of cabbage, coontail, hydrilla, and milfoil, looking for small panfish, golden shiners, shad, and any other baitfish that swim by. Bait is a perpetual nuisance here, ripping free of hooks whenever a jig or lure needs to be popped off the weeds.

Almost any lure or package in the 3- to 5-inch range that can be worked between the weeds and the surface will take walleyes here. The crux is finding lures or speeds that touch the weeds without getting too involved. Rattle baits like the Cotton Cordell Super Spot and XCalibur Xr50, pitched on casting gear with 30-pound braid, are perfect because you can simply speed up or slow down as necessary to clip along through the weed tops. During warm, stable weather, walleyes crush rattle baits all through the day. No need to wait until evening.

Marianne Huskey "The Only Professional Female Walleye Angler" ((pictured on the front cover))



Since 2009 Marianne Huskey has been the only female competing in Professional Walleye Tournaments. In May of 2012 she made history as the highest placing female with her 2nd place finish at the AIM Pro Walleye Series CAN-AM Invitational that took place in Brimley MI.

"Even though the fish are not gender specific I feel as if I put more pressure on myself to perform and make a good impression for all of my sponsors.

After the weigh in at Brimley, MI for the CAN AM I was approached and received multiply emails from women telling me that they had never watched a weigh in until they heard about me leading after day 2.

If I can make a lasting impression and expose more people to the outdoors then I am doing my job."

Marianne is also a United States Licensed Charter Captain on Green Bay in Wisconsin. Book your trip at www.mariannehuskey.com

In 2010 Marianne received the Dave Anderson Sportsman of the Year Award from her peers. She has competed in the AIM Pro Walleye Series since 2009 and has also competed in 2 FLW events.

Marianne is sponsored by: Lund Boats, Mercury Motors, Lowrance, Navionics, Optima Batteries, Off Shore Tackle, Frabill, JT's Custom Tackle, Slimers, Pure Fishing, Fin-tech and Walleyeworkshop.com



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Minnow-shaped cranks or stick baits are deadly for walleyes. Suspending baits are especially effective, using a basic pause-and-pull retrieve, but they often dig a little too deep to work over the tops of the weeds. Where weed tops are 5 feet or more below the surface, a Suspending Smithwick Rogue or XCalibur XEE4 EEratic Shad worked with the rod tip held low will whack a lot of fish. Where weeds are 4 feet below the surface, retrieve with the rod tip held high or go with a floater-diver like the Bomber Long A and work it slow. When a floating minnowbait makes contact with weeds, stop it, feed it a little slack and let it float up. Hard plastic baits like the Long A float up slow -- an enticing trigger for walleyes skulking around in nearby weed clumps.



Tackle should be fairly stout. Unlike fishing minnowbaits in open water, these baits need to be ripped free of weeds, and after a strike the challenge becomes turning a big walleye and moving it quickly toward the boat. Don't offer any opportunities for a trophy to turn and burrow into the weeds. Medium-heavy spinning or casting rods coupled with 20- to 30-pound braided line accomplish it best. Braids won't stretch, so the distance the rod tip moves is pretty much the same distance you move the fish. Where the water is clear, tie on a

3- to 4-foot section of 12- to 17-pound fluorocarbon, using a small barrel swivel or back-to-back uni knots.

Plastic Tactics

Weeds are basically ambush stations for walleyes. When they set up along the deep weed edge (a strategy often employed where perch populations are dense), approach them with slightly lighter tackle and soft plastics on jigs. Soft swimbaits like the 3.5-inch YUM Money Minnow swimming slowly by on a horizontal plane near bottom brings walleyes ripping out of pockets in the weedline.



