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ANDY MORGAN WINS
HIS THIRD AOY TITLE
IN FOUR YEARS



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FEATURES

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2016 | VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 6

54



THE KING RECLAIMS HIS CROWN

ANDY MORGAN WINS HIS THIRD AOY TITLE IN FOUR SEASONS

by Curtis Niedermier

60



RUNAWAY ROOKIE

ROY CHRIS JOHNSTON MAKES IT LOOK EASY

by Colin Moore

62

NEW'S CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

NORTH CAROLINA CO-ANGLER COLLECTS THIRD MAJOR FLW AWARD

by Kyle Wood



FORREST WOOD CUP

PRESENTED BY Walmart

PREVIEW

65



NEXT ISSUE

2016 FORREST WOOD CUP SPECIAL ISSUE

- In the annual Forrest Wood Cup issue, FLW reports on the patterns of the Cup's top pros, as well as all the festivities surrounding the biggest event of the year. There'll be a photo gallery and detailed illustrations of the techniques used on Wheeler Lake.

TUNE IN TO FLW ON THE NBC SPORTS NETWORK, PURSUIT CHANNEL AND WFN.





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DEPARTMENTS

6 EDITOR'S NOTE

Who's the GOAT? | *by Curtis Niedermier*

8 SOLUNAR TABLES

10 FISHING EXPOSED

Largemouths Leaping

13 LIVEWELL

News and Notes from Around the Lake

26 ASK A BIOLOGIST

Understanding Thermoclines | *by Dr. Brian Weidel*

28 ANGLING PROFILE

Bethel University | *by David A. Brown*

32 FISHIN' WITH THE RANGER MAN

Forrest L. Wood's Fishing Wisdom

34 ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Fishing 101 | *by TJ Maglio*

37 GEAR

Products and Insight to Help You Catch Fish

89 TECHNIQUES

Tactical Approaches to Seasonal Challenges | *by Curtis Niedermier*

95 ON TOUR

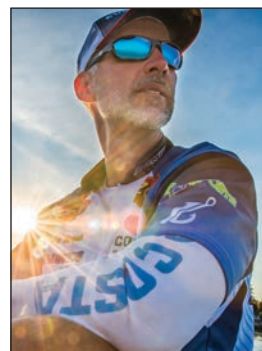
Tournament Coverage and Highlights

114 TBF

What's Making News in The Bass Federation | *by Dan Johnson*

120 LAST CAST

Secrets on the Seams of Change | *by Rob Newell*



ON THE COVER

Andy Morgan

PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON

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2015 FORREST WOOD CUP
CHAMPION



EDITOR'S NOTE



WHO'S THE GOAT?

Cody Meyer might not have originated the acronym GOAT, but he was the first to apply it to Andy Morgan during their 2014 Angler of the Year race. The GOAT tag, which stands for Greatest of All Time, stuck with Morgan, and rightly so. Meyer applied it during the second of Morgan's three AOY seasons, and given his performance in the last few years, Morgan hasn't done anything to suggest that he doesn't deserve to be considered the best to ever fish FLW tournaments.

But is he?

That's a tough call and a debate that likely can never be settled. If Morgan is a sort of Michael Jordan, then FLW has a Larry and a Magic too.

Funny thing is, in basketball, the pundits love this type of debate, but in fishing – specifically in FLW's tournament circuits – it's not a topic that gets bounced around a lot.

I'll bite.

With apologies to such great pros as Clark Wendlandt, Larry Nixon (the greatest to split his career between B.A.S.S. and FLW, perhaps) and Bryan Thrift, my candidates for FLW's GOAT are Morgan, David Dudley and Scott Martin.

Stats-wise, they're all juggernauts, but the GOAT debate primarily hinges on how you evaluate greatness. Is it consistency? If so, Morgan's 62 top 10s in 232 FLW tournaments since 1996 is ridiculously good (he actually has more top 10s from the old Red Man circuit prior to 1996, but that's as far back as FLW records go). More impressive is that he's finished in the top 10 in the Walmart FLW Tour AOY standings 11 times ... in a row. That streak is still active, by the way.

Dudley's resume reflects his consistency as well. He is FLW's all-time leading money winner, with \$3.4 million in earnings, and he won three Tour AOY titles before Morgan won his first.

Martin also got his first AOY last year, has finished in the AOY top 10 three years in a row and has won \$2.5 million. That's about \$600,000 more than Morgan, who began his pro career in 1996. Martin started in 2000.

If you place a higher value on wins, Dudley and Martin are tied with seven, and they each have six \$100,000-plus victories.

If championships determine greatness, then Dudley and Martin are neck-and-neck in that regard too. Each has won the Forrest Wood Cup, though Dudley also won the \$700,000 Ranger M1 Millennium tournament. Morgan has never won the Cup.

Maybe if Morgan rolls into Huntsville this month and wins the 2016 Forrest Wood Cup on Wheeler Lake we can stop the debate and go ahead and cast his bust in bronze. Or maybe not. Martin seems to me to be the guy who's going to win about a dozen Tour events before he calls it quits. He's also my pick to be the first two-time Cup champ. He's a hammer in tough summer tournaments. Morgan, however, would shock no one if he won AOY No. 4 in 2017. As for Dudley, he could pull off either feat.

So who's the GOAT? I guess for now it's Morgan. He's the reigning AOY, after all. But ask me again on Aug. 7 when an FLW superstar is handed the Forrest Wood Cup trophy.

Curtis Niedermier, Editor-in-Chief

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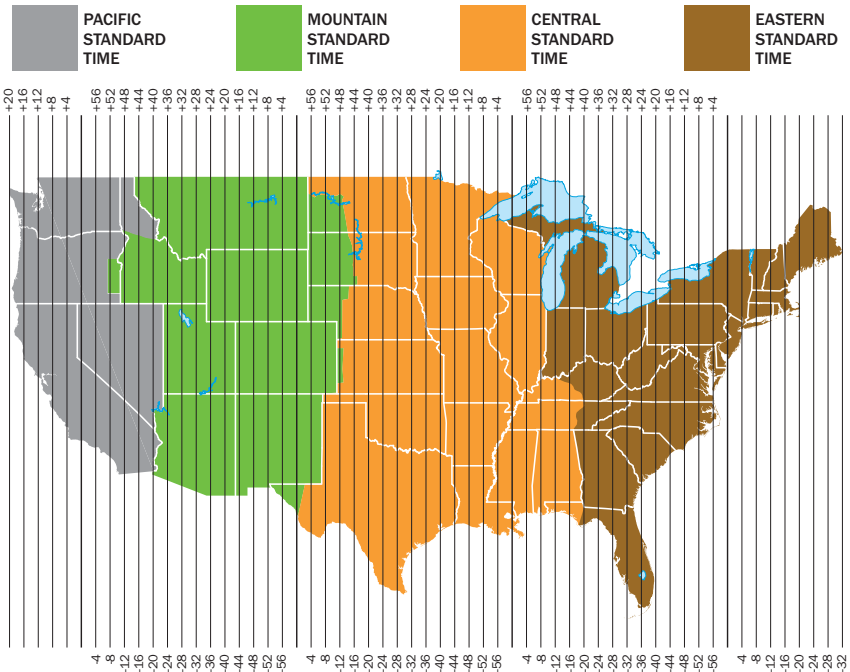
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AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2016 SOLUNAR TABLES



AUG. Date	Day	AM Minor	AM Major	PM Minor	PM Major	Moon Phases	SEPT. Date	Day	AM Minor	AM Major	PM Minor	PM Major	Moon Phases
1	Mon	3:15	9:25	3:35	9:50	●	1	Thu	4:30	10:35	4:45	11:00	●
2	Tue	4:05	10:15	4:25	10:40	●	2	Fri	5:15	11:25	5:35	11:50	●
3	Wed	4:55	11:10	5:20	11:40	●	3	Sat	6:05	—:—	6:30	12:15	●
4	Thu	5:55	—:—	6:20	12:05	●	4	Sun	6:45	12:35	7:15	1:00	●
5	Fri	6:40	12:30	7:10	12:55	●	5	Mon	7:35	1:25	8:00	1:45	●
6	Sat	7:30	1:20	7:55	1:40	●	6	Tue	8:20	2:10	8:50	2:35	●
7	Sun	8:15	2:05	8:45	2:30	●	7	Wed	9:10	3:00	9:35	3:20	●
8	Mon	9:05	2:55	9:30	3:15	●	8	Thu	10:00	3:50	10:25	4:10	●
9	Tue	9:50	3:40	10:15	4:00	●	9	Fri	10:50	4:40	11:20	5:05	●
10	Wed	10:40	4:30	11:05	4:50	●	10	Sat	11:35	5:25	—:—	5:45	●
11	Thu	11:20	5:10	11:45	5:30	●	11	Sun	12:00	6:10	12:20	6:35	●
12	Fri	—:—	5:50	12:00	6:15	●	12	Mon	12:50	6:55	1:05	7:20	●
13	Sat	12:30	6:35	12:45	7:00	●	13	Tue	1:35	7:45	1:55	8:10	●
14	Sun	1:15	7:20	1:30	7:50	●	14	Wed	2:25	8:35	2:45	9:00	●
15	Mon	2:05	8:10	2:20	8:35	●	15	Thu	3:15	9:20	3:30	9:45	●
16	Tue	2:50	9:00	3:10	9:25	●	16	Fri	4:00	10:10	4:20	10:35	●
17	Wed	3:40	9:50	4:00	10:15	●	17	Sat	4:50	11:10	5:20	11:40	●
18	Thu	4:30	10:35	4:45	11:05	●	18	Sun	5:55	—:—	6:25	12:10	●
19	Fri	5:20	11:35	5:45	—:—	●	19	Mon	6:50	12:40	7:20	1:05	●
20	Sat	6:15	12:05	6:45	12:30	●	20	Tue	7:50	1:40	8:25	2:10	●
21	Sun	7:10	1:00	7:40	1:30	●	21	Wed	8:50	2:40	9:20	3:10	●
22	Mon	8:15	2:00	8:40	2:25	●	22	Thu	9:50	3:40	10:30	4:15	●
23	Tue	9:05	2:55	9:45	3:25	●	23	Fri	10:55	4:45	11:25	5:10	●
24	Wed	10:05	3:55	10:40	4:25	●	24	Sat	11:45	5:35	—:—	6:00	●
25	Thu	11:05	4:55	11:40	5:25	●	25	Sun	12:15	6:25	12:35	6:50	●
26	Fri	—:—	5:55	12:05	6:15	●	26	Mon	1:05	7:15	1:25	7:40	●
27	Sat	12:30	6:40	12:50	7:05	●	27	Tue	1:55	8:00	2:10	8:25	●
28	Sun	1:20	7:30	1:40	7:55	●	28	Wed	2:40	8:40	2:50	9:05	●
29	Mon	2:10	8:20	2:30	8:45	●	29	Thu	3:20	9:25	3:35	9:45	●
30	Tue	3:00	9:05	3:15	9:30	●	30	Fri	4:00	10:05	4:15	10:25	●
31	Wed	3:45	9:50	4:00	10:15	●							

SOLUNAR TABLES® are designed to forecast the daily active feeding periods of fish. They are formulated from the position of the earth in relation to the sun and moon.

The major periods last for approximately 2 to 3 1/2 hours, and the minor periods last for approximately 3/4 to 1 1/2 hours. To determine the start of major and minor times for your area, find the bold time-zone rule on the map. If you are located in the area left of the time-zone rule, add the number (in minutes) at the top to the corresponding time on the chart. If you are located in the area right of the time-zone rule, subtract the number (in minutes) at the bottom from the corresponding time on the chart. Add one hour to all times during daylight saving time.

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FISHING EXPOSED

LARGEMOUTHS LEAPING

Maybe it's the current or the competition from other bass in their schools that makes Kentucky Lake's largemouths impressive jumpers. Whatever it is, the fish being caught by the top 10 pros on the final day of June's Walmart FLW Tour event on Kentucky put on numerous aerial displays for FLW's cameras. The particular jumper in this photo so badly wanted to make the gallery that it launched up higher than Brandon Hunter's gunwale from the backside of his boat to get in front of the lens. Hunter caught the fish in his net on its way down. He finished runner-up.

Photo by Curtis Niedermier





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NEWS AND NOTES FROM AROUND THE LAKE

LIVEWELL



WHAT'S INSIDE

- LAMBERT'S RECORD-SETTING WIN ON KENTUCKY LAKE
- WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THERMOCLINES
- PROS' FAVORITE FORREST WOOD CUP MEMORIES

PHOTO BY CURTIS NIEDERMAYER

BY THE NUMBERS

LAMBERT'S KENTUCKY LAKE SMACKDOWN

by Colin Moore

Each tournament season brings a fresh record or two to the annals of the Walmart FLW Tour. This year, records fell at Kentucky Lake in early June, mainly to winner Jason Lambert of Pickwick Dam, Tenn. See what we mean:

twenty-nine

The number of pounds that Lambert brought to the scale on the tournament's last day. It's the single-day record for a Kentucky Lake Tour event now. Who's in second? It's Lambert, with 25-05 on the third day of his incredible 2016 performance.

4

The number of times Lambert's name appears on the list of the top 50 all-time heaviest Kentucky Lake Tour single-day stringers. Brandon Hunter and Jim Moynagh are tied for second in the top-50 group with three each.

For the Record

To put Lambert's records in perspective, there have been 11 Walmart FLW Tour events on Kentucky Lake, dating back to 1996.

97-02

In pounds and ounces, Lambert's four-day weight. It broke the record set in 2014 by Skip Johnson of Michigan (88-10). Lambert was runner-up that year with 87-08.

2

The number of Kentucky Lake FLW Tour events in which Lambert has managed to average more than 20 pounds per day all four rounds. He's the only Tour angler to do it so far. To break that down, Lambert has actually caught seven 20-pound-plus limits in the pair of tournaments he's fished there since joining the Tour in 2014.

EIGHT

Where Lambert's 97-02 four-day total ranks all time among heaviest four-day weights brought in on the FLW Tour.

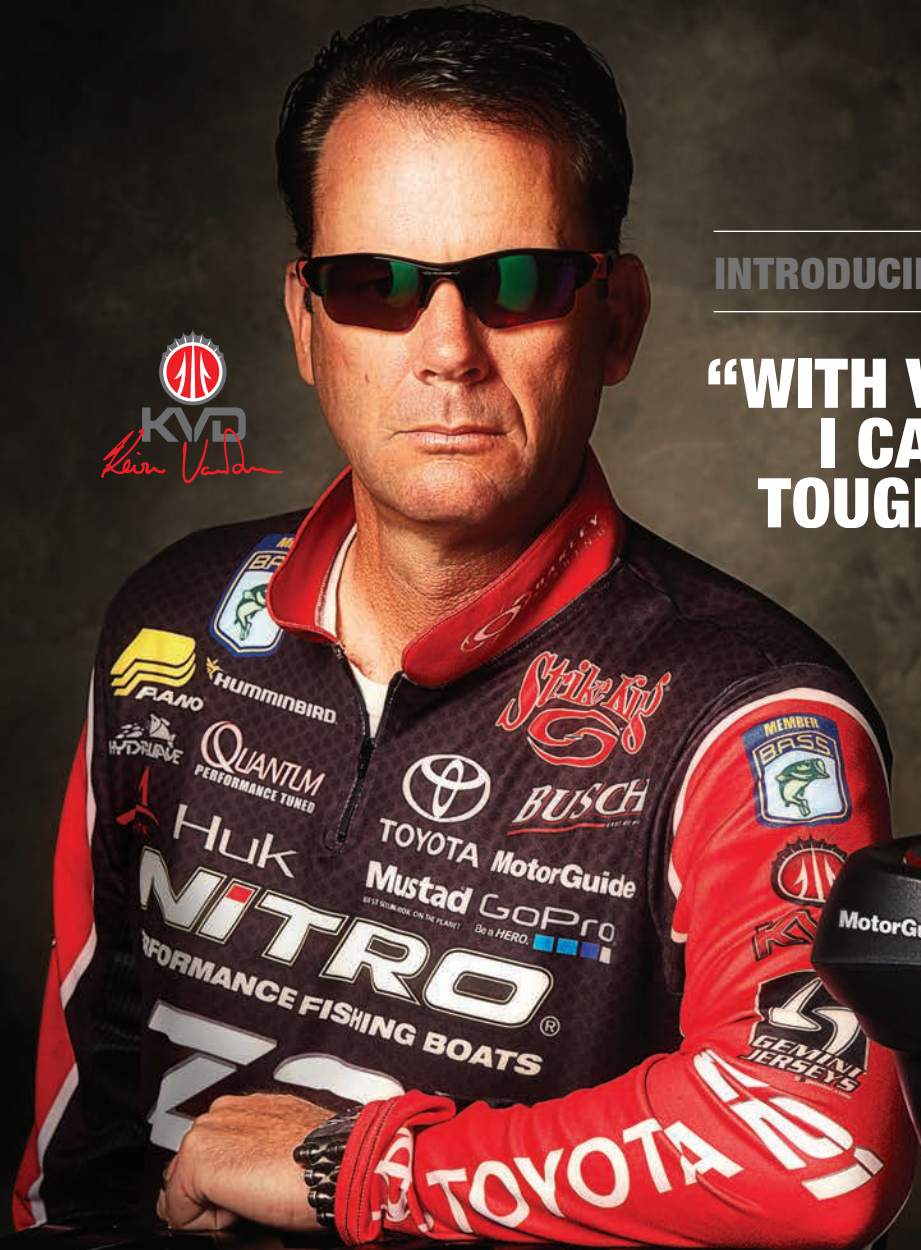
89-06

Runner-up Brandon Hunter's haul, which is now second place among the heaviest four-day stringers from Kentucky Lake.



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MATCHUPS



WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A PRO BASS FISHERMAN?

MN: The chance to make a living doing something I love and am so passionate about.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST?

MN: No guaranteed paychecks.

NAME TWO THINGS YOU WOULD WANT WITH YOU IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND.

MN: Something to eat and matches.

WHAT IS ONE BODY OF WATER YOU HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF FISHING?