With the boat on the weed edge, make short pitches parallel to the weeds in the direction you're moving and let the bait hit bottom. The right retrieve speed is critical, and tends to be easiest to achieve with a ¼-ounce jighead. After selecting the right head, speed becomes a matter of keeping it near bottom without dragging. If it drags, speed up. If it never touches bottom, slow down. This is a trophy-walleye tactic that will entice more than a few largemouth or smallmouth bass hanging around in the same areas doing the same thing. Be sure to fan cast a little toward deeper water and try walking the baits over the tops and down the deep edge of the weeds, too. The right tackle for a light swimbait like this is 10-pound mono on a fast, medium-power spinning rod.

A similar tactic with slightly lighter tackle absolutely smokes walleyes throughout the open-water season around rock reefs, rip-rap, and rocky shorelines. From spring through ice-up, in areas 8-feet deep or less, try pitching an auger-tail grub, like the YUM Walleye Grub, on a 3/32- to 1/8-ounce head with 6-pound mono. The optimum gear includes a fast, 7-foot, medium-light spinning rod. Just cast to the deep side of boulders, rock piles, or rip-rap, let the jig fall to bottom (or count it down to a spot near bottom where it's really snaggy) and slowly retrieve with the rod tip held low. Don't jig it, snap it or rip it. Just reel.

Hard baits, plastics, and bass tactics score massive numbers and trophies from mid-summer though early fall, especially during stable-weather periods.

Unconventional behavior can be disturbing, though. If it sounds too radical to have a walleye rip the rod out of your hands, don't try any of this.





Roy Lake – Fishing Heaven in South Dakota

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

North Dakota native Jan Thames was a single mom on a fishing trip to Minnesota with her two sons in the early 1990s, searching for a motel to spend the night. She drove and drove until she eventually found one with an occupancy sign lit up. As fate would have it, it was not far from the farm she grew up on, and close to Roy Lake, a 2,000-acre body of water in the glacial region of northern South Dakota.

The next morning, she stumbled onto Roy Lake Resort, a place for sale at the time because the business was as down as was the lake level. Jan, a council woman battling gangs in a suburb of Houston and a former wildlife rehabber, wanted to find a business where she could mix her love of the outdoors with her drive to make a wonderful life for herself and her boys.

“I’ve always dabbled in things with an outdoor theme,” said Thames, a certified scuba diver who went as far as the Alps to break a leg skiing. She made an offer on the resort.

“They saw ‘sucker’ in neon lights on my forehead,” Thames said.

But she had the last laugh. The lake level rose 11 feet soon after the ink was on the papers. And, as they say, the rest is history.

For the past 19 years, Thames has been the innkeeper of a resort that can play host to as many as 60 people who come to fish Roy Lake in addition to the nearly 50 other lakes within a 20-minute drive. Anglers like outdoor telecasters and writers, Tony Dean (recently passed away) and Al Lindner, take their vacations there.

“I like to say God opened a window for me but I climbed through by the seat of my pants,” laughed Thames. Her resort is the kind of place where a fish camera below the dock is linked to a screen in the bar. Foot-long crappies are the stars of the show.

A chain of three lakes, the flowing waters eventually winding up in the Missouri River, feeds Roy Lake. Roy is labeled trophy walleye water, with natural walleyes reproduction. The wall



Bobby's 1st trip



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of the resort's restaurant features an 11.5-pound walleye caught from that same dock where the crappies strike a pose. It dates to before Thames bought Roy Lake Resort. The wall also has a 10 ¼-pound walleye a resort guest caught not long ago.

The lake turns over in mid-September each year. By Oct. 1, anglers take to the waters with big chubs and Lindy Rigs to target the big fish as they fatten before ice up. Roy Lake has a variety of fish-holding structure, from points with sand and gravel to sunken islands. Look for the sharpest breaks. A drop of one foot for every foot out from shore is prime territory. Crystal clear water means walleyes can be deep. Use a 3/8-ounce Lindy Rig, a snell length of about 4 feet and a hook large enough to hold a tail-hooked 5-inch chub. The struggles of the minnow will attract the attention of big walleyes.

But walleyes aren't the only species that draws anglers to Roy Lake. Try a 9-pound, 4-ounce largemouth bass that has stood as the state record since it was caught a couple of years ago.

Smallmouth bass are one of Thames' favorite fish. "I like catching them on surface lures, like poppers," she said. Big Roy Lake smallies go 3 to 5 pounds. "I think you ought to be seeing more of the 5- to 6-pounders soon," she said.

Lindy Rigs and big chubs work for the bass, too, in fall. Target similar structure as the walleyes, but go shallower. A Fuzz-E-Grub jig tipped with a minnow is also a great combination to catch nice smallmouth bass.

While fall trophy fishing is the pinnacle of the year's fishing, it's merely a prelude to Thames' favorite time of the year. Ice fishing in the region is so good it draws people like Dave Genz, the father of modern ice fishing.

Roy's clear water creates some problems for daytime ice anglers. "The fish can see you through the ice," she said.

Stick to nighttime fishing or use tip-ups – which isn't all-bad. Guests have been known to sit in the bar drinking beer and playing cards when they have to hustle to put on a coat and dash outside to set the hook on a 26-inch walleye or an 18-pound northern pike. And the pike could be even bigger. The state record Northern came from Roy, a 32-pounder.



With so many lakes nearby, the resort's guides always know where the day bite is on for crappies, bluegills or big perch, she said. They take care to spread out the pressure and to protect the locations of hot bites to insure that overfishing doesn't harm fragile panfish populations, Thames said. "We try to have a customer base that's respectful of the lakes," she said.

Because the resort is located in South Dakota, fishing isn't its only attraction. The pheasant hunting is fabled. If the 55,000 acres of public hunting land in the county aren't enough, the guides have access to private land. The area also offers hunting for deer, waterfowl and two kinds of turkey, Eastern and Merriam's.

The resort has its own restaurant and the cabins have kitchens. If you're looking for someplace to quench your thirst other than the bar at the resort, Lake City, population 42, is just down the road. "It has the best bar in South Dakota and a post office," Thames said.

Remote? Yes. But, Roy Lake is only four hours from Minneapolis, 80 miles northwest of Aberdeen and two small airports nearby can handle small jets. Thames hopes to attract more business clients to group outings there.

Roy Lake Resort also has a swimming beach, boat launching facilities, picnic areas, a new nine-hole frisbee golf course, volleyball court, playgrounds, campgrounds and foot bridge to Roy Island. For cold weather, The lodge is located a mile from the 73-mile Glacial Lakes snowmobile trail which meanders through the backcountry.

For more on fishing Roy Lake, call (605) 448-5498 or email jan@roylakeresort.com. Visit www.roylakeresort.com or the Roy Lake State Park Web site at www.sdgfp.info/parks/Regions/GlacialLakes/RoyLake.htm.



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Note: Takasaki is teaming up with Anderson Trucking Service to offer fishing tips to the company's drivers, along with the chance to win all-expenses-paid fishing trips with the Hall of Fame angler. Ted's Tips are found at www.drive4ats.com, along with information on joining this industry leader, founded in 1955. Interested drivers can also call 1-855-JOIN-ATS.

ODU



MightEE Worm Wins By 9 ½ Pounds On T-Bend

By Lawrence Taylor

What's it take to win a bass tournament on Toledo Bend Reservoir? Getting five big bites (and landing them, of course).

Glenn Freeman of Converse, La., knew this going into the FLW EverStart Series Texas Division tournament last week and believes that you need a big bait for big, tournament-winning fish.

The winning strategy became clear during his practice.

"I used a smaller finesse worm and the 10 ½-inch YUM MightEE Worm to locate the schools of bass, but cut the hook point off so it wouldn't hook them in practice," he said. "I could feel the bigger bass when they would bite it. I keyed into deep-water structure that was holding big staging bass to weigh in 68-15 pounds and win the tournament by 9 ½ pounds.