MN: Clear Lake in California. I would love to go out there and throw some big swimbaits for those big bass.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD TO GRILL?

MN: T-bone steaks. Straight meat, no seasoning needed or anything.

WHAT CELEBRITY WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO FISH WITH AND WHY?

MN: Peyton Manning. I'm a big University of Tennessee fan and would like to fish with him just to get an idea of how he approaches things.

FAVORITE COLLEGE/PRO SPORTS TEAM?

MN: Definitely Vols football.

IF YOU HAD TO PICK ONE TECHNIQUE FOR THE REST OF YOUR CAREER WHAT WOULD IT BE?

MN: It would definitely be offshore ledge fishing.

RATE YOUR SKILLS FROM 1-10 AS A BASKETBALL PLAYER.

MN: 5. I can shoot well, but I'm not that fast. Wesley would probably beat me one on one, because he's much quicker than me.

Michael

NEAL

Dayton, Tenn.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING TOP FLW ANGLERS

by Tyler Brinks
PHOTOS BY D.W. REED II

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A PRO BASS FISHERMAN?

WS: All of the great people I get to meet and all of the nice places we get to see each year.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE LEAST?

WS: The driving.

NAME TWO THINGS YOU WOULD WANT WITH YOU IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND.

WS: I would say water and a good Buck Knife.

WHAT IS ONE BODY OF WATER YOU HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF FISHING?

WS: The California Delta. I'd love to get out there and fish that tidal water with a chance to catch a 12- or 13-pound bass.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD TO GRILL?

WS: That would be a toss-up between salmon and tuna.

WHAT CELEBRITY WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO FISH WITH AND WHY?

WS: Joe Rogan (UFC commentator and *Fear Factor* host). I saw how he recently killed a big elk. I'd like to talk hunting with him.

FAVORITE COLLEGE/PRO SPORTS TEAM?

WS: That's easy: the Tennessee Vols.

IF YOU HAD TO PICK ONE TECHNIQUE FOR THE REST OF YOUR CAREER WHAT WOULD IT BE?

WS: Flipping shallow cover. It's my favorite way to fish.

RATE YOUR SKILLS FROM 1-10 AS A BASKETBALL PLAYER.

WS: 6, in general, but a 10 if it is against Michael Neal. He may be half my age, but I would beat him like a drum. ■



Wesley

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FORREST WOOD CUP
Aug. 4-7
Wheeler Lake

COSTA FLW SERIES
Aug. 18-20
Northern – Oneida Lake
Sept. 29-Oct. 1
Southwestern – Fort Gibson Lake

FLW BASS FISHING LEAGUE
Aug. 13
Illini – Rend Lake
Northeast – Oneida Lake
Aug. 20
Great Lakes – Mississippi River
Michigan – Detroit River
Aug. 27-28
Arkie – Lake Dardanelle
Bama – Lake Eufaula
Hoosier – Ohio River/Tanners Creek
Shenandoah – Potomac River
Sept. 10-11
Buckeye – Lake Erie
Bulldog – Lake Eufaula
Cowboy – Sam Rayburn Reservoir
LBL – Kentucky/Barkley Lakes
Michigan – St. Clair
Mountain – Barren River
Piedmont – High Rock Lake
Sept. 17-18
Gator – Lake Okeechobee
Great Lakes – Mississippi River
Illini – Lake Shelbyville
Music City – Old Hickory Lake
Okie – Grand Lake
Savannah River – Lake Keowee
Volunteer – Lake Chickamauga
Sept. 24-25
Choo Choo – Lake Gunterville
Northeast – 1000 Islands
Ozark – Lake of the Ozarks
South Carolina – Lake Wylie
BFL REGIONAL
Sept. 29-Oct. 1
Arkie, Hoosier, LBL & Mountain
Lake Chickamauga

FLW COLLEGE FISHING
Sept. 24
Southeastern – Lake Chickamauga

FORREST WOOD CUP MEMORIES

MY MOST MEMORABLE FORREST WOOD CUP MOMENT ...

... was the winning moment [in 2011] when I looked out into the crowd and saw my father standing up above everyone else with a tear running down his face and a great big thumbs-up. It was the ultimate moment where I felt how proud he was of me. – SCOTT MARTIN



... came last year at Lake Ouachita at the day-three weigh-in when [FLW Weighmaster] Chris Jones told me before I knew what I had that I was going fishing the next day because there were only eight guys waiting to weigh in behind me and I was in the top 10. After all the work and dreams, knowing that I was fishing on day four in the Forrest Wood Cup was a feeling unlike any I have ever experienced in fishing before or since. – MARK DANIELS JR.



... was at my first one, in 2011, at Lake Ouachita, when I almost launched at the wrong ramp the very first morning. Luckily, [tournament director] Bill Taylor saw me when my trailer was about halfway in the water and pointed me to the right ramp. I thought, wow, wouldn't it be something to launch at the wrong ramp and wind up being late for the takeoff in my first Forrest Wood Cup. – JOHN COX



... was my nightmare in 2014 when I lost that 5-pounder that cost me a half-million dollars. It was on Lake Murray, and Anthony Gagliardi wound up winning by 1 ounce. Instead of weighing in that fish, I weighed in a 2 1/2-pounder in its place. Not good enough. Twice I've finished second in the Cup, but until I win one, that will be my most memorable moment. – SCOTT CANTERBURY



The Heddon Luny Frog was a far cry in design and action from the lifelike soft-plastic versions of today, which perhaps helps explain why it was on the market for only five years beginning in 1927. Available in green frog, meadow (tiger) frog or the ubiquitous red head/white body, the Luny Frog was made of a type of hard plastic called Pyralin. It was designed to be twitched along the surface or to wiggle as it was retrieved, and had a treble hook mounted under its head in a metal yoke as well as a single hook between its legs. Pyralin being a brittle material, the Luny Frog would sometimes break apart when it hit a rock or log on the cast – another factor that hastened its departure from the Heddon catalog. The lure is valued at about \$200 to \$400, depending on age and color (red head/white body is extremely rare), and whether the original box is available. ■



Lure shown is from the collection of Karl White, karlwhite.com.



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10 HAPPY YEARS



PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON

It can be tough on pros living life out on the tournament trail, especially if they have to leave their families behind for extended periods. Birthday and anniversary celebrations are often replaced by practice outings and rules meetings.

Cody Meyer knows what it's like. The California angler's wife, Keri, and daughter, Brooke, don't often get to tag along with the superstar when he hits the road. Yet, the fact that Cody was in Upstate New York during the couple's 10th wedding anniversary didn't stop Keri from showing her affection for her husband. She had a bunch of balloons sent over to the day-two weigh-in at Lake Champlain, to be delivered to Cody by FLW Weighmaster Chris Jones.

Cody went on to make the top-10 cut and earn \$16,000 – a pretty nice anniversary prize. ■

CRISIS IN THE CALIFORNIA DELTA

by Colin Moore

California bass fishermen and conservation groups are being mobilized in an effort to alter a bill introduced in the U.S. Senate by Diane Feinstein that they say contains language detrimental to the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary's bass fishery.

Titled the "California Long-Term Provisions for Water Supply and Short-Term Provisions for Emergency Drought Relief Act," S.2533 ostensibly relates to federally managed water projects in the Central Valley and elsewhere, but also contains language that would protect salmon in the vast estuary at the expense of non-native species. The latter group includes largemouth and smallmouth bass, striped bass, and various types of panfish.

"S.2533 is a death sentence for sport fishing and will accelerate the collapse of all the fisheries, including salmon, in the Bay-Delta estuary," contends Conservation Director John Beuttler of

Allied Fishing Groups, the organization that represents a consortium of individuals, fishing clubs and groups. "It will have devastating financial impacts on the money these fisheries generate for Northern California, the Delta, San Francisco Bay and the state's economy. A 2013 California Department of Fish & Wildlife report estimates these fisheries generate \$500 million annually to the state's economy."

According to Beuttler, Feinstein's bill as currently written contains one word that his organization wants stricken: "invasive."

"Instead of calling these other fish species 'non-native' and leaving it at that, the bill's language makes them vulnerable to removal," says Beuttler. "We agree that bass and other species are non-native, but a lot of them were stocked in the Delta deliberately for the public good, and that's exactly what they are: part of the public's very valuable natural resources.

"As it is now, S.2533 would give fishery management agencies the green light to kill any non-native species, rationalizing that they are competing with native salmon for food and habitat. We want a stipulation in the bill to prevent the authorization and funding of programs to remove and eradicate non-native species."

Beuttler says he and others have spoken to Feinstein's staff about the changes they propose, but without success. They hope to have better results with U.S. Congressman John Garamendi, D-Walnut Grove, who has introduced a companion bill in the House.

Costa FLW Series Western Division angler Bobby Barrack is circulating a petition asking that the bill's language be amended. The online petition can be accessed at alliedfishinggroups.com.

For more information about the efforts of the Allied Fishing Groups, contact Beuttler at johnbeuttler@icloud.com, or visit alliedfishinggroups.com. ■

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ASK THE EXPERTS

HAIR JIG PRIMER

Q. How do you determine an appropriate hair jig size?

A. **JT Kenney, Palm Bay, Fla. –**
A hair jig is a finesse presentation, so I try to go as light as possible. If I am targeting fish in 10 to 25 feet of water – typical for summer – I will start with a 1/2-ounce size. If it is flat calm with no current, then I will downsize to 3/8 ounce. You don't want it to fall real fast.

Hook size and type are important, too. When helping to develop Gambler Lures' JTK Hair Jig, we utilized a premium light-wire hook. On long casts in deep water, the smaller hook performs great, believe it or not. It is easy to set the hook, and you rarely lose a fish.



Q. **TRAILER PREFERENCE**
 What soft-plastic trailers do you use on your buzzbait?

A. **Scott Canterbury, Springville, Ala. –**
A few years ago, I worked with Dirty Jigs Tackle to design the Scott Canterbury Pro Buzz. The buzzbait comes packaged with a Bruiser Baits Thrasher trailer. It's similar to a frog, but has a single tail, which mimics a baitfish. I use it a lot, but depending upon where you are fishing, you may need to use something different. For example, where I live on the Coosa River, the spotted bass don't seem to bite it. I'll use a soft jerkbait or swimbait instead.

Q. **LOOKING UP**
 Does frog color really matter?

A. **Jim Moynagh, Carver, Minn. –**
I've seen many situations where color does matter. To me, it's all about the color on the bottom of the frog. A lot of times, the leg color will make a difference, too. I limit my color selection to three types: white, dark and orange. A white bottom can be opaque white or a clear, translucent color. A darker bottom can be green pumpkin or black. I rotate through all three colors to see if the fish show a preference.

Q. **FLIPPIN' LINES**
 When flipping, do you prefer braid or fluorocarbon?

A. **Tony Davis, Williston, Fla. –**
I prefer to use braided line when flipping. It provides better hookups and makes it easier to get fish out of heavy cover. When the fish are pressured and in clear-water situations, however, I like to use fluorocarbon. Another consideration is sound. Sometimes the "zip" sound that braided line makes when punching, lifting and dropping baits in heavy cover can spook bass. You have to weigh all of those considerations when making the decision of what line to use.

Q. **CULLING QUICKLY**
 What system do you use for efficiently culling bass?

A. **Chris Johnston, Peterborough, Ontario –**
I like to use the Accu-Cull Culling System. I only tag the smaller ones and weigh them on a scale. If I catch a fish that is close to the weight of my smallest, then I will put them on a balance beam. For bigger fish, I don't even tag them. If I have to cull those, then I am having a really good day. In team tournaments, I will place big ones in the driver's side livewell and smaller ones in the other. That makes them easier to identify and cull. ■

Ask the Experts is compiled by Paul Strege. If you have a question that you'd like answered, email it to questions@flwfishing.com.



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ASK A BIOLOGIST

UNDERSTANDING THERMOCLINES

by Dr. Brian Weidel

A Thermoclines are thin portions of the water column where the temperature changes rapidly over just a few feet. They form when surface waters, heated by solar radiation, become less dense than the cooler, deeper waters below them – effectively creating a boundary between the layers. This process is called stratification, and it occurs annually on many lakes and reservoirs.

Although common, thermoclines can be variable from year to year, and even within a season. Some water bodies don't ever form a thermocline, some will periodically and some do annually. Thermoclines are also variable across the same lake. Certain parts of a lake might stratify, while others won't. The depth where a thermocline forms is also variable seasonally and annually. Thermocline depth and formation timing are primarily influenced by how much solar radiation is hitting the lake and mixing due to wind.

From a fish's perspective, thermoclines can be looked at the same way as any other edge or transition zone. Baitfish

might congregate near or right at the thermocline to feed on zooplankton, which in turn might cause game fish to cruise the thermocline as they would a depth contour, weedline or reef.

Anglers often assume that there will never be any fish below thermoclines due to lack of oxygen. This can be true, partially true or false – but it depends on the lake. When thermoclines are stable, bacteria and other organisms use up oxygen to complete their life cycles below the thermocline, which, without any mixing from oxygen-rich surface waters, can cause the water below to become anoxic (low in oxygen).

This occurs most commonly in productive waters and reservoirs, creating oxygen levels too low for fish.

In contrast, in clear infertile lakes where there are fewer nutrients to spur anoxic conditions, there is ample oxygen below the thermocline, providing habitat for many cool-water species. ■



How do game fish and baitfish relate to a thermocline?



Meet Our Expert

Dr. Brian Weidel is a research fishery biologist at the U.S. Geological Survey Lake Ontario Biological Station.

Fishing Tip: Turning up the sensitivity of your electronics will often allow you to “see” the presence of a thermocline on your graph in the form of a fuzzy band or line. Identifying this depth can be helpful when patterning fish in late summer and early fall, and to recognize when the thermocline breaks up and the lake “turns over.”

TJ Maglio produces the Ask a Biologist department. If you have a question you'd like to have answered by a fisheries expert, please email it to TJ at info@flwfishing.com.

THE BEST GRIPS IN FISHING



Russ Lane, Pro Bass Angler

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Russ Lane



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ANGLING PROFILE

GOING ON THE RECORD WITH NOTABLE FLW FISHERMEN



BETHEL UNIVERSITY

SEVEN YEARS AFTER AWARDING THE FIRST VARSITY FISHING SCHOLARSHIP, THE NATION'S FIRST COLLEGE-FUNDED FISHING CLUB IS PROVING THAT ITS SYSTEM CAN WORK FOR EVERYONE

by David A. Brown

PHOTOS BY D.W. REED II

When you believe in your cards, you go all-in. But for Bethel University, launching the nation's first varsity fishing program shortly after the formation of FLW College Fishing was less of a gamble than it was an investment.

The premise was simple: Offer scholarship support for talented student anglers to study at this cozy little Christian university in northwest Tennessee, give them a budget for fishing activities and treat them the same as any other competitor wearing the Wildcats' purple and gold.

To spearhead the fledgling program, Bethel hired Garry Mason, a longtime west Tennessee hunting and fishing guide

and founder of the "Legends of the Outdoors" National Hall of Fame. Tasked with recruitment and team development, Mason also found that nearly 40 years of contacts proved invaluable in gaining regional and national media exposure – including from the *New York Times*. Back in 2010, a feature story on Bethel's new varsity program earned the school widespread notoriety.

As Mason recalls, Bethel's administration and athletic department were cautiously optimistic, but once the team success and the media coverage started rolling, everyone jumped in with both feet. Now, Bethel is among the nations' best established and

most successful college fishing programs, and it's a trendsetter that has led to additional colleges adding varsity fishing. Adrian College, in Michigan, for instance, has a full-time bass fishing coach, wrapped Ranger boats and a varsity team.

But it all started in west Tennessee.

The Vision

Mason coaches a team of 25 student anglers, all of whom receive some level of scholarship support from Bethel and all of whom benefit from a substantial expense budget and a fleet of five bass boats.

"Most college kids have to pay their tournament expenses on their own, but we have a huge benefit because Bethel provides our jerseys, our gas money and our travel expenses just like a sponsor," says sophomore business management major Kris Queen, who fished solo at the 2016 National Championship and finished 13th. "It helps that we can go to a tournament and know that we can cover our expenses and just focus on what we have to do – catch fish."

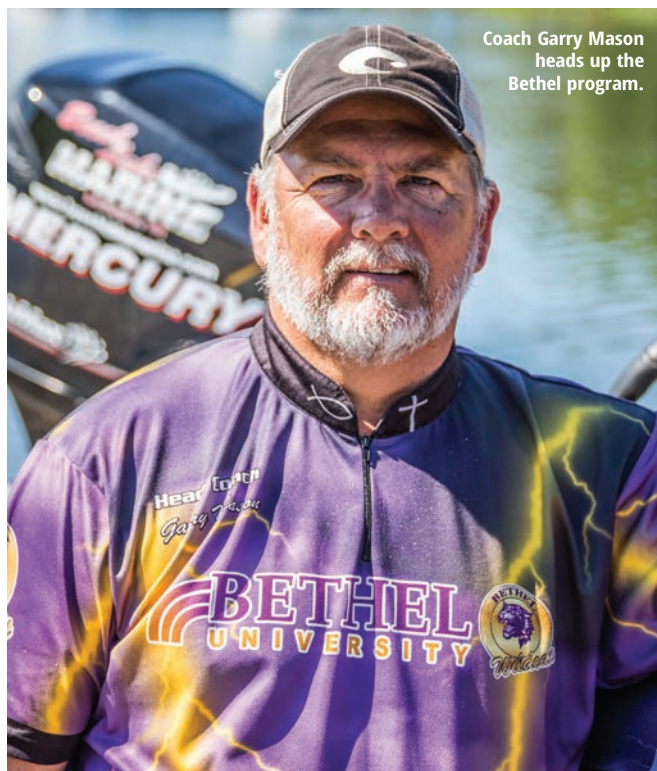
Broadening the optics, Mason points out the benefit of making opportunities available to bright young minds that aren't always placed in athletically gifted bodies.