Think about that for a minute – Toledo Bend...some of the best anglers in the world...winning by 9 ½-pounds. That's the perfect storm of big-bass lake, superior planning by a tremendous angler and a bait that catches big bass.

Toledo Bend Reservoir is renowned for its grass beds at all depths where big bass hide, but Freeman's approach was to go deep, finding offshore structure like humps and ridges with staging bass.

"I fished mid-lake in 20- to 30-feet deep around structure that didn't have any grass or rocks on it. They were just bare bottoms with standing timber," said Freeman. "The key was to drag or hop a YUM MightEE Worm across the structure."

Freeman started out using both a Booyah Pigskin jig and the big worm on day one of the tournament, but by day two had narrowed it down to just the YUM MightEE Worm.

"On day one I could get the bass to bite a Booyah Pigskin jig with a crawfish imitating trailer and the YUM MightEE Worm in Blue Fleck, then as the tournament went on the big bass really got to biting the big worm good," said Freeman.

Freeman rigged the YUM MightEE Worm with a 7/0 Gamakatsu EWG hook, 1/2-ounce lead worm weight on 20 pound fluorocarbon fishing line. The bigger hook was necessary to not only hook the bass, but land them. "I like using the YUM MightEE Worm because its bigger diameter and longer length," Freeman continued, "and as you can tell it catches big fish."

Other keys to Freeman's win were his electronics and boat control. Freeman used his electronics to find small and big schools of bass that were around the ridges and humps. The bass were holding tight to the bottom, but close to deep water.

"The thermocline has just started showing up on the lake and the bass are just now moving out to deeper water. I knew where the fish were moving out to and that's where I caught them," said Freeman.

Boat control was also important as the wind blew hard every day of the tournament.



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“I swear on the first day, the wind was blowing from all directions. It was taking me 30 minutes just to drive 15- to 18-miles down the lake to where I was fishing,” he said. “Once I got to where I was fishing, the real challenge was to keep the boat in the right position so I could cast to the bass.”

Besides fishing bass tournaments, Freeman also guides on Toledo Bend Reservoir. During the summer months, Freeman often has his guide clientele cast with plastic worms to catch fish. If they want to catch big bass, Freeman gives them a big worm like the YUM MightEE Worm, but if they just want to catch numbers he'll go to a smaller finesse style worm. Sometime's he'll change from using a big worm to a Cotton Cordell CC Spoon in the same areas.

But it's not a numbers game when it comes to fishing and winning a bass tournament on Toledo Bend Reservoir. An angler had better come prepared mentally and ready to get only five big bites, but if those bites if they come on a big worm, that should be enough to easily win the tournament like Freeman did at the FLW EverStart Series Texas Division tournament – by 9 ½ pounds!

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Cranking 'Eyes with Authority

By Tom Neustrom

Slam dunk crankbaiting techniques for busting the backs of summer walleyes

(Crank-tim-a-da-tion): A fearfulness of crank baits. Lacking the confidence to trust bodybaits. To be utterly intimidated by hard-bodied lures. Ex: "Tom suffered from cranktimidation, not having the confidence to employ the lure even when the fishing



This sailor suffers not from CRANKTIMIDATION. By trolling prescribed crankbaits in specific depth ranges you can have your way with walleyes – even when jigs, rigs and spinners aren't getting the job done. Photo courtesy of Humminbird

conditions were ideal for casting or trolling a crankbait."

Seems we're always hearing the term "confidence bait." It's the lure you throw with your chest pumped and head full of self-assurance. Might be a jig. Perhaps a spinner and crawler dragged almost pompously along the bottom. Maybe even hanging a leech under a slip-bobber with your chin held high. You've hooked walleye after walleye on the technique over the years. It's the first outfit that hits the water...no matter what. Herein lays the fatal flaw: you'll stubbornly fish it even when the lake says it isn't working.