"We realize that only about eight percent of high school students all across the country get offered scholarship funding in their particular sport of choice," Mason says. "When you start offering scholarship funding for kids who love to compete – but who aren't necessarily going to get that for their particular sport of choice – they come."

That's the cool thing about fishing: It's open to all.

Case in point: Queen's sister, Chelsey, became the nation's first female angler to receive a bachelor's degree on a fishing scholarship when she graduated in spring 2016.

Mason, who recruited the Queen siblings on the basis of their performances in The Bass Federation and High School Fishing events, says it's all about getting more quality students on campus.



Coach Garry Mason heads up the Bethel program.

Milestones and Accolades

Since Bethel awarded the first school-funded fishing scholarships in 2009, the club's timeline has included some notable accomplishments:

2010 – Lauren Stamps becomes the first lady angler to receive a fishing scholarship.

2011 – Jason Arnold becomes the first collegiate angler to earn a bachelor's degree on a fishing scholarship.

2011 – Bethel wins the Southern Collegiate Bass Fishing Series Championship.

2012 – Bethel wins its second consecutive Southern Collegiate Bass Fishing Series Championship and the College B.A.S.S. South Super Regional.

2013 – Bethel wins its second consecutive College B.A.S.S. South Super Regional and the BoatUS Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship, ACA Collegiate Bass Fishing Open and Bassmaster College Series Wild Card.

2014 – Bethel wins its second consecutive Bassmaster College Series Wild Card.

2015 – Three Bethel teams make the top 10 at the first FLW College Fishing College Open on Kentucky Lake and qualify for the 2016 FLW College Fishing National Championship.

2016 – Bethel finishes runner-up at the Collegiate Big Bass Bash and FLW College Open, both on Kentucky Lake.

Another good example is Hunter Loudon, a senior biology major whose father, Kenny, now serves as the team's assistant coach. The younger Loudon initially had planned to join his high school buddies at another Tennessee school, but the lure of a fishing scholarship was too great to resist.

"If Bethel did not have a fishing team, I probably would not have gone here," he says. "The scholarship was the main reason I came here."

Chelsey, who was recruited away from Eastern Carolina University, makes an even stronger case for Bethel's impact.

"They were able to give me a nursing degree, which I'm going to be able to use the rest of my life to do what I love," she says. "I got that through my fishing scholarship, so I am very grateful."

Hooks and Books

Mason scrutinizes prospects' angling backgrounds and stresses the need for tournament experience, as well as the ability to trailer, launch and drive a bass boat. He also requires a resume, GPA, and ACT or SAT scores, with the latter requirements weighted as heavily as the former.

"I can teach kids a little about fishing, but I can't teach them how to study," Mason says. "I'm looking for kids with great study habits because I know that without those study habits being instilled at the high school level, they're not going to make it all the way through college. I'm looking for a good student first and then a good angler."

Kris agrees and notes that, while sharpening angling skills is certainly encouraged, catching fish has never been the top priority. He says the Bethel culture goes much deeper.

"Our team has a set GPA standard to be able to fish," he says. "That drives us to do well in our classes so we can fish. If we drop below a 2.0 GPA, we go on probation, and we're not allowed to fish."

In the early goings, Mason awarded a few full-ride scholarships, but now he prefers a broader distribution. For one thing, this enables more students to participate. Moreover, Mason finds that students who pay some portion of their college tab tend to be more engaged in the academic side.

“If you recruit the right people, you’re going to win tournaments,” he adds. “But you should be in tune with the fact that they are coming to your school to get an education.”

Inner Workings

Bethel teammates enjoy the usual pre-tournament camaraderie and the impromptu football or basketball games after team meetings. They also know that starting spots are never an assumption.

“We have a varsity and a junior varsity team, and you work your way up,” says Kris. “Coach will send the anglers with the best local experience to each tournament. During a tournament, we share information, waypoints and tactics. Everybody thinks of one another as family, and we try to help one another.”

Even when underclassmen possess local knowledge for an upcoming tournament’s fishery, they’re expected to share what they know with the varsity competitors slotted for competition. Such is the selfless discipline of a team firmly rooted in mutual success.

Down the Road

Louden says he’s one of several Bethel anglers eyeing the pro ranks. Launching a new career requires economic

Hunter Loudon (left) and Ty Dyer were persuaded to come to Bethel because of the scholarship opportunities available to anglers.



support, and he’s hopeful that the sponsor experience he’s gaining through his college years will serve him well down the road.

Mason agrees, but adds this caveat: “One of the things I try to teach them is there are great opportunities in the outdoors industry, but be loyal to your team, your sponsors, etc. Don’t jump ship. These kids get so much offered to them, but I stress that they need to stay with the ones who brought them to the dance.”

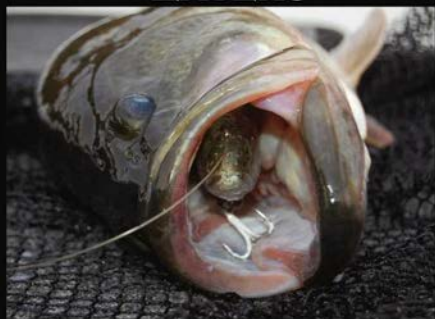
Kris says he’s hoping the Bethel pedigree – the program’s history and its status among the innovators of varsity fishing – will help fuel his post-collegiate game plan.

“My childhood dream has been to fish professionally,” he says. “When you pull up to a tournament and people say, ‘Bethel’s fishing,’ heads turn because they know about Bethel’s fishing history. We’ve had several great anglers come through school and win several national championships. Hopefully, being a part of this will be a great stepping stone to get to that professional level.”

Even for those who choose another path, the Bethel program lends credibility that has launched everything from guide services to electronics training businesses.

“Bethel has changed my life completely,” says Chelsey, who plans to focus on her medical career and stay connected to tournament fishing by entering local events with her father. “Not only has it strengthened my faith; not only has it made me the nurse I want to be, but it’s made me a better angler. I’m just so thankful for the opportunity.” ■

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Let's
Go
Places

Fishin' with the Ranger Man

by Roland Bell

Ranger Boats Founder Forrest L. Wood shares some fishing tips

Well, so much for this latest, greatest lure. I haven't gotten so much as a nudge since I tied it on.

Sometimes it doesn't take too long for those "hot" lures to cool off. Maybe the bass just get tired of seeing them.

You've probably got a whole tackle box of "new" lures stuck somewhere in your garage that you need to try. These are the lures you used years ago, before you abandoned them for newer models. A lot of those old baits will still catch fish under the proper circumstances, because most of the bass swimming around today have never seen them before. In that sense, they are "new" again.

Score one for the Floyd's Buzzer!

I think it's time for me to try a Spence Scout.

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ESSENTIAL SKILLS

FISHING 101

by TJ Maglio

How to Set The Brakes on A Baitcasting Reel

To both Walmart FLW Tour pros and weekend warriors, one of the most frustrating realities of bass fishing is the backlash, which occurs when the spool spins faster than the line is coming off, causing it to overrun and tangle.

Zack Birge, 2015 Rookie of the Year, has some tips for setting up reels to minimize backlashes.

Birge's Set-up Tips

1. When you spool a reel, always under-fill it by 1/8 inch. "By doing so, you can still get great distance while allowing some space for the line to settle, which makes it less likely to backlash," Birge says.
2. Set the magnetic cast control or centrifugal brakes to their highest setting first — usually 10 for magnetic brakes. For reels with centrifugal brakes, that means the brakes should be adjusted all the way out.
3. Set the spool tension (the knob by the handle) just high enough so that the lure falls at a slow, controlled pace when you hit the thumb bar. "I want it to move toward the ground, but when it hits the ground the spool should stop without overrunning."
4. Make a few casts. "Check to see how much distance you're getting and how it feels."
5. Back off the spool tension and brake one click at a time until you reach the sweet spot. "I'm looking for the best combination of castability and spool control. I don't want to have to whip it all day, but I also don't want to have to worry about a backlash if I'm not 100 percent concentrating." ■



PHOTO BY KYLE WOOD

PHOTO BY JOOX WHITE



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FLAT-SIDED CRANKBAITS

A SPECIALIZED CRANKBAIT FOR A MORE SUBTLE APPROACH



by TJ Maglio
PHOTOS BY MATT PACE

To novice anglers, any old hard wooden or plastic plug with a lip is referred to as a crankbait. They all wobble, dive on the retrieve and, periodically, come back with a fish attached.

To the crankbait die-hards of the Carolinas and the Tennessee River region, though, the word “crankbait” itself is just a heading used to refer to many different styles of plugs, each with a very particular time and place to shine.

From those regions comes an old-school crankbait style that’s now one of the fastest growing: the flat-sided crankbait. It’s a style that Wamart FLW Tour pros Wesley Strader and Alex Davis both use to achieve incredible results, albeit with different twists. Flat-sides typically shine when the bite is tough and in the spring or fall, and while summer is still in full swing in the South, the shorter days and cooldown period of autumn are just a few weeks away for many bass anglers. Now’s the time to prepare.

Alex Davis Targets Submergent Grass Flats

When: “The flat-sided crank is quickly becoming one of my go-to baits in almost any situation where anglers would normally throw a lipless crankbait. For me, it’s usually any time the water temperature is between 45 and 55 degrees, when the bass are sluggish and want something with a less aggressive action.”

Where: Davis breaks out the flat-side around submergent grass flats. In the fall and spring, big bass relate to the deeper grass lines found on these flats in many bodies of water, and they wait for shad to pass by.

How: “I like to throw a plastic bait such as the Jackall Jaco 58,” says Davis. “It has the excellent tight wiggle of a

wooden bait, but casts farther. I throw it on a G. Loomis GLX 843 CBR [7-foot, medium-power, moderate-action] cranking rod paired to a Shimano Curado reel with 5.1:1 gear ratio and spooled with 12- to 14-pound-test Sufix Elite monofilament.”

Wes Strader Targets Rocky Points, Riprap

When: “I’ll throw a flat-sided bait just about any time the bass are feeding on shad and the water temperature is below 60,” says Strader. “If you’ve ever seen shad swimming in the fall, they just slide through the water with almost no action. Flat-sided plugs imitate this better than almost any other plug. It’s a natural-looking deal, and bass can’t resist them.”

Where: Strader relies on the flat-sided crankbait a lot in the fall to imitate shad, which he finds on rocky areas with a depth change – rocky points and steep riprap banks, for instance. He says bass like such areas because they can hang on the bottom when inactive, but still easily come up shallow to feed if a school of shad swims by.

How: “If it’s not made of balsa, it’s not on the end of my line,” Strader says. “I’ve been carving and tinkering with crankbaits for a long time, and there is something different about how a balsa bait moves compared to a plastic plug. Old School Balsa Baits is a company I’m working with to make hand-carved plugs available to everyone. My signature-series flat-sided plug is called the W3. That thing is as good as it gets. It casts a mile and catches anything that swims. I throw it on a 6104 Powell Max 3D [6-foot, 10-inch, medium-power, moderate-fast] cranking rod paired to a Team Lew’s Lite reel with 10-pound-test Gamma Edge fluorocarbon.”

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phcustomlures.com



RAPALA SHAD RAP

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rapala.com



W.E.C. HICKY

Zoom owner Ed Chambers' hand-carved crankbaits have built a reputation with die-hards for quality and fish-catching ability. The Hicky is a 2 1/4-inch-long flat-sided plug designed to catch bass in the shallows all season long. It features a circuit board bill and high-quality finishes. \$22

peepersbaits.com



P.H. CUSTOM LURES SKINNY P

Another bait by a master hand-carver – Phil Hughes of P.H. Custom Lures – the Skinny P is a winner for anglers looking for the perfect combination of tight wiggle, natural profile and realistic colors. \$22.99

phcustomlures.com



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15 FINESSE RIGS

OPTIONS FOR THE TOUGHEST DAYS

by Tyler Brinks

PHOTOS BY MATT PACE

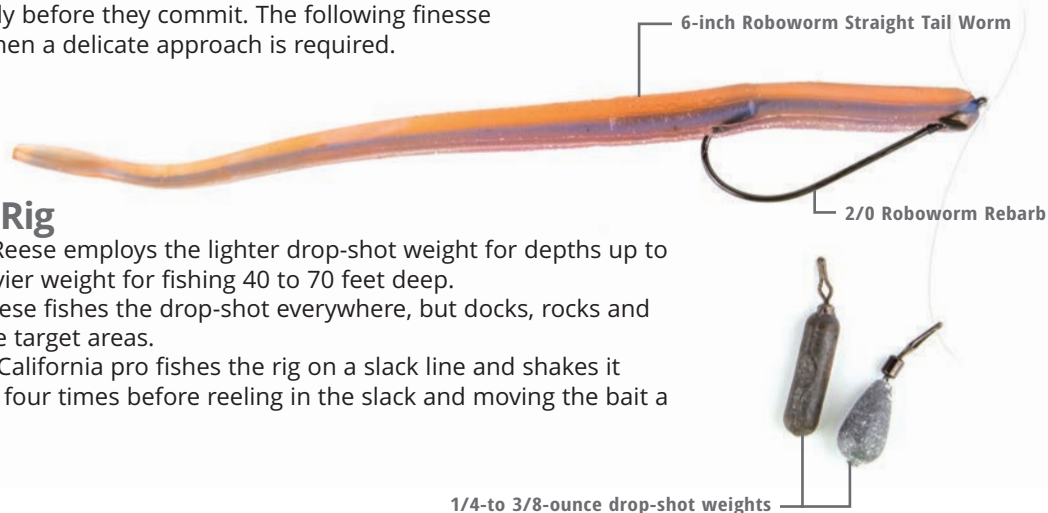
Going big and brassy with baits often works for bass, but there are always those times when they want to be courted a bit more subtly before they commit. The following finesse rigs will do the trick when a delicate approach is required.

1. Drop-Shot Rig

Rigging tip: Jimmy Reese employs the lighter drop-shot weight for depths up to 40 feet and the heavier weight for fishing 40 to 70 feet deep.

Where to use it: Reese fishes the drop-shot everywhere, but docks, rocks and vegetation are prime target areas.

How to fish it: The California pro fishes the rig on a slack line and shakes it moderately three to four times before reeling in the slack and moving the bait a little along bottom.



2. Ned Rig

Rigging tip: Casey Martin prefers to use the lightest jighead he can, depending on wind conditions. He believes the chartreuse head outperforms other colors because it's more visible. Some anglers use as light as 1/20-ounce jigheads.

Where to use it: This is strictly a clear-water technique, and Martin says hard cover is best – rock, riprap and bridges.

How to fish it: The Alabama guide suggests simply casting the rig and letting it fall. Impart slight action by twitching it and popping it, but the light jighead and small plastic make for an easy meal as long as bass can see the rig.

3. Shaky Head

Rigging tip: Switch baits depending on fish preferences. Choose colors based on water clarity and depth.

Where to use it: Reese fishes the shaky head under docks and around open-water rock piles from 6 to 20 feet deep.

How to fish it: Try not to move the bait very much, says Reese. Simply shake it in place a few times with the rod tip, and then drag it slightly.

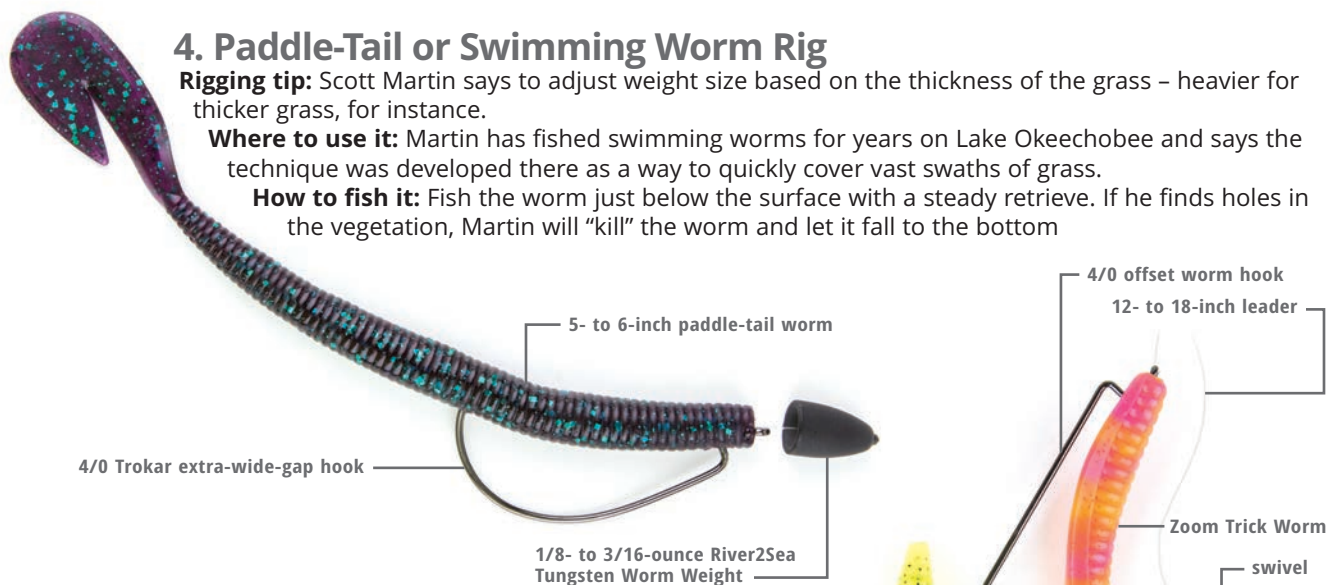


4. Paddle-Tail or Swimming Worm Rig

Rigging tip: Scott Martin says to adjust weight size based on the thickness of the grass – heavier for thicker grass, for instance.

Where to use it: Martin has fished swimming worms for years on Lake Okeechobee and says the technique was developed there as a way to quickly cover vast swaths of grass.