I've watched guys drift a jig and minnow infinitely without a bite. Even if another boat passes by engaged in another technique and banging fish – say me trolling crank bait – they doggedly or lazily stick to their guns. Those would-be guns with the wrong rounds that won't shoot.

Get on the boat, guys. When there's the potential for catching walleyes on crankbaits, or you've actually seen fish with balsa and trebles hanging from their lips, do yourself a favor and make the move. Courageously tie on a crankbait. They can be fished furiously fast or subtly slow; is fun to burn through the water; Get fish angry



The Shad Rap family from Rapala is the most diverse series of crankbaits to ever meet the mugs of walleyes. Author Tom Neustrom touts the Glass Shad Rap for its tight tracking even at high speeds, as well as the mirror-like flanks that naturally reflect the underwater environment. Photo courtesy of Rapala

enough to strike when not hungry; and come in such a wide range of sizes, shapes and colors that experimenting becomes part of the fun.

So to get cranked-up, not cranky and fishless, here's a commonplace summer circumstance where crankbaits rule: The spawn is long gone. Water temperatures are hiking into the 60s and 70s. Walleyes are roaming and ransacking batfish. Getting fish to attack isn't science.

Put a bead on long shoreline points, one with inner pockets and a notable plunge into deep-water. Beaten by wind? All the better. It's been well documented, but always worth restating: Onshore winds relocate entire food chains. The waves drive zooplankton and other micro-edibles. Bait fish follows, and are also held somewhat captive by the surging water. Walleyes come tumbling after. Conversely, rather, slinging around to impart dental-destruction on fleshy minnows.

Rock, gravel and or vegetation is always preferred over a flat desert, sandy bottoms. 8- to 16-feet in depth of water is my go-to starting range, slipping deeper as warranted. There is one caveat to that, however. If the wind is really howling, waves cresting, and clouds thicker than thieves, I'll explore waters shallower than 8-feet.

Something I've been doing to find structure, without barging right over it, and scattering walleyes, is running Humminbird's Side Imaging. Structure located, and marked with a GPS icon, I can troll alongside it, rod out, without busting up the spot with prop turbulence. Side Imaging also reveals inside turns, so I can alter my next pass to cover the feature

TECHNIQUE ALA TROLLING

Time to break a severe case of cranktimidation. Instinct, or perhaps second nature says to pitch jigs, perhaps drift live bait rigs. Nah-ah. We're cranking and trolling. And here's the recipe. Follow it and you'll be eating well.

To build that confidence, it's prerequisite to operate with the proper tools, and that begins with the reel. No deliberating, I'm strapping a Daiwa Accudepth 17 reel to a trolling-friendly rod. The reel was actually engineered for trolling walleyes – not a repurposed saltwater dragging device. Being able to measure out line, with utter accuracy, is crucial to control – and

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X Rap Shad**

ultimately staring down cranktimidation.

My choice in fishing line is pretty straightforward as well. Everything's spooled with Sufix 832 superline in 10-lb, 4-lb diameter. So sensitive you can feel a fish fart, not to mention the deadness of a crankbait when it fouls with debris. Before welcoming the crankbait, I tie in 6-foot span of 10-lb. Sufix fluorocarbon, connecting the lines with an InvisaSwivel. The clear leader line gives me the confidence that fish won't get turned off by the colored main line. Also, the fluorocarbon acts a shock absorber. The InvisaSwivel eliminates line twist and keeps the crankbait running like a champ.

Here's where you get out the notebook. Eons of hours spent trolling for walleyes has built a faultless mental library of lures to line to depth. Picking a series of crankbaits is child's play. Rapala Shad Raps do it all. Mix the right size and pattern with an established depth-range and you're taking candy from babies.

I'll cut to the chase. If the walleyes are working in 8- to 10-feet of water, it's a shallow-running #7 Shallow Shad Rap – one with the bent bill. Let out 80- to 100-feet of Sufix 832 and let the

games begin. Go ahead and mess around with colors. But for me, it's Bleeding Blue Shad, straight blue/silver, or Firetiger.