How to fish it: Fish the worm just below the surface with a steady retrieve. If he finds holes in the vegetation, Martin will “kill” the worm and let it fall to the bottom



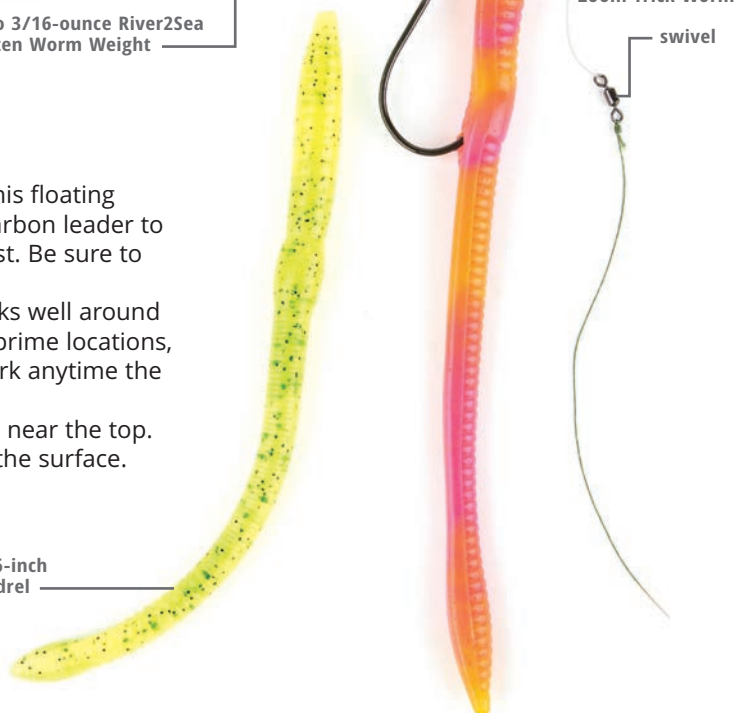
5. Floating Worm

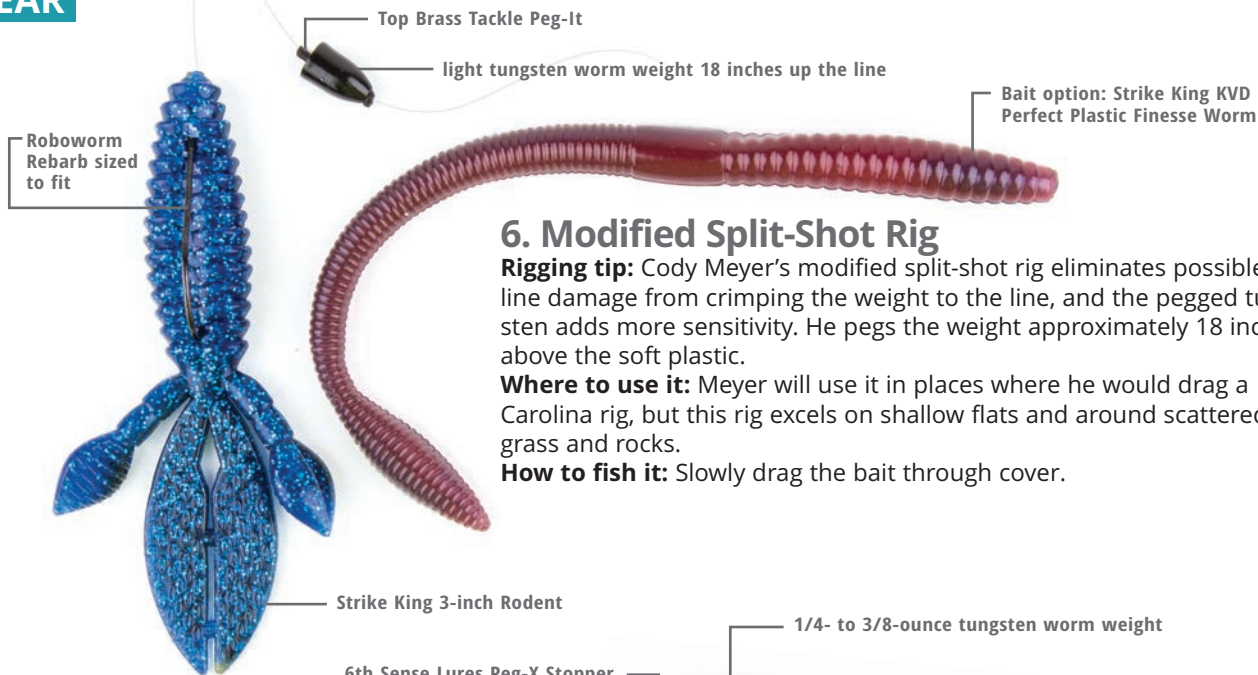
Rigging tip: BFL angler Thomas Harris of Virginia rigs his floating worm with a braided main line. He connects a fluorocarbon leader to the braid with a swivel, which helps to prevent line twist. Be sure to use a floating worm.

Where to use it: A brightly-colored floating worm works well around any type of shallow cover. Docks, wood and grass are prime locations, especially in rivers or off-colored water. The rig will work anytime the bass are shallow, but it excels in spring and summer.

How to fish it: Harris rigs the worm with a slight bend near the top. This allows it to spin and rotate as it is twitched along the surface.

Bait option: 6-inch
Creme Scoundrel





6. Modified Split-Shot Rig

Rigging tip: Cody Meyer's modified split-shot rig eliminates possible line damage from crimping the weight to the line, and the pegged tungsten adds more sensitivity. He pegs the weight approximately 18 inches above the soft plastic.

Where to use it: Meyer will use it in places where he would drag a Carolina rig, but this rig excels on shallow flats and around scattered grass and rocks.

How to fish it: Slowly drag the bait through cover.

7. Finesse Pitchin' Rig

Rigging tip: Mark Daniels Jr. prefers to use the bobber stop only when fishing heavier cover. When the weight is loose, the bait has a slower fall, which is key to the technique. His weight size varies based on wind, and preferably he will use the 1/4-ounce size to achieve a more natural fall.

Where to use it: The slight action of Daniels' two preferred baits works well for pressured or inactive fish. His primary targets are bushes, lay-downs, docks or overhanging limbs.

How to fish it: The key is letting the bait fall on a slack line. Many of the bites will come as the bait is descending.

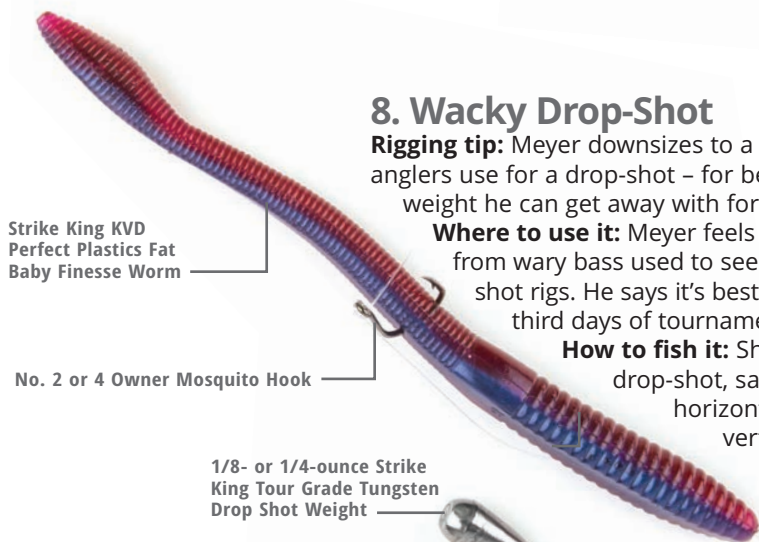


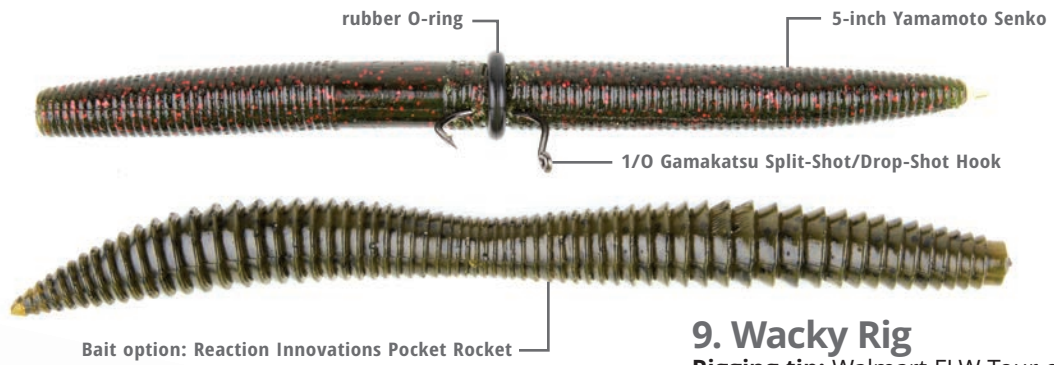
8. Wacky Drop-Shot

Rigging tip: Meyer downsizes to a smaller hook – much smaller than most anglers use for a drop-shot – for better action. He'll also use the lightest weight he can get away with for a slower fall.

Where to use it: Meyer feels that the wacky-rigged version gets bites from wary bass used to seeing ordinary nose-hooked or weedless drop-shot rigs. He says it's best for pressured fish and for the second and third days of tournaments.

How to fish it: Shake the rig much more than a standard drop-shot, says Meyer. He also fishes it with more of a horizontal presentation instead of fishing it strictly vertically.





9. Wacky Rig

Rigging tip: Walmart FLW Tour co-angler Casey O'Donnell improves hookups by bending out the hook point.

Where to use it: Scattered grass and docks are prime locations. O'Donnell feels the rig works best in pressured situations.

How to fish it: O'Donnell fishes the wacky rig on a slack line, though he shakes it slightly as it's falling. When fishing around submerged grass, he'll let the bait fall to the outside edge and shake it just above the grass.

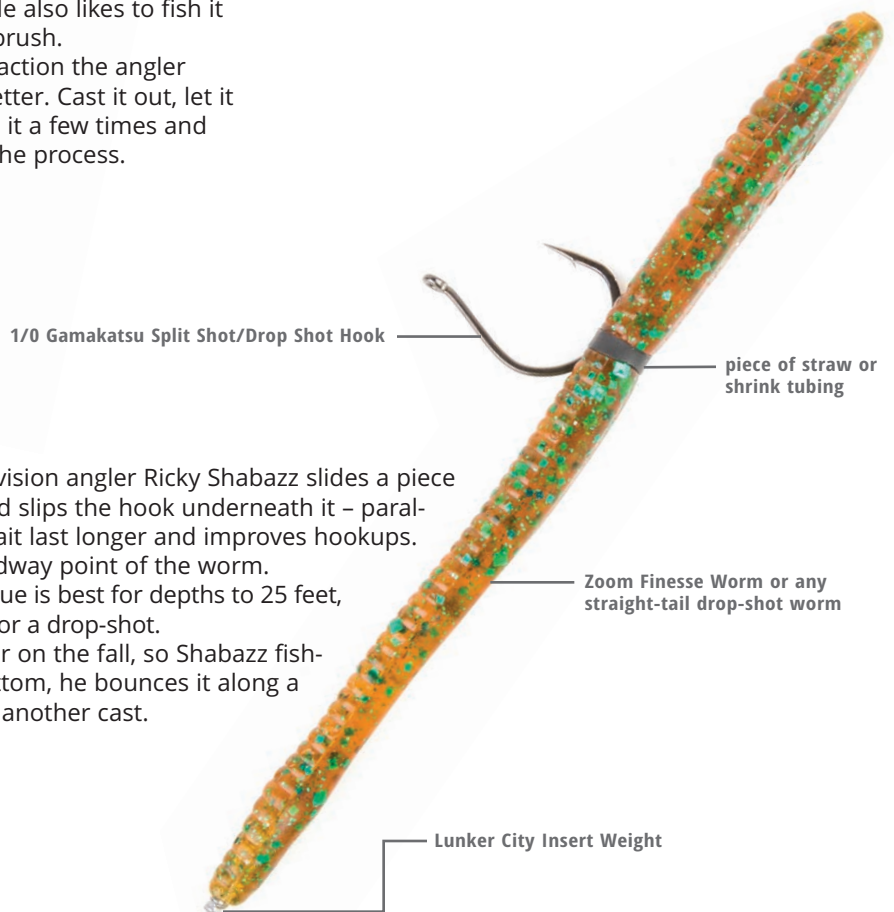


10. Weighted Wacky Rig

Rigging tip: Small-diameter monofilament or fluorocarbon works best. Watch the line; the bites often are subtle pickups.

Where to use it: Daniels fishes the weighted wacky rig strictly in clear-water situations as it is a visual technique. He also likes to fish it around boat docks and brush.

How to fish it: The less action the angler imparts to the rig, the better. Cast it out, let it fall on a slack line, shake it a few times and then reel it in to repeat the process.



11. Nail-Weight Rig

Rigging tip: Costa FLW Series Western Division angler Ricky Shabazz slides a piece of straw or shrink tubing up the worm and slips the hook underneath it – parallel with the worm body. This makes the bait last longer and improves hookups. The hook should be slightly above the midway point of the worm.

Where to use it: Shabazz says the technique is best for depths to 25 feet, and that anything deeper is better suited for a drop-shot.

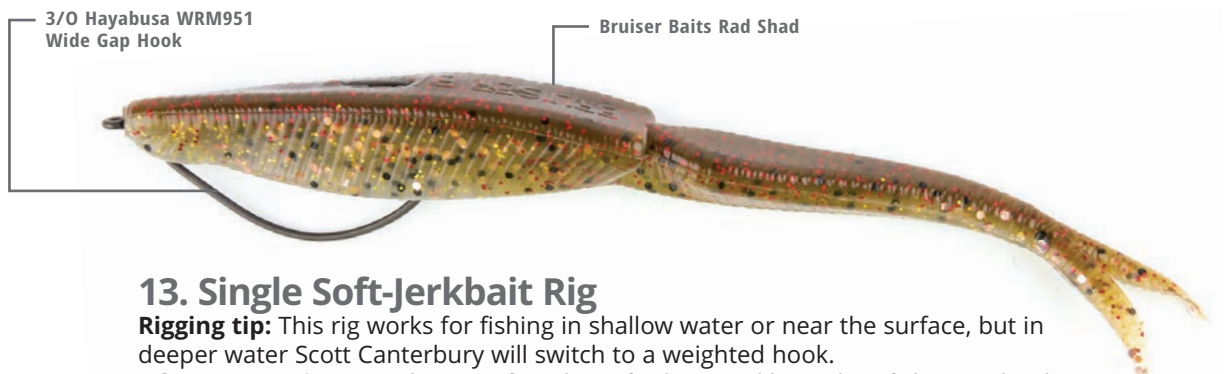
How to fish it: Most of the bites will occur on the fall, so Shabazz fishes it on a slack line. Once the bait hits bottom, he bounces it along a few times before retrieving it and making another cast.

12. Under-Spin

Rigging tip: Be prepared to upsize or downsize the under-spin and bait based on the size of the forage that bass are chasing.

Where to use it: 2015 Costa FLW Series Championship co-angler winner Todd Kline uses the under-spin anytime fish are feeding on shad. He'll target any areas where bass are chasing baitfish.

How to fish it: Kline will burn the bait quickly if fish are near the top of the water column. If bass are deeper or not as active, he'll slow-roll the bait at various depths until he connects.



13. Single Soft-Jerkbait Rig

Rigging tip: This rig works for fishing in shallow water or near the surface, but in deeper water Scott Canterbury will switch to a weighted hook.

Where to use it: Canterbury prefers the soft-plastic jerkbait when fish are schooling. He also uses it frequently whenever smallmouths are present.

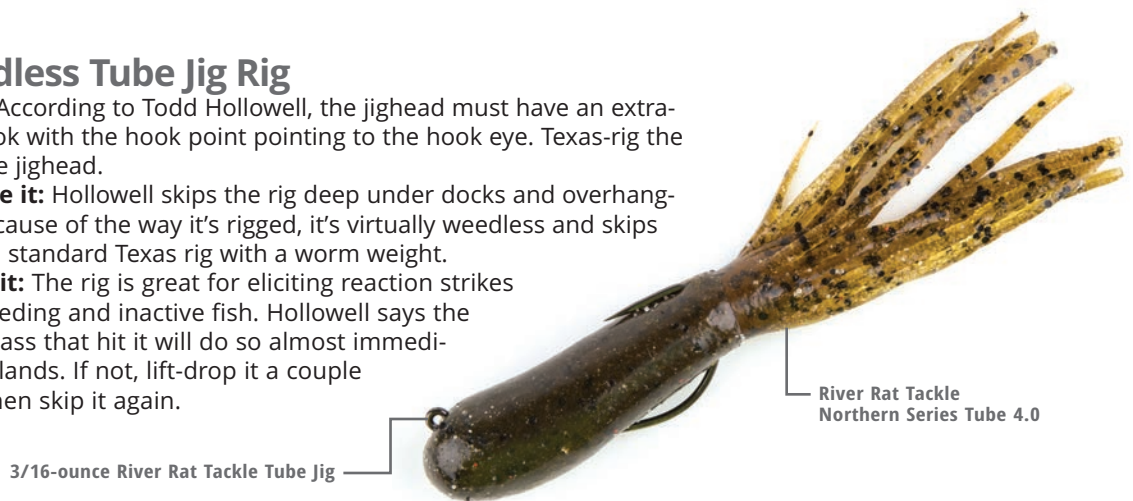
How to fish it: Canterbury usually fishes the rig with a stop-and-go retrieve; quick jerks followed by pauses to let the bait fall. When fishing current, he will cast and allow the bait to flow naturally with the current.

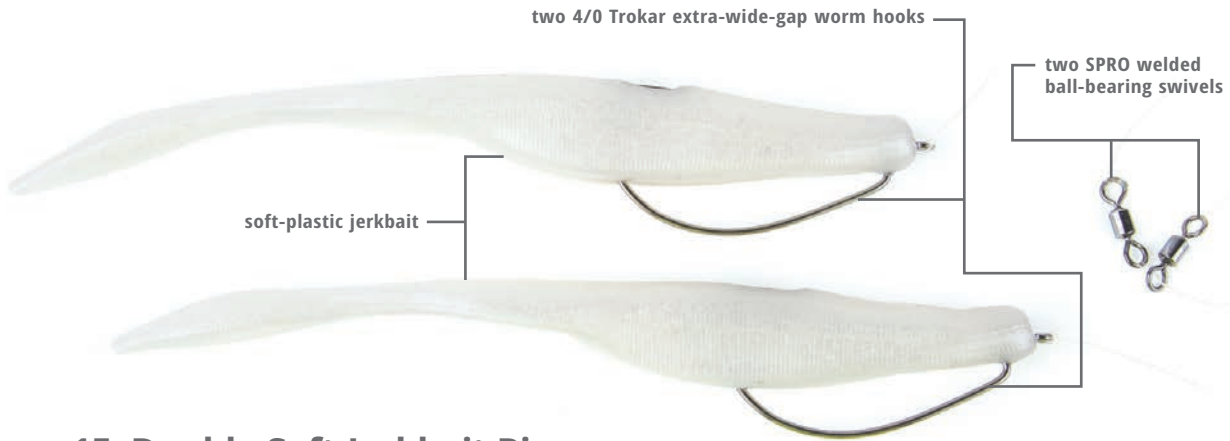
14. Weedless Tube Jig Rig

Rigging tip: According to Todd Hollowell, the jighead must have an extra-wide-gap hook with the hook point pointing to the hook eye. Texas-rig the tube onto the jighead.

Where to use it: Hollowell skips the rig deep under docks and overhanging trees. Because of the way it's rigged, it's virtually weedless and skips better than a standard Texas rig with a worm weight.

How to fish it: The rig is great for eliciting reaction strikes from both feeding and inactive fish. Hollowell says the majority of bass that hit it will do so almost immediately after it lands. If not, lift-drop it a couple times, and then skip it again.





15. Double Soft-Jerkbait Rig

Rigging tip: Scott Martin prefers the welded ball-bearing swivels to prevent the line from getting caught or damaged in a split ring. Inserting a 1/32-ounce nail weight in one jerkbait can aid with casting and help maintain separation between the baits during the retrieve. To rig it, put the main line through the eye of one swivel, and then tie it to the second swivel. Attach an 18- to 24-inch leader to the main-line swivel and a shorter 12- to 16-inch leader to the sliding swivel.

Where to use it: The double soft-jerkbait rig excels on blueback herring lakes, but will work anywhere bass are schooling and feeding on baitfish.

How to fish it: Martin likes to rip and jerk the rig quickly as he retrieves it. A fast retrieve will keep the baits just below the surface.



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FIRST LOOK

COOL NEW PRODUCTS FOR THE MODERN FISHERMAN

by Colin Moore

PH Custom Lures Ledge Spin

Bass hanging out on ledges get tired of seeing the same old stuff swimming by, so why not give them a look at the Ledge Spin. Made of resin, the 3-inch, 1 1/2-ounce lure enables anglers to sling it a long way so they can sit well off the fish. The lure's VMC back hook permits the fishing of offshore brush, and there is the added option of a removable bottom treble hook. \$15

phcustomlures.com



Jenko Fishing Booty Shaker and Long Shank Custom's Swim Bait Head

Jenko Fishing's new Booty Shaker swimbait – available in five colors – is soft enough to provide some fluid kicking action, but sturdy enough to last through a few fish. Pair it with Jenko's swim-bait head, whose long shank is positioned far enough back in the bodies of the 6-, 7- and 8-inch models to ensure better hookups. Swimbait sizes include 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 inches that range in price from \$8.99 to 13.99 per pack of five, four, three, two and one, respectively. Heads are available in 1/4-, 1/2-, 3/4-, 1- and 1 1/2-ounce sizes for \$5.99 to 6.99 per pack of two.

jenkofishing.com

Shimano Zodias Cranking and Frog Rods

Anglers can choose among 14 models in the Zodias line now that three new rods have joined the lineup. They include a pair of crankbait rods (7-foot ZDS 170M-G and 7-foot, 6-inch ZDS 176M-G) as well as a 7-foot, 5-inch, heavy frogging/braid rod (ZDS 175H). The two cranking sticks, medium and medium-heavy power, respectively, are made of a glass composite for the more moderate action that most anglers prefer for cranking. All three blanks incorporate Hi-Power X construction, which is a process that keeps the blank from torqueing or twisting on the cast and promotes more accurate presentations. Each rod is equipped with a reel seat made of the new CI4+ lightweight material, and lightweight Fuji Alconite K semi-micro guides. \$199.99

fish.shimano.com



Beast Coast Tungsten Originals

Premium skirts and high-quality finish characterize the new lineup of tungsten jigs and punch rigs from Beast Coast Tungsten. The skirts are made of silicone with strands of flash fibers tied in by hand using wire so the skirts won't slip. Three models are available now. The Perfect Punch Rig (center) comes in eight colors in 3/8-, 1/2-, 3/4-, 1- and 1 1/4-ounce sizes for \$3.99 to \$7.79. The Vanquish Flipping Jig (right), which has a 4/0 hook, comes in 12 colors in 3/8 and 1/2 ounce. It sells for \$4.89 to \$5.49. The Finesse Dragging Jig (left) has a football-style head in 7/16 or 5/8 ounce. It comes in 12 colors and sells for \$5.49 to \$5.99. More products are in development.

beastcoasttungsten.com



Adventure Medical Kit

Don't you hate it when you catch so many bass that you rasp your thumb raw from lipping them all? When you're in need of ointment and a bandage to alleviate such pain and suffering, dig out your Sportsman Series Steelhead medical kit. The kit, which is 7 1/4 inches by 6 3/4 inches, weighs just 6 ounces, but contains all the bandages, gauze, painkillers and topical medication you'll need to patch up your fishing buddy or yourself. It's all packaged in a waterproof, zippered pouch. \$25

adventuremedicalkits.com

Pro-Z Baits T-Fitz Poppin Frog

Fitzgerald Rods founder Trevor Fitzgerald – with the help of some giant Florida bass – perfected the Pro-Z Baits T-Fitz Poppin Frog, a spitting image of the real thing. Dual VMC hooks hug the frog's soft body to ensure that it stays weedless, but are exposed instantly on the hookset. The frog has extra-long legs that can be trimmed with scissors to suit. Colors include white shad, firetiger, Scooby-Doo (a caramel-colored underbelly with dark back), and black and blue. \$8.99

pro-zbaits.com

fitzgeraldrods.com



SPOOL IT UP

ACCESSORIES TO HELP
YOU ORGANIZE LINE
AND RE-SPOOL

by Matt Williams

Spooling up reels is a chore that comes around often enough that it's not a bad idea to invest in a dedicated spooling station or one of several portable line storage and spooling accessories on the market.

Here are few that we think you'll want to check out:



SPOOLIN BUDDY 15 UNIT

This is arguably among the highest-quality portable spooling stations on the market. Not only does it provide a solid anchor point for spooling line, but it acts as an open storage bin to keep spools of varied sizes neatly organized and easily accessible.

The rigid frame is made from high-density polyurethane plastic and features triangular end caps that are rounded so you can access any rack by simply rolling the unit over like a tumbler. The 15 Unit model will hold 15 bulk spools from 1,000 to 3,000 yards in size and even more filler spools. Four smaller sizes are also available.

The 15 Unit model features three spool racks. It comes with a convenient carrying handle at one end and 15 reusable line-size stickers.

The rack measures 23 inches long by 11 1/2 inches wide and assembles in about five minutes. \$129.95 (smaller models range from \$64.95 to \$119.95)

spoolinbuddy.com



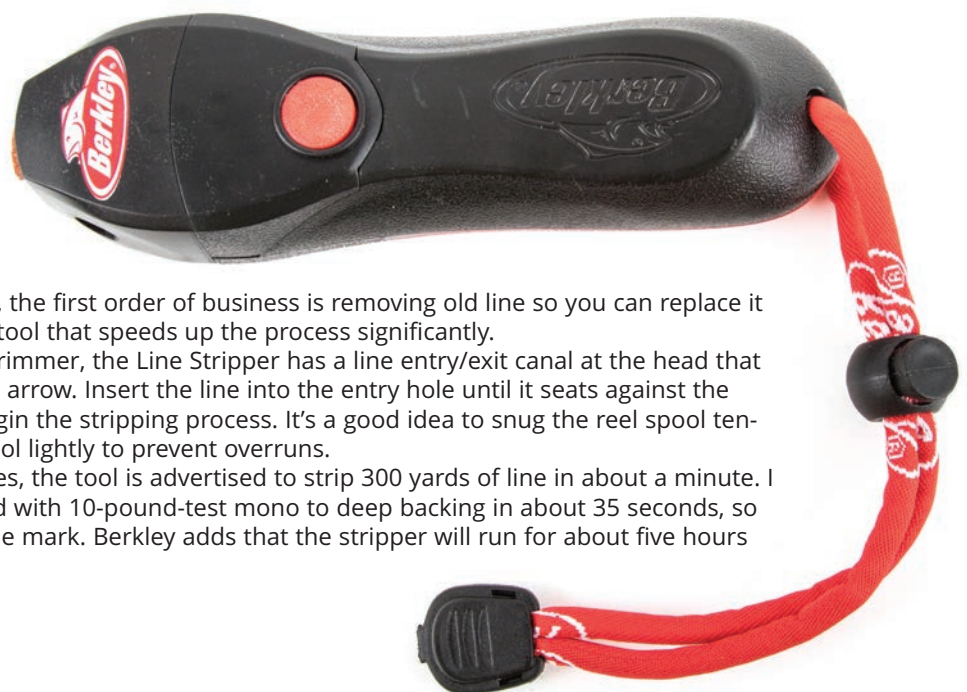
RMC PRO TRAVELING SPOOLING STATION

Designed for traveling anglers, this is a dual-rack spooling station that neatly organizes multiple bulk or filler spools. The rack measures 24 inches long by 8 inches tall by 10 inches wide.

End caps are fashioned from heavy-duty black PVC and come pre-drilled for fast, easy assembly. The stainless-steel spool rack rods are super-sturdy and threaded at both ends so they can be snugged to the end caps using the supplied hardware. Each end cap has its own carrying handle/slot.

A spring-loaded arm slides back and forth and can be aligned to apply adjustable tension on the chosen spool. It helps alleviate overruns or tangling during the spooling process. \$79

rmcboatworks.com



BERKLEY LINE STRIPPER

When it comes time to re-spool, the first order of business is removing old line so you can replace it with the new. Here's a handy little tool that speeds up the process significantly.

Comparable in size to a beard trimmer, the Line Stripper has a line entry/exit canal at the head that is clearly marked with a directional arrow. Insert the line into the entry hole until it seats against the rollers, and press the button to begin the stripping process. It's a good idea to snug the reel spool tension knob a little or thumb the spool lightly to prevent overruns.

Running on two new AA batteries, the tool is advertised to strip 300 yards of line in about a minute. I stripped down a baitcaster spooled with 10-pound-test mono to deep backing in about 35 seconds, so the claim appears to be right on the mark. Berkley adds that the stripper will run for about five hours on new batteries. \$14.99

berkley-fishing.com



SPOOL STIX LINE WINDING SYSTEM

At one time or another we've all relied on the old nail-in-the-wall trick to steady the spool when filling a fishing reel with fresh line. The tactic works flawlessly; so well that Kentucky angler Mark Morgan figured out a way to adapt the concept to a bass boat – minus the hammer and nail.

The Spool StiX Line Winding System features a metal rod that's housed within a rectangular aluminum frame and covered by a cloth strip, which secures using a hook-and-loop fastener. Measuring 7 1/4 inches long by 3/4 inch wide by 1 inch deep, the unit is designed to mount vertically to any flat surface – in the boat, shop or wherever – using the double-sided tape. It's best to mount to surfaces that provide a 90-degree angle, or close to it.

Once mounted, peel back the cloth cover and fold down the rod so it protrudes outward at a pre-established 30-degree angle. Slide a line spool onto the rod, and you're ready to roll. When the spooling process is complete simply stow the rod.

The rod is long enough to accommodate bulk spools up to 4 3/4 inches wide, but also works well with smaller spools. It's sold exclusively through tacklewarehouse.com. \$23.99

spoolstix.com



PLANO LINE SPOOL BOXES

Here's a series of compact spooling stations that are small enough to carry in the boat without sacrificing much room yet big enough to hold enough line for an extended fishing trip, or backup line for tournament day.

Plano makes a couple of size options and also a leader spool box, if you're a multi-species angler. All are made from durable clear plastic that allows for easy identification of different lines riding in the interior dividers. The lids secure with two Plano ProLatches and include a handle.

Each spool compartment has its own line-transfer hole. The holes are filled with rubber grommets to nix any worries about line fraying while the transfer is underway. about \$10 to \$17

planomolding.com



A FEW NEW ITEMS TO ADD TO YOUR BUCKET LIST

The Frabill Bait Bucket. It has been a staple for anglers for years and is now getting a complete overhaul. Available in 5 new options with updated designs, new features and more durable construction, there is an option for everyone's live bait needs.

- CLASSIC BAIT BUCKET
- INSULATED BAIT BUCKET
- DRAINER BAIT BUCKET
- BUILT-IN AERATOR LID
- DUAL-BAIT AERATED BUCKET





THE KING RECLAIMS HIS CROWN

Andy Morgan wins
his third AOY title
in four seasons

by *Curtis Niedermier*

Sports fans love a good debate. Who's the greatest of all time? Does a championship streak constitute a dynasty? When will someone be able to challenge the champ?

Bass fans being sports fans too, they understand that, as it relates to the Walmart FLW Tour, nearly all debates about all-time greats have to include Andy Morgan.

Morgan, of Dayton, Tenn., put the finishing touches on the 2016 Angler of the Year title at the Tour's finale on Lake Champlain in June. He earned \$100,000 for winning AOY and reinforced his stature as one of the all-time greats in professional bass fishing.

Remarkably, Morgan's most recent AOY is his third in four seasons. He won it back-to-back in 2013 and 2014, slipped way down to ninth (pause for that sarcasm to register) in 2015 and reestablished himself at the top of the sport in 2016.

Morgan was the king of bass fishing during his 2013-2014 stretch, and now he's reclaimed his crown.

Defining Morgan

What's notable about Morgan's run, and his career in general, is that he's managed to have tremendous success without fitting into any of the established "categories" of anglers.



PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON

He's not just a power fisherman or a finesse fisherman. He's not a shallow or deep guy. He's not a ledge guy or a river guy or a specialist at fishing clear or dirty water. He doesn't dominate in the North, Southeast, Midwest or anywhere in particular.

Morgan is none of those things and all of those things. He's Andy Morgan.

Probably the best way to sum up his skill is with the phrase that FLW Tour Weighmaster Chris Jones uses to describe Morgan and the rest of the small group of elite pros who've never been considered specialists, but who are

perennial AOY contenders: "He catches them everywhere we go, all over the country."

That's Morgan. He's a five-fish-per-day kind of guy, and while he might not win very often at the Tour level, Morgan almost never drives home from an event without a paycheck.

Morgan isn't exactly the type who'll do "whatever it takes" to catch five fish. That suggests a tackle locker overflowing with Tackle Warehouse packages or 20 rods on the front deck. He's more the type who'll fish hard enough to sniff out five good bites. In fact, he's a bit of a bass fishing minimalist in an era when that's unusual.

**LAKE
OKEECHOBEE**
40th PLACE

**LAKE
HARTWELL**
42nd PLACE

**BEAVER
LAKE**
6th PLACE

"I stick to what brung me, pretty much," he says. "I'll put a new twist on things, but it's very seldom. I don't modify much. If Livingston, Zoom or War Eagle makes it, that's it. They've bit a damn plastic worm for 100 years, and they're not going to stop in the next 100 years."



PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON

Fearless Fishing

When comparing the sport's elite fishing stars, ability levels tend to be more or less equal. They can all catch 'em, they know how to execute, and they all know how to research lakes and acquire help when needed to get on the right track.

The factor that separates them, besides occasional luck, is confidence.

It took Morgan 18 years on Tour to win his first AOY title. In that span, he came close numerous times, including a runner-up finish in 2010 and five top-10 finishes in the standings.

He didn't win his first AOY until 2013. Now he already has three.

The competition hasn't changed, but something else has. His confidence.

"I guess after you win that first time you kind of get a little fearless," Morgan says. "You don't fear 'the zero.' You start to think, 'Well if I don't catch anything, I don't catch anything.' That helps a lot. You just learn to roll with it.

"Every now and then you get put back in check. You come to a tournament and don't get a check, and that kind of puts you back in remission a little bit."

Funny thing is, Morgan's track record doesn't exactly line up with his statement, specifically that part about not catching them. In fact, he seems to trend the opposite with his fishing. While pros such as Scott Martin and Jacob Wheeler are known for swinging for the fences and occasionally blanking about as often as they occasionally win tournaments, Morgan is more the type just to catch fish every day, stick around in the standings until everyone else bombs at least once and he's left at the top.

So where does the fearlessness come in? In his approach, mainly; Morgan is fearless in heading onto the water without a plan and fishing by instinct, or in scrapping his plan (he says the plan always goes wrong anyway) midday to find a way to catch five. Most guys lack that kind of confidence, but it's the way that Morgan, David Dudley and Clark Wendlandt fish every tournament, and they each have three AOY titles.

Nowadays, Morgan's mantra might be: Catch five, and eventually everyone else will screw up and leave the door open.

Morgan admitted as much at Champlain. He recalled that he might not have made the cut at Pickwick had 30 anglers not gotten stuck in the lock coming back from Wilson Lake, and that could have changed his entire season. Plus, he trailed Jeff Sprague for most of the year in the AOY race, and coming down the stretch it looked as if Sprague was untouchable. Then Sprague slipped at Kentucky Lake and finished 71st. Morgan made the top 10, and Sprague couldn't catch him on Champlain.