Little deeper, say 10- to 12-feet of water? I'm pulling a #5 Shad Rap – the classic elongated lip – with 80- to 90-feet behind the boat. Same colors apply, but here's where I make the switch to Glass Shad Raps. Their foil skin echoes the aquatic surroundings, making them spot-on realistic at all depths. Additionally, the concave lip on Glass Shad Rap keeps it running straw-straight at trolling speeds over 2.5 mph.

If walleyes have crept out to 12- to 14-feet, it's a #5 Shad Rap with 110- to 120-feet of Sufix pulling it along. Here's an opportunity to upsize the bait as well. Go to a full-figured #7 Shad Rap and let only 70- to 80-feet of line out – same depth is achieved, just with more meat and metal.

This particular Shad Rap trolling pattern taps out at about 16-feet. So in 14- to 16-feet of water it's a #7 Shad Rap with 110- to 120-feet of line behind. Hulking up to a #8 Shad Rap, just reel it back to 70 or 80-feet of line. Again, more size in the same zone.



Futuristic Fiber Bonding Leads the “Rod Race”

St. Croix Rod's fortified resin and curing system are best-practices in the industry

Park Falls, Wis. – Speaking of a system, it's said that “A system is only as good as the weakest link.” Sometimes, despite the quality of components involved, a weakness arises during the manufacturing process – this to include the rod curing process in other factories.

To achieve the maximum effectiveness of a resin in the bonding process, utter sophistication is required not only in the oven itself, but also the time and temperature management. Using new state-of-the-art ovens, St. Croix is able to achieve perfection. The curing cycles are timed with exactness. Temperatures are policed without fail. There'll be no rod building crimes – ancient ovens with mismanaged times and temperatures – in Park Falls, Wisconsin. St. Croix guarantees that...

The lower end of the fishing rod spectrum has tampered with terminology, too. Back when, IM6 meant something. Now it and even higher IM claims seldom reflect the true quality of a rod – as expert rod engineering and building is a combination of premium parts in harmony with real hands-on craftsmanship.

So somewhere along the line, the idiom “composite” comes into vogue. Everyone's saying it, and many manufacturers abusing its meaning. In fundamental terms, composite refers to the

bonding of fibers and resin (think of glue) to create the rod blank. And like the 33-step process that goes into building a St. Croix rod, the bonding of fibers is taken to a scrupulously scientific level.

St. Croix's flagship resin meticulously bonds to each and every fiber. This advantage is enhanced when combined with St. Croix's sophisticated curing system. This powerful resin and curing union is called Fortified Resin System or FRS. The result of FRS is a rod that's 33% stronger than rods built with standard resins and curing practices. FRS prevents microbuckling by keeping the carbon fibers in proper alignment.

Several St. Croix rod series feature FRS. For 2013, FRS is available in Legend® Xtreme, Legend Elite®, Legend Tournament® Bass/Musky/Walleye, Legend® Inshore, Legend® Surf, Legend® Salt, Bank Robber™ and High Stick Drifter rods.

About St. Croix Rod

St. Croix Rod is a family-owned manufacturer of high-performance graphite and fiberglass fishing rods headquartered in Park Falls, Wisconsin. The company offers a complete line of premium, American-made fly, spinning and casting rods under the Imperial®, Legend Elite®, Legend Ultra®, Legend Tournament®, Avid Series®, Premier®, Wild River®, Tidemaster®, and other trademarks through a global distribution network of full-service fishing tackle dealers. The company's mid-priced Triumph®, Mojo, and Rio Santo series rods are designed and engineered in Park Falls, Wisconsin and built in a new, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Fresnillo, Mexico. Founded in 1948 to manufacture jointed bamboo fishing poles for a Minneapolis hardware store chain, St. Croix has grown to become the largest manufacturer of fishing rods in North America.