Eventual AOY runner-up Chris Johnston made his booboo at Pickwick, where he finished 61st and missed a check – his only cash-free event all season. Stetson Blaylock probably put together the best-looking season without winning AOY. He tied Johnston for points, but finished third by way of tiebreaker. He caught a limit every day of competition, cashed a check at every stop and made the top 20 three times – an incredible season. Yet, Blaylock had three sub-30 finishes, and he didn't quite earn the necessary points to hang with Morgan's 20th-place-finish average.

Morgan also caught a limit in every day of competition in 2016. He had two sub-40 finishes, but his other four events were top-20 cuts, including two top-10 cuts. He never missed a check and finished 24 points ahead of both Johnston and Blaylock.

The results suggest that while Martin and Wheeler might not fear bombing, Morgan really does fear bombing, but he avoids it with a fearless "just going fishing" attitude.

THE MORGAN DYNASTY

Looking back over his last four seasons, Andy Morgan's worst tournament finish was in 2015, when he took 81st at Lake Chickamauga. It dashed his hopes for a third-straight AOY title and was the only Tour event in a four-year period spanning 2013-2016 that Morgan didn't cash a check. During that stretch he earned 10 top-10 finishes.

Fearless in his own way.

"It just works out sometimes," he says. "I put a lot of effort in. It's one of those deals, and I really hate to say it, you just never give up. It's an old cliché, but it really works. If you have an hour left in the day, you better be fishing just as hard as at the beginning of the day. It takes that kind of grinding, and that kind of mentality of 'you're not going to beat me.'"

The W

It's not accurate to suggest that Morgan's not a winner when he's won three AOY titles and their respective six-figure paychecks in the last four seasons. But he's not a winner in the way that Scott Martin is a winner. Martin won the Tour finale on Champlain and now holds the record for most FLW Tour wins (six), is the only angler to win three Tour events on the same fishery (Champlain) and has won the Forrest Wood Cup. He also won the AOY title – his first – in 2015.

Morgan has only won a single Tour event in his career, and that was back in 2007. Jimmy Houston pointed out that stat on stage before the day-three weigh-in at Lake Champlain, while chatting with Chris Jones. Houston didn't mince words. He said that Morgan rarely wins, but he's always there when the top-20 list is called, and he hangs around often enough to make top 10s. That's why he always competes for AOY. And it's why he has 62 top-10 finishes across all FLW circuits – an FLW record – but only six total wins, with just the one on Tour.

This is also where Morgan relies on his fearlessness. He's not afraid to not win. To him, it's not losing when you earn a paycheck and always make the Forrest Wood Cup.

All those top 10s and near-misses can wear a guy out, but Morgan says he's sort of become immune to the "could've beens."

"I guess you get a little more ... well, honest to God, you get used to the beat-down, because I've fished so many events and I never win. If you've been in this awhile and get used to that, you're kind of numb," he says.

It's worth considering that Morgan's wait-it-out approach is effective in annual points races, but maybe it's not as effective in individual events. Since his win in 2007, Morgan has finished runner-up at Tour events five times, plus scored numerous other top-five finishes. In some of those cases he was



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PICKWICK LAKE 11th PLACE

KENTUCKY LAKE 10th PLACE

LAKE CHAMPLAIN 13th PLACE

flat-out beaten, but in a few cases it was one bad break on his part or one lucky break on another angler's part that cost him the win.

"At Beaver [this season] I jumped one off that was over 6. If I catch that one I don't know if I was going to beat Canterbury, but it would've been close," he recalls. "It seems like every time I catch them, Dudley will dig one out of a tree and beat me. It seems like I'm never the one to get a break. It seems like it never works out, and I finish second and I finish third. It's aggravating. But I don't know what else to do about it."

Season Recap

Morgan's two worst finishes of the season came at the first two stops. He finished 40th at Okeechobee and 42nd at Hartwell.

"My first tournaments were not that great. I got checks, and I was proud of that, but to win AOY they weren't the kind of checks you need to get. The last four tournaments I put it together, and it just worked out well."

Morgan's fearlessness with regard to scrapping a pattern was on display early on in the season.

"Okeechobee was kind of like that. I had to bob through a couple of areas. I really wanted to live in one area," he recalls. "I scrapped that and went and got a 40-something-place finish. I got a check."

"At Hartwell I wasn't going to sight-fish. I was totally against that. Then I ended up going and sight-fishing just to cash a check."

At Beaver, Morgan caught his fish "running around like a wild man" and placed sixth. And at Pickwick, he never even bothered with the deep bite, instead finding water all to himself and finishing 11th.

Kentucky Lake was "pretty standard" for Morgan. He's been fishing there for years and knew what to expect.

"Once you get in these summer months things get a lot more predictable," he adds. He placed 10th on Kentucky Lake by dragging a Zoom Ol' Monster worm.

Champlain was probably Morgan's biggest hurdle. He's not a fan of Northern smallmouths.

"I'm just not comfortable up here," he said after the day-two weigh-in. "It's not a good feeling to come here in a slugfest and have to catch them. I think this is my fifth time here, and every time everybody catches them."

Morgan did what he always does en route to proving that he is a tough closer when in a position to win AOY. He scraped and clawed up north for two days, saying it was "real jagged" fishing, and he made the cut. On day three he turned and headed south to try for a big bag of largemouths after his best areas dried up in the qualifying rounds. Of course, by that point he'd already sewed up AOY.

It was a quiet tournament for Morgan. He didn't really contend to win, but he obviously didn't bomb out. He was there on the weekend, like he always is, after 140 other pros had already gone home, reminding everyone what kind of performance it will take if one of them wants to usurp his throne and wear the crown. ■



PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDORN



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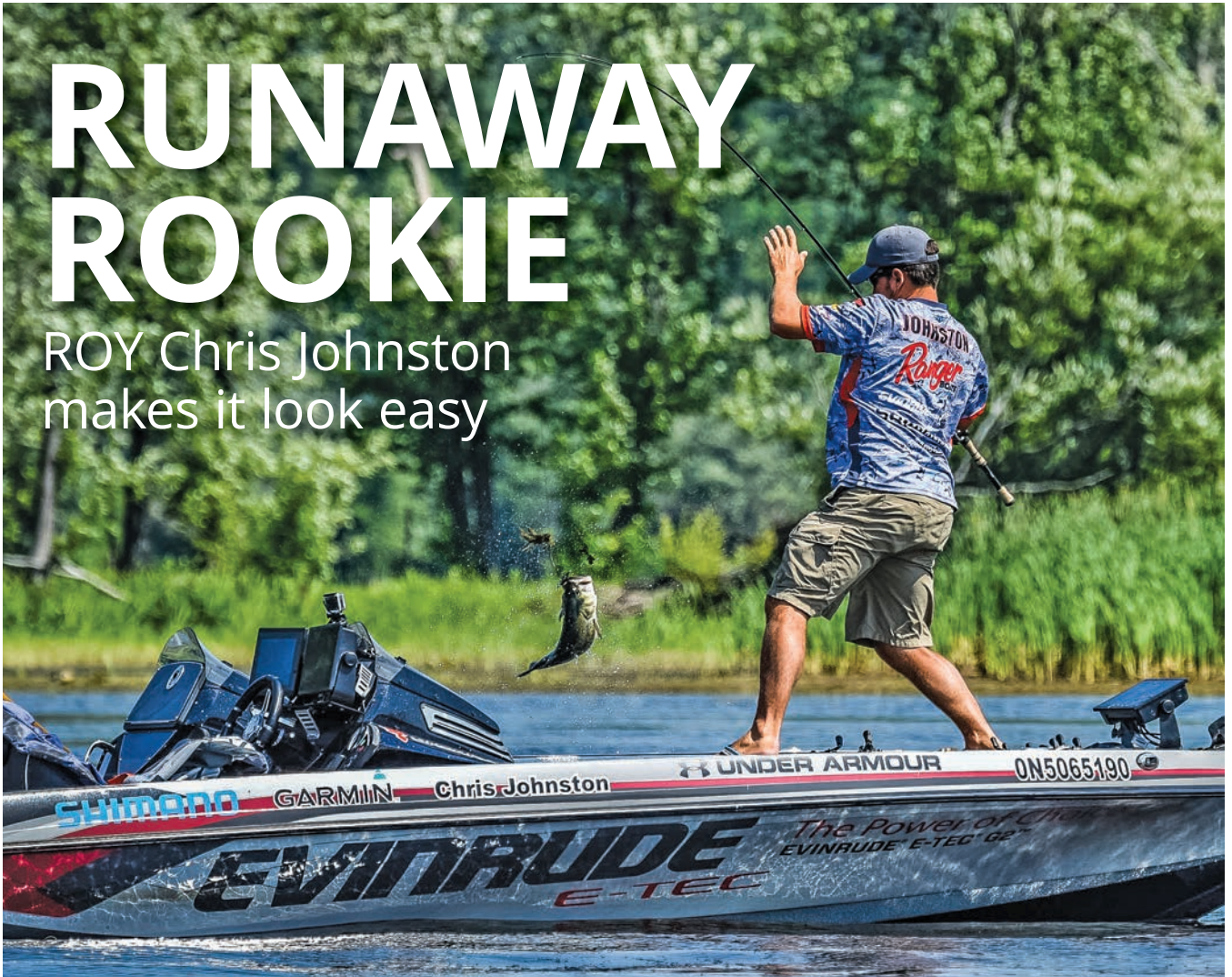
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ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

CHRIS JOHNSTON

RUNAWAY ROOKIE

ROY Chris Johnston makes it look easy



by Colin Moore

PHOTOS BY ANDY HAGEDON

Before the 2016 Walmart FLW Tour opened on Lake Okeechobee in early February, Chris Johnston decided he was going after a trio of goals: Rookie of the Year, Angler of the Year and a berth in the Forrest Wood Cup.

Two out of three isn't bad. Not only did the Canadian fisherman win Rookie of the Year and qualify for his first Forrest Wood Cup, but he came within an eyelash of capturing the Angler of the Year title as well. The only thing that stopped him was a juggernaut of long standing named Andy Morgan. Still, in finishing 24 points behind Morgan (1,084 points to 1,060 points), Johnston flirted with fishing history, becoming the nearest thing to a double winner since Shinichi Fukae accomplished it in 2004 and Clark Wendlandt in 1997.

Setting goals and then doing his best to achieve them is part of the mental process that the 27-year-old rookie goes through to help maintain his focus through a season of tournaments. Even when he realized that the AOY title was slipping from his grasp, Johnston fixed his sights on the ROY race, a Cup berth and the award for highest-finishing Ranger Cup-qualified angler. Though the first two issues were settled by the time the Champlain tournament rolled around, Johnston could claim the latter award only after what became a scramble at the end of the 2016 campaign between Ranger pros Johnston and AOY fourth-place finisher Jacob Wheeler (1,058 points). Johnston won a Ranger Z518C with a 200-hp outboard – a nice consolation prize after coming so close to the AOY crown.

That Johnston, of Peterborough, Ontario, would win the ROY race was a foregone conclusion a couple of tournaments before Champlain when Chris had already made it a run-away. And if he had faltered, his older brother and fellow rookie, Cory, would have been there to take up the slack. Cory finished runner-up in the ROY standings with 884 points.

"Being Rookie of the Year is like a family honor," says Chris. "Cory and I practiced together all season and helped each other figure things out. It's always been that way with us. We grew up in an area where there are about 20 lakes that are unbelievable fisheries, and we were well-schooled in tournament fishing because our dad [Lynn] fished tournaments all over Ontario.

"Dad's a little old school, but Cory and I stayed up to speed about new techniques and baits via websites, magazines and just fishing as many tournaments as we could, wherever we could. Champlain, Okeechobee, Kentucky Lake – we have all those scenarios in Canada, so that's been one of the reasons my brother and I have been pretty consistent in tournaments."

"Consistently good" is a better description of the Johnstons' tournament performances, especially in the Costa FLW Series Northern Division. In 2009 Chris fished his first season in that circuit and was both Angler of the Year and Rookie of the Year. Cory was the top angler in the Northern Division in 2011 and 2015. Heading into this year and having honed their fishing skills to the appropriate sharpness, the Johnston brothers decided the time was right to take the next step up. Now they're part of the strong north wind from Canada that's sweeping through the FLW Tour ranks in the form of the Johnston brothers, Jeff Gustafson and Curtis Richardson.

Though the general perception of fishing in Canada conjures images of deep glacial lakes and feisty smallmouth bass, Chris is more confident when he is able to sight-fish and flip, pitch or punch soft plastics to largemouths. His performance

at Okeechobee, where he finished third, is indicative of his shallow-water prowess. Likewise, a month later he managed a 12th-place showing at Lake Hartwell.

"Hartwell and Beaver Lake were the two places that worried me some – not just because I had never fished them before, but I had heard that they might be more offshore deals," recalls Chris, who, with his father and brother, runs the family's vehicle and marine battery business. "Fortunately, there was a warm spell at Hartwell, and I spent all the time sight-fishing."

It was the same at Beaver Lake, though Chris' sight-fishing options were more or less restricted to a five-mile stretch of shoreline washed by clear water. Then came Pickwick – the only tournament of the year where he didn't finish in the money – and a 61st-place showing.

"Pickwick was a bad one. I had an OK practice, but I only weighed a couple of fish that first day," he notes. "I left a place where I should have stayed and went on to a place that was trashed by the wind. I hurt myself on that one and made some bad decisions, but I guess that's what it's all about: learning to make the right decisions in different situations."

Chris rebounded at Kentucky Lake with a 40th-place showing and ended his season much the same as he began it, with a fifth-place finish at Champlain.

Now it's on to Wheeler Lake and the Forrest Wood Cup. Chris fished the Costa FLW Series Championship on the lake a couple of years ago, finishing 68th, and he admits that the summer patterns likely to be in play there won't be favorable for him.

Don't sell him short, however. Back in February, the thought that a Canadian angler could challenge for the FLW Tour's Angler of the Year title plus Rookie of the Year designation didn't seem so likely either.

At least, it was doubtful to just about everyone except Chris Johnston. ■

Johnston came within a few points of becoming the first Canadian to win AOY. He settled for ROY and the Ranger Cup award.



BRYAN NEW



NEW'S CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

North Carolina co-angler collects third major FLW award

PHOTO BY GARRETT DIXON

by Kyle Wood

Once Bryan New of Belmont, N.C., stepped onto the Walmart FLW Tour stage as a co-angler back in 2012, it didn't take long for his peers or fishing fans to realize that this Tarheel angler was the real deal. Indeed, success has characterized New's short career in the Tour ranks.

In five seasons as a co-angler, New earned a regular-season Tour win at Lake Eufaula in 2013, claimed the Forrest Wood Cup title in 2014 and capped it off this year with the 2016 Co-angler of the Year award – along with the Ranger Z518C and 200-hp outboard that comes with it.

Climbing the Ladder

While New aspired to a career in fishing at a young age, his obsession started out as a simple desire to have a fish – any fish – stretch his line.

"I've lived on [Lake] Wylie my whole life and have always loved to fish," says New. "It didn't matter if it was a crappie or a catfish, I just wanted to catch something. Back then just catching one fish in a day was a huge reward. Then, after a few years, I'd catch six or seven fish in a day and thought that it'd be cool to make a living catching fish."

As New grew older he started frequenting a nearby tackle shop and pestering local sticks to take him fishing. That's also when he started to focus on targeting bass.

At age 16, New entered his first FLW Bass Fishing League derby as a co-angler.

"The first tournament I entered was on Lake Norman [in 2006], and I got 20th place and I thought that was pretty dang good," recalls New, now 26. "Not long after that I met Roger

Pope, who is a legend in the Carolinas, and he took me under his wing and taught me so much about bass fishing."

New soon expanded to fish both the North Carolina and South Carolina divisions of the BFL, and in 2011 he won the North Carolina Division's co-angler points race. The win spurred him to take the next step, so he signed up to fish the Walmart FLW Tour as a co-angler in 2012.

His first season on Tour resulted in a solid 13th-place finish in the Co-angler of the Year standings. More impressively, New qualified for the Cup, where he finished fifth. The next year he wound up 12th in the Tour standings and qualified for his second Cup, where he finished fourth.

In 2014, New moved to third in the COY standings and won the Forrest Wood Cup on Lake Murray. He followed the win with a runner-up finish in the 2015 Cup at Lake Ouachita, the last Cup to include co-anglers.

Rung by rung, New has climbed the ladder to the pinnacle of the co-angler realm.

The Best Teachers

It's no surprise that New has evolved so quickly in his short tenure in competitive fishing, considering the caliber of angler he gets to hang around with in North Carolina and as he travels with the Tour.

"I met Matt [Arey] at a BFL on High Rock Lake a few years ago," says New. "We became pretty good friends, and I traveled with him my first year on Tour. After that, I met Bryan [Thrift], and we've been traveling together ever since. Bryan and I just get along real well because we are both so

into fishing. We talk every day about tweaking baits or new things to try. We just can't stop thinking about fishing.

"I've known Todd Auten and Chris Baumgardner since I was a little kid and I've fished around them, so I feel very fortunate to have been around the people I have," New adds. "I feel like things have worked out for me the way they have and I met the people I have because fishing is something that I'm supposed to do."

Sure, if you hang around hammers of that level you're bound to learn a thing or two, but there's another reason why New has become such a fishing machine. He says it's a combination of self-reliance and respect.

"Honestly, I think the biggest, most important thing I have learned is how to teach myself. It's kind of hard to explain, but that has helped me learn more as a co-angler than anything," he says.

"My mentality has always been to do something different from what my pro is doing," New adds. "I just don't pay a lot of attention to what they do. I focus on the depth finder and chart or side imaging and just try to fish for fish that I don't think anyone else is trying for. And I have always tried to respect what the pro is doing. If we are fishing a pocket and I could cast to the other bank, but I know the pro is going to fish it, I'll just cast out in the middle instead."

What's Next

Now that New has achieved about every goal he can as a co-angler, most people expect him to jump up to the pro level on Tour. New kind of expects that too, if it all works out.

As one of the top five co-anglers on Tour in 2016, he's eligible to fish the new FLW Tour Invitational tournaments this

fall. One of them is on North Carolina's Lake Norman, a lake with which New has some familiarity. It poses an attractive opportunity to try his hand at fishing up front against the Tour's best pros.

Regardless, New says he's definitely considering moving to the front full time in 2017.

"If I can get some financial support from my sponsors I'd love to try and fish the Tour as a pro next year," New says. "If I do, a selfish goal of mine would be to win Rookie of the Year, since you only get one shot at that."

One shot, perhaps, but anyone familiar with his tournament record is unlikely to bet against New if and when he goes after that goal. So far in New's short career, he's had more hits than misses. ■

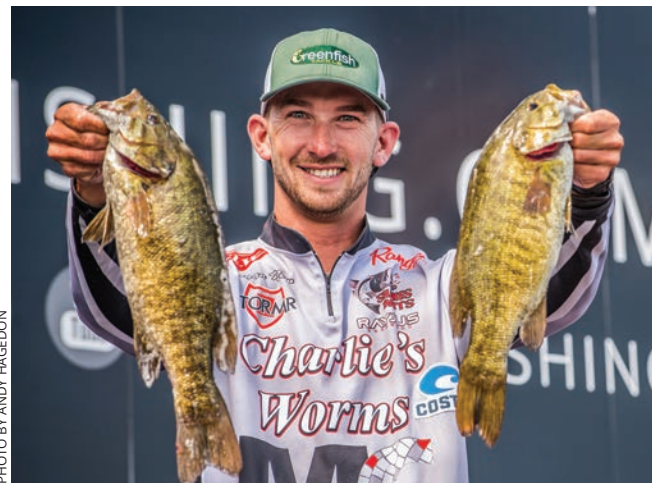


PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON



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2016 FORREST WOOD CUP PREVIEW

THE CUP

WHEELER LAKE • HUNTSVILLE, ALA. • AUG. 4-7

WHAT'S INSIDE

- THE PATTERNS IN PLAY AT WHEELER IN AUGUST
- MEET ALL 50 OF THE 2016 CUP CONTENDERS
- EVENT SCHEDULE AND THINGS TO DO IN HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

PHOTO BY JESSE SCHULTZ

HOSTED BY

HUNTSVILLE
Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau



HISTORY AWAITS IN HUNTSVILLE

WHEELER LAKE PLAYS HOST TO THE 2016 FORREST WOOD CUP AUG. 4-7

by Curtis Niedermier

The opportunity only comes once a year, but the anticipation never ends. The Forrest Wood Cup presented by Walmart is FLW's pinnacle event of the season. It's the championship. The Big Show. The whole shebang for die-hard tournament bass anglers.

Fifty anglers from all of FLW's tournament circuits and The Bass Federation make the Cup, but only one will be crowned champion and earn the \$300,000 top prize.

This season, and for the first time ever in more than two decades of the Walmart FLW Tour, the Cup will be held on the Tennessee River system at Wheeler Lake, Aug. 4-7.

Huntsville, Ala., plays host for the 2016 Cup, and the community is sure to slather on the Southern hospitality for the thousands of fishing fans who'll attend.

In the following pages, FLW offers readers a preview of all of the Cup festivities, both on and off the water. Contenders are profiled, patterns are predicted and schedules of exciting events are provided. However, the real experience can only be had by joining us in Huntsville. We hope you'll be there.

CUP PAYOUTS

Every angler who makes the Forrest Wood Cup earns a check. Here's how the payouts break down.

Place	Payout
1	\$300,000*
2	\$60,000
3	\$50,000
4	\$37,500
5	\$30,000
6	\$24,000
7	\$23,000
8	\$22,000
9	\$21,000
10	\$20,000
11-20	\$15,000
21-50	\$10,000

*Plus entry into the 2017 Forrest Wood Cup

VISIT ROCKET CITY

FLW's partner for the 2016 Forrest Wood Cup is the Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau. If you're looking for a place to stay, a spot to dine or ideas for family activities while you're in town for the Cup, the Huntsville/Madison County CVB website, Huntsville.org, has plenty of helpful information. Or flip over to page 86 for FLW's suggestions for local attractions.



THE EXPO

The FLW Expo at the Forrest Wood Cup is one of the biggest consumer shows in the business. Best of all, FLW allows exhibitors to sell their wares on the show floor, and many companies offer exclusive discounts on great fishing tackle.

Over the years, the FLW Expo as the Cup has helped launch some of the best-known fishing tackle products, including the Basstrix Swim Bait, Nichols Magnum Spoon and the Alabama Rig. What will be the hot seller this season?



THE 20TH CUP

The first Forrest Wood Cup was held in 1996 on Lake Sinclair in Georgia. The 2016 Cup should have been the 21st installment of the championship, but in 2001 the Cup on Lake Champlain was cancelled due to the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in New York. Thus, the 2016 Cup is actually the 20th FLW championship event.



THE MAKINGS OF THE CUP

HOW THE PRETTIEST TROPHY IN BASS FISHING IS MADE

It takes years of hard work and skill development, followed by a week of near-perfect performance to become Forrest Wood Cup champion.

For the folks at MTM Recognition, the company in Oklahoma that manufactures the Forrest Wood Cup trophy as well as awards for numerous other professional sports, the process of creating the Cup is sort of like that – an extended period of cutting and polishing that all comes together in the final stages on the assembly table.

“To build this award, if we had all the components sitting on a table waiting to be built, would probably take half a day,” says Brad Myers of MTM. “But the process of getting all the pieces cut and polished – because everything that gets cut has to be polished – with sand etching and sanding, would probably be about a two-week process.”

We asked Myers to go into a little more detail on the make and makeup of the Cup that every bass angler dreams of hoisting at FLW's summertime finale.

THE TROPHY

- The main body of the Cup is made of nickel silver that is stamped into a mold using a hydraulic press. Myers says nickel silver is much more durable and resistant to scratches and tarnishing than sterling silver. That means it'll shine longer yet won't require the champ to spend as many hours polishing his trophy – unless he wants to, of course.
- The handles and emblem are cast of pewter and then plated in nickel silver before being installed.
- The Cup is 28 7/8 inches tall, including the lid, with an 8 5/8-inch-tall base (not shown) that is 16 1/2 inches square. The diameter at the base of the Cup is 9 1/8 inches.
- MTM builds the base in layers. The very bottom is black acrylic, under a piece of black Sunstone, which is a proprietary cast resin stone that looks like granite, but is lighter and easier to work during the manufacturing process. Text is etched into the Sunstone and then colored. On top is a 3/4-inch-thick burl stone and a 1/4-inch-thick slab of black Sunstone.





MAKING THE CUT

THE 2016 FORREST WOOD CUP ROSTER

50 anglers from across FLW's tournament ranks will compete for the sport's biggest prize. Here's who made the cut:

- 2015 Walmart FLW Tour Angler of the Year
- 2015 Forrest Wood Cup champion
- The highest-finishing angler from each of five divisions at the 2015 Costa FLW Series Championship, plus the next five highest finishers regardless of division
- 2016 FLW College Fishing National Championship Fish-Off winner
- 2016 FLW Bass Fishing League All-American champion
- 2016 The Bass Federation National Championship winner
- The top 35 in the 2016 Walmart FLW Tour standings

Note: One angler double qualified this season, so FLW extended an additional invite to the 36th-place Tour pro.



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2016 FLW College Fishing



MATT AREY
Walmart FLW Tour



TODD AUTEN
Walmart FLW Tour



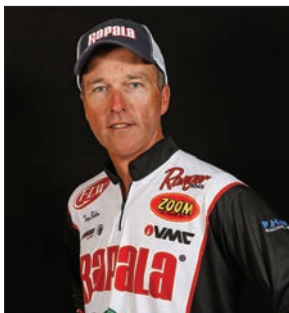
DAVID BARNES SR.
2015 Costa FLW Series



STETSON BLAYLOCK
Walmart FLW Tour



GREG BOHANNAN
Walmart FLW Tour



TERRY BOLTON
Walmart FLW Tour



DENNY BRAUER
2015 Costa FLW Series



SCOTT CANTERBURY
Walmart FLW Tour



BILL CHAPMAN
2015 Costa FLW Series



BRANDON COBB
Walmart FLW Tour



JOHN COX
Walmart FLW Tour



DAVID DUDLEY
Walmart FLW Tour



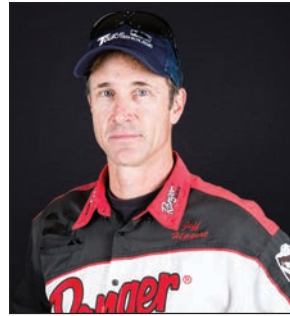
SHINICHI FUKAE
Walmart FLW Tour



JEFF GUSTAFSON
Walmart FLW Tour



RAY HANSELMAN
2015 Costa FLW Series



JEFF HIPPERT
2015 Costa FLW Series



BRIAN HOLDER
2015 Costa FLW Series



JAMIE HORTON
Walmart FLW Tour



CHRIS JOHNSTON
Walmart FLW Tour



CORY JOHNSTON
Walmart FLW Tour



JAY KENDRICK
Walmart FLW Tour



JT KENNEY
Walmart FLW Tour



BRAD KNIGHT
2015 Forrest Wood Cup



JEREMY LAWYER
2016 BFL All-American



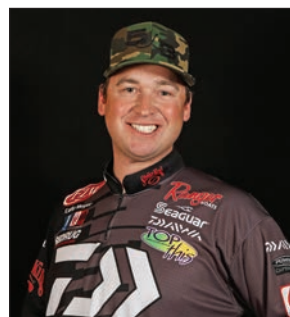
SHANE LEHEW
Walmart FLW Tour



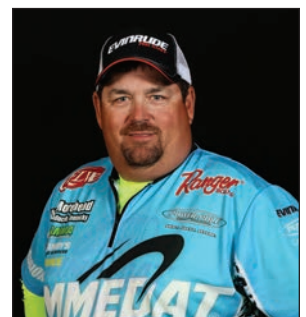
SCOTT MARTIN
2015 Angler of the Year



BRANDON MCMILLAN
Walmart FLW Tour



CODY MEYER
Walmart FLW Tour



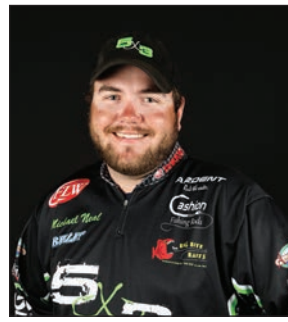
DAN MOREHEAD
Walmart FLW Tour



ANDY MORGAN
Walmart FLW Tour



TROY MORROW
Walmart FLW Tour



MICHAEL NEAL
Walmart FLW Tour



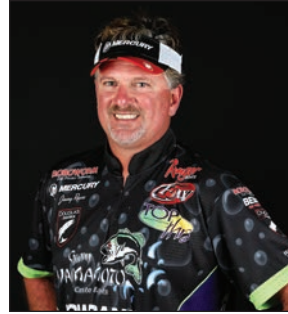
BRANDON PERKINS
2015 Costa FLW Series



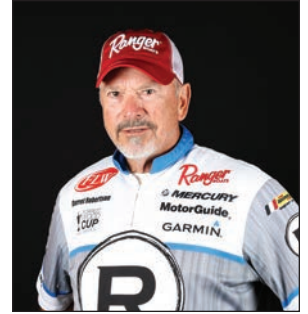
NICK PRVONOZAC
2015 Costa FLW Series



CLARK REEHM
Walmart FLW Tour



JIMMY REESE
Walmart FLW Tour



DARREL ROBERTSON
Walmart FLW Tour



MARK ROSE
Walmart FLW Tour



BRYAN SCHMITT
Walmart FLW Tour



JEFF SPRAGUE
Walmart FLW Tour



WESLEY STRADER
Walmart FLW Tour



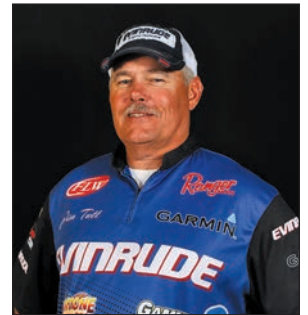
TYLER SUDDARTH
2015 Costa FLW Series



SCOTT SUGGS
Walmart FLW Tour



BRYAN THRIFT
Walmart FLW Tour



JIM TUTT
Walmart FLW Tour



JOSEPH WEBSTER
2016 The Bass Federation



CLARK WENDLANDT
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CHARLIE WEYER
2015 Costa FLW Series



JACOB WHEELER
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Madison:

8650 Madison Boulevard
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Owens Cross Roads:

330 Sutton Road SE

Visit flwfishing.com for a detailed schedule of events.

Special Giveaways and Events Sponsored by These Local Partners

THE FORREST WOOD CUP

Thursday, Aug. 4

7 AM | Takeoff at Ditto Landing
5 PM | Weigh-in at Propst Arena

Friday, Aug. 5

7 AM | Takeoff at Ditto Landing
10 AM | FLW Expo at the Von Braun Center
5 PM | Weigh-in at Propst Arena

Saturday, Aug. 6

7 AM | Takeoff at Ditto Landing
10 AM | FLW Expo at the Von Braun Center
FREE rod and reel to the first 500 children 14 and under
Jackson Kayak giveaway*

5 PM | Weigh-in at Propst Arena

Sunday, Aug. 7

7 AM | Takeoff at Ditto Landing
10 AM | FLW Expo at the Von Braun Center
FREE rod and reel to the first 500 children 14 and under
Jackson Kayak giveaway*

Ranger Z521C powered by Mercury giveaway

4 PM | Dustin Lynch Concert at Propst Arena

5 PM | Weigh-in at Propst Arena

Ranger Z521C powered by
Mercury Giveaway

Dustin Lynch
Concert

Rod & Reel
Giveaway

Jackson Kayak
Giveaway

Bass and BBQ
Festival



*Giveaways for children 14 and under, while supplies last, to be picked up at the main exits following weigh-in. No exceptions.

FREE

Dustin Lynch Concert

Sunday, Aug. 7
4 PM @ Propst Arena

Presented by





FORREST WOOD CUP

PRESENTED BY Walmart 

wheeler lake

Ditto Landing is Huntsville, Alabama's gateway to the majestic Wheeler Lake, one of many great reservoirs on the Tennessee River, and proud host of the 2016 Forrest Wood Cup. The gorgeous river greenway boasts some of the south's most breathtaking views and an ideal angler's paradise. We can't wait for you to experience it for yourself! Visit us online to finalize your plans to attend the Forrest Wood Cup today.

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8 THINGS YOU MUST DO AT THE CUP

DON'T MISS OUT ON GREAT PRIZES, ACTIVITIES

by Curtis Niedermier

Not to mention the obvious draw of the season's biggest bass tournament, the Forrest Wood Cup also offers fans plenty of activities off the water at the FLW Expo and associated events. The Expo will be at the Von Braun Center at 700 Monroe Street SW, Huntsville, Ala., from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Friday-Sunday, Aug. 5-7.

The Expo will be filled with tackle to buy, games to play and pros to meet, among other things. To help you plan your trip, we offer these eight must-do activities at the 2016 Forrest Wood Cup.



ENTER THE RANGER BOAT GIVEAWAY

Get the chance to fulfill your dream of owning the finest bass boat on the market by entering the Ranger Boats Z521C powered by Mercury giveaway, which is being sponsored by local TV station WAFF. To enter, come to the FLW Expo and fill out an entry form. The winner will be drawn after the final weigh-in Sunday, Aug. 7. You must be present to win.



TWO



GET A FREE ROD AND REEL

The first 500 kids age 14 and under through the doors of the FLW Expo on Saturday, Aug. 6 and again on Sunday, Aug. 7 get a free Kid Casters SpongeBob SquarePants, Steinhauser Deluxe or Dora and Friends no-tangle rod-and-reel combo courtesy of local TV station WHNT.





3

PIG OUT AT THE BASS & BBQ FESTIVAL

Held Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 6-7, in conjunction with the FLW Expo, the Bass & BBQ Festival hosted by WQRV The River 100.3 will feature great BBQ vendors cooking for a cause. Each vendor has selected a charitable organization and will donate a portion of the proceeds to its respective charity.

Local radio stations will broadcast live from the festival grounds and will provide musical entertainment for fans in attendance. WQRV The River 100.3 will be on site Saturday, followed by WDRM 102.1 Country on Sunday.



PARTICIPATE IN THE YOUTH FISHING DERBY

Walmart FLW Tour pro Cody Kelley has organized an FLW Foundation Unified Fishing Derby that's free to attend and will include prizes for the top young anglers. Rods and reels will be available, but families are encouraged to bring their own. DMF Bait Co. will provide the bait.

The derby will take place on Saturday, Aug. 6 at Brahan Spring Park, 500 Drake Ave. SW, Huntsville, Ala., from 9 a.m.

to 10:30 a.m. To register, email Judith Allen at judith.allen@flwfishing.com. The first 50 youths to register receive a fishing goodie bag.

4

five

TAKE IN A SEMINAR

Learn how to catch more bass from top FLW anglers in the Quaker State Seminar Room from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday through Sunday. A full seminar schedule will be provided online and on site before the event.



6

REGISTER TO WIN A JACKSON KAYAK

The Jackson Kayak Coosa HD is kind of like the Ranger Boat of kayaks – a top-of-the-line rig. Anyone who enters the Ranger Boats giveaway is also entered to win a free Coosa HD courtesy of Jackson Kayak. One winner will be drawn at

Saturday's weigh-in on Aug. 6, and another on Sunday. You must be present to win. Giveaways sponsored by The Huntsville Times and Quaker State.



seven DEMO GREAT PRODUCTS

Test drive a Ranger Boat or experience an on-the-water Lowrance demo at Ditto Landing Friday through Sunday after takeoff.

8

WIN A FISHING TRIP WITH JIMMY HOUSTON AND HANK PARKER

Dubbed "The Ultimate Fishing Experience," this once-in-a-lifetime fishing trip with industry legends Jimmy Houston and Hank Parker will take place at Houston's private ranch and bass lake in Oklahoma, courtesy of Quaker State. To enter, simply attend a fishing seminar at the FLW Expo and fill out an entry form. The winner will be drawn Sunday following the final seminar.



WHEELER DAM

THE LOWER END

The extreme lower end of the reservoir contains some of the better ledges on the lake and is the most popular stretch for ledge fishing. There are also a few major creeks, plenty of bluff banks and some hefty smallmouths.

THE ELK RIVER

The Elk River is Wheeler's largest inflow, and it's where Zack Birge won the 2014 Costa FLW Series Championship and Bradley Dortch found FLW Series victory this past May. The Elk has an extraordinary number of laydowns along the banks and logjams on its flats, and it can produce all summer.

DECATUR FLATS

The section of Wheeler from the Interstate 65 bridge down to about the Browns Ferry Nuclear Power Plant is known as the Decatur Flats. In the early 2000s, when the area was loaded with grass, it was one of the best places to fish on the entire Tennessee River. Though not as productive now, it's still one of the best sections on the entire lake, with vast flats, offshore ledges and plenty of shallow cover along the banks.

DECATUR



WHEELER LAKE BREAKDOWN

LEARN ABOUT THE PLAYING FIELD FOR THE 2016 CUP

For the first time ever FLW will host its pinnacle event, the Forrest Wood Cup, on the Tennessee River in 2016. The host reservoir is Wheeler Lake in Huntsville, Ala., which is likely to be a challenging, yet worthy playing field for a late-summer championship event.

THE BRUSH BITE

By August on Wheeler, the ledges will have been pressured by the locals, making the brush pile bite one of the better options – more so than at any other Tennessee River impoundment. Productive brush piles can be found from one end of the lake to the other, and having a milk run of brush piles, with each capable of producing a keeper or two, just might be a championship strategy.

HUNTSVILLE

DITTO LANDING

Located at 2963 Ditto Landing Rd. in Huntsville, the takeoff site for the Cup is situated at the far upper end of the reservoir, just a short trip from Guntersville Dam.

I-65 BRIDGE

THE RIVER

The upper end of Wheeler from the Guntersville Dam west to about the Interstate 65 bridge is primarily a narrow river with just a few sweeping bends. The banks are lined with rock and wood that act as current breaks, though anglers can also sample a smattering of backwaters with shallow cover ranging from brush and laydowns to pads and bank grass.

THE TAILRACE

The tailrace below the Guntersville Dam is smaller than most on the Tennessee River. Though it can become crowded with boats quickly, the tailrace area can be a premier place to fish.

GUNTSVILLE DAM

Google earth

FACTS AND FIGURES: Length: 70 miles — Area: 67,000 acres — Shoreline: 1,000 miles — Age: 70 years

A QUICK HISTORY

One of nine reservoirs on the Tennessee River, Wheeler Lake was formed by the construction of Wheeler Dam in the 1930s. The dam was the second to be built by the Tennessee Valley Authority, following Norris, and the resulting reservoir is now sandwiched between Lake Guntersville and Wilson Lake.

Wheeler Lake is named for Joseph "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler, a U.S. Congressman and former cavalry general who led Confederate troops during the Civil War.

Along with Wilson and Pickwick, Wheeler covers Muscle Shoals, enabling barge traffic across the middle part of the Tennessee River system. Thus, its water level is kept reasonably stable, with seasonal fluctuation of 5 or 6 feet. ■



5 PROBABLE PATTERNS

TACTICS THAT WORK ON THE TENNESSEE RIVER IN LATE SUMMER

by Curtis Niedermier

The Forrest Wood Cup is slated for late summer on the Tennessee River, and likely there won't be many surprises with the techniques that anglers choose to use. What approach will produce the win, however, is a bit more unpredictable. Here are some patterns that could do it.

PATTERN 1 Ledges

Ideal Conditions

The current needs to flow for the ledges to turn on, especially with the amount of fishing pressure that Wheeler's ledges will receive this summer. These fish will be picked on.

Location on the Lake

Just about anywhere, but the lower end is traditionally the best zone. Mid-lake, there are offshore patterns on shell beds, stumps and the like.

Baits

Crankbaits, hair jigs, drop-shots, jigs, Texas rigs, Carolina rigs, spoons and swimbaits.

Potential to Win

If a pro can find a tucked-away school or two, this pattern has a lot of potential, but if anglers are sharing schools - especially on community holes where the fish have been pressured all summer - the potential for victory decreases.



Strike King 8XD

PATTERN 2 Brush Piles

Ideal Conditions

This pattern will almost certainly be in play, no matter the conditions.

Location on the Lake

There are brush piles everywhere, both in the creeks and on the main lake.

Baits

Texas rigs, jigs, spinnerbaits, topwater, swimbaits and under-spins.

Potential to Win

For an experienced brush pile angler or someone with good local help to locate a lot of brush, this pattern has very high potential to win. A milk run is needed to make it last four days. Current will help offshore, but there could be enough young-of-the-year bait in creeks to make creek brush better.



War Eagle Spinnerbait



Zoom Swimmer

PATTERN 3

The Tailrace

Ideal Conditions

There must be current, and a pro needs to get there early to beat the crowd.

Location on the Lake

The extreme upper end below Guntersville Dam.

Baits

Jigs, swimbaits and crankbaits.

Potential to Win

The tailrace can produce tournament-winning fish, but there might not be enough water to go around if a group of pros decides to run upstream and share the space. That said, outside of the best community holes directly below the dam, there could be a lesser-known winning spot a bit farther downstream where there's still a lot of felt current to attract bass.

PATTERN 4

Shallow Topwater

Ideal Conditions

Hot weather with sunshine, especially around bream beds.

Location on the Lake

Everywhere, though the creeks likely will be better. A morning schooling bite could take place on the main lake.

Baits

Frogs, popping frogs, poppers, buzzbaits and walking baits.

Potential to Win

It's hit or miss. The bream-bed pattern is a five-bites-a-day kind of deal, but the biggest bass in summer do tend to feed on bluegills up shallow. Where shad school up in the creeks, the morning topwater bite could be strong. Also, some backwaters house enough shallow grass and wood to potentially make this a winner regardless of the bluegill spawn and shad locations.



SPRO Bronzeye Pop

PATTERN 5

Pitching and Junk-Fishing

Ideal Conditions

Any and all weather conditions, though it's probably more likely to win if there's no current or bluegill spawn to support the other patterns mentioned.

Location on the Lake

Everywhere.

Baits

Jigs, Texas rigs, crankbaits, topwater, wacky rigs and tubes.

Potential to Win

This late in the summer, an old-fashioned junk-fishing approach could do it for a pro willing to burn a lot of fuel. That said, Brad Knight's 2015 Cup win proved that a shallow flipping bite - with finesse baits - can win out in just one key area, if the area is right. Inflowing water and stable water level would be necessary.



Zoom Brush Hog



10 QUESTIONS FOR FORREST WOOD

GET TO KNOW THE NAMESAKE OF FLW AND THE FORREST WOOD CUP

1. If you hadn't co-founded Ranger Boats with your wife, Nina, what would you have been?

A. Probably a general contractor. That's what I was doing at one point before we started making boats. If somebody wanted anything done, I'd bid on the job.

2. Who taught you how to fish?

A. My dad took me fishing a couple of times, but it was to catch fish to eat. Mainly I taught myself how to bass fish. Back then, pretty much everybody taught themselves because there wasn't much information handy to learn from.

3. What's your all-time favorite Ranger?

A. The current new model.

4. Your favorite boat color?

A. Red and silver.

5. What do you do in your spare time?

A. I go to sleep. Nina and I work most of the time. The only hobby I have is going to watch my great-grandkids playing ball.

6. What's your favorite type of bass?

A. I'll compromise by saying a LARGE smallmouth.

7. What's your favorite fishery?

A. Wherever I happen to be and the fish are biting. Fortunately, that could be just about everywhere now, thanks in part to laws that fishermen pushed like the Clean Water Act in the '60s.

8. What's your favorite way to catch bass?

A. Topwater fishing is my favorite, but I'd hedge my bet by having a jig handy.

9. Any favorite FLW tournaments come to mind?

A. Not really. They all have their own special stories. The thing I like best about going to any of our tournaments is getting the chance to make new friends and visit with some old friends.

10. Tournament fishing is more popular than ever. Did you ever think it would get as big as it has?

A. Not at first. None of us did, so it's gratifying to see the direction it's heading.

Fans will have the chance to meet Forrest Wood at the FLW Expo at the Von Braun Center during the Forrest Wood Cup.



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CUP CHAMPION COVERS

WHOSE PHOTO WILL GRACE THE COVER THIS YEAR?

The Forrest Wood Cup champion is immortalized in fishing lore each season. He's also immortalized on the cover of *FLW Bass Fishing* magazine.

Here are some of the recent Cup champs' covers. For the record, two champs – Michael Bennett (2008) and Randall Tharp (2013) – appeared on two magazine covers the years that they won the Cup.



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BRANDON PALANIUK
Photo by: Brandon Palaniuk

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SEE DUSTIN LYNCH LIVE



MUSIC SUPERSTAR, ANGLER TO PERFORM FREE CONCERT AT THE CUP AUG. 7



As if the final weigh-in of the Forrest Wood Cup needed any more excitement, FLW has lined up country music superstar Dustin Lynch to perform before Sunday's weigh-in begins. The concert, which is presented by WDRM - 102.1 FM Country, is free to attend and kicks off at 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 7 at Propst Arena in the Von Braun Center.

A native of Tullahoma, Tenn., Lynch is an avid outdoorsman. He recently sat down with FLW to chat about his love of fishing.

FLW: We've heard that you love the outdoors. Can you tell us about your fishing background?

DL: I started fishing with my dad at a young age and became completely addicted pretty early on because we would fish a "Monday-nighter" at a lake not far from my house. When I was old enough to drive I

fished most every evening solo when my dad couldn't join. Nothing better than a sunset soft-plastic bite!

FLW: Fishing and country music often cross paths. Do any of your songs mention going fishing?

DL: I've written plenty of songs that mention fishing and draw a lot of inspiration when writing from my time on the lake. However, up to this point no literal songs about fishing.

FLW: To be successful in music seems to require a lot of the same traits as success in tournament bass fishing: hard work, dedication, etc. Any chance we'll see you on the FLW Tour trail some day?

DL: I definitely wanted to chase fishing competitively at one point, but now I'm gonna stick to enjoying it as a hobby.



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WELCOME TO HUNTSVILLE

HAVE A GOOD TIME IN ROCKET CITY

by Curtis Niedermier

If you're coming to Huntsville for the 2016 Forrest Wood Cup, here's a quick guide to attractions in the area.

U.S. Space & Rocket Center – Learn about the history of NASA and space travel at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, Alabama's most popular attraction, which includes the Davidson Center for Space Exploration, Shuttle Park and Rocket Park. rocketcenter.com



Huntsville Botanical Garden – See more than 20 collections of plants, enjoy the nature center or walk in the nation's largest open-air butterfly house. hsvbg.org

Big Spring International Park – Relax in the sun in this vibrant green space in downtown Huntsville. A schedule of public events in the park is available on the Huntsville/Madison County CVB website, Huntsville.org.



GRUB ON

You gotta eat, right? Of course, and you shouldn't have to settle for just any food while you're in town.

To find a dining spot that's just the right fit for your tastes, Huntsville.org features a searchable database of more than 2,700 restaurants in the Huntsville/Madison County area.

ROCKET CITY HISTORY

With the Tennessee River in its backyard and a budding railroad industry, Huntsville was a center of commerce even before the Civil War. Luckily, the city was spared from great damage during the conflict between the states, and visitors can still see graffiti from the Civil War era on the walls of one of the nation's oldest railroad depots, plus one of the largest concentrations of antebellum homes in the region (look up the Twickenham Historic District if you want to peep at some beautiful old homes).

In the wake of the Civil War, Huntsville became a center for textile manufacturing and eventually the heart of U.S. space exploration in the mid-20th century when NASA and the Marshall Space Flight Center landed in town – earning the community the nickname "Rocket City USA."

Now, Huntsville is a hub of academia with three universities in town, plus the Cummings Research Park, which is one of the nations' largest research facilities. Engineers, doctors, students and more from more than 300 companies operate within the park.

Learn more at Huntsville.org.



Burritt on the Mountain – Hike and explore Round-Top Mountain, or learn about life in the 19th century at this restored mansion and farm. burrittonthemountain.com

Huntsville Museum of Art – Scope some of the finest work from regional and national artists at the museum, which is located in Big Spring International Park. hsvmuseum.org



LEARN MORE ABOUT HUNTSVILLE

Hosting an event such as the Forrest Wood Cup isn't possible without great local partners, and the Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau has been key in executing the Wheeler Lake event. The folks there can also help you with trip planning. Learn more by calling 256.551.2230, or visit Huntsville.org.





HOW TO FISH A BRUSH PILE

THE KEYS TO THIS POSSIBLE CUP-WINNING TECHNIQUE

by Curtis Niedermier

Brush piles have factored into Forrest Wood Cup victories several times over the years, which isn't surprising considering that late summer is brush pile season in many parts of the South. This year's championship at Wheeler might be setting up to be a brush-fishing battle too.



Walmart FLW Tour pro Luke Dunkin, of Lawrenceburg, Tenn., offers some insight on the brush pile bite specific to Wheeler.

Walmart FLW Tour pro Luke Dunkin, of Lawrenceburg, Tenn., offers some insight on the brush pile bite specific to Wheeler.

The Brush

Generally the "fuller" the piece of brush is, the more habitat it can provide for minnows, which attract bass. Willow trees, for example, have dense boughs. Green, leafy "fresh trees" offer ample cover too. Dunkin likes both, but he says old trees and other types of cover that've been planted by anglers are good too.

"To me, it's just about finding one in the right depth. Any kind of tree to me can be good," he says. "Some trees they'll get around, and some they won't."

For the Cup, Dunkin suspects that brush piles in the 15- to 20-foot range will be the sweetest, though shallower brush could produce too.

Location

In late summer, Dunkin looks for brush in close proximity to deep water. He prefers that it be on a drop-off. Large ledges generally don't need brush to hold fish. The current, shad and bottom structure are enough. Many of his better brush piles he's located on out-of-the-way spots that other anglers miss or don't fish in late summer: the deep edge of a flat, secondary points in creeks and drops in the mouths of pockets in large creeks.

"Contour helps," Dunkin adds. "It's something they're traveling. I think they run those contour lines a lot."

Finding Brush

Modern electronics make it a lot easier to find brush piles because a treetop looks just like a treetop on a down-view sonar whereas it used to look like nothing more than a blob. The sonar will usually also reveal bass or bait in or around the brush. The presence of a bait school is often enough to convince Dunkin to fish the spot.

In water shallower than 10 feet, however, fish might spook from the boat overhead. In that case, Dunkin will sometimes leave the brush and come back later once it's had time to settle.

Fish the Brush

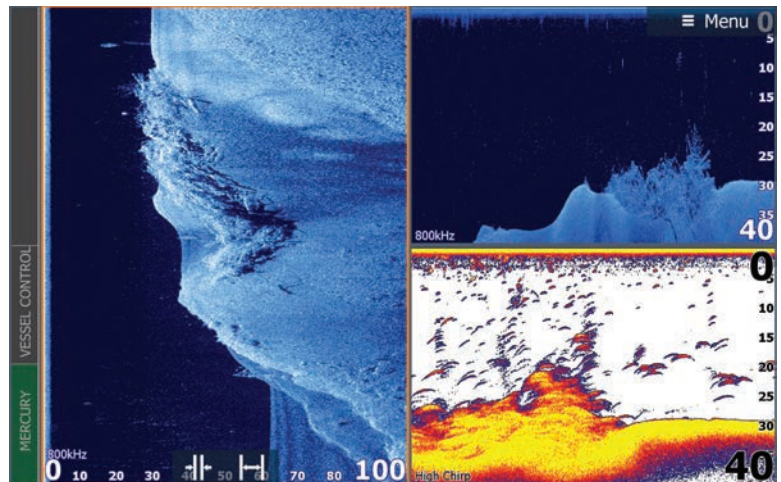
Dunkin prefers to use landmarks to align his boat, but a buoy dropped off to the side can help too.

His presentation is pretty simple: Starting with a Texas-rigged worm, he casts past the brush, then pulls the bait back to the cover and "feels his way around" the branches.

If he doesn't get a bite after a few casts, he switches to a heavier jig to get a little deeper into the brush.

In and Out

According to Dunkin, most brush pile bites come as soon as the bait hits the cover. If he doesn't get bit, he'll make a few casts, but he doesn't bombard the brush over and over and expect to get bit. ■



Down- and side-viewing sonar will be critical for locating Wheeler Lake's brush piles. Here's an example of what pros will be looking for during the Cup.

TACTICAL APPROACHES TO SEASONAL CHALLENGES

TECHNIQUES



WHAT'S INSIDE

- HAIR JIG TACTICS
- FISHING MICRO-FLATS IN LATE SUMMER

PHOTO BY MATT PACE

HAIR JIG TACTICS

MAKE THIS CLASSIC JIG WORK FOR OFFSHORE BASS

by Curtis Niedermier

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT PACE

Whether you call them bucktails or hair jigs, a lead-head jig with a skirt of fur and feathers is an old-school lure that's undergoing a big-time resurgence in offshore ledge fishing. Walmart FLW

Tour pro Michael Neal of Dayton, Tenn., is among the elite when it comes to ledge fishing, and he's devised three productive techniques for getting bites with a hair jig.



PHOTO BY ROB NEWELL

ON FEATHERS AND FUR

Neal's go-to jig maker won't tie hair jigs with feathers, so he's only recently started experimenting with feathers in his jigs. Previously, he's relied on other means of adding bulk and attraction.

"I've got two that I'll throw that don't have feathers," Neal says. "On one, I'll put a 5-inch Big Bite Baits Jerk Minnow in pearl. The other has real bucktail, as long as I can find, and it has some synthetic hair in with it that's 7 inches long that takes the place of feathers.

"The longer hair acts like feathers. It kind of floats around behind it more. That Jerk Minnow doesn't move; it just stays still. The feathers or a substitute are a little more aggressive. They help more when hopping it or doing something with the rod tip to make it pulsate."

THE JIGS

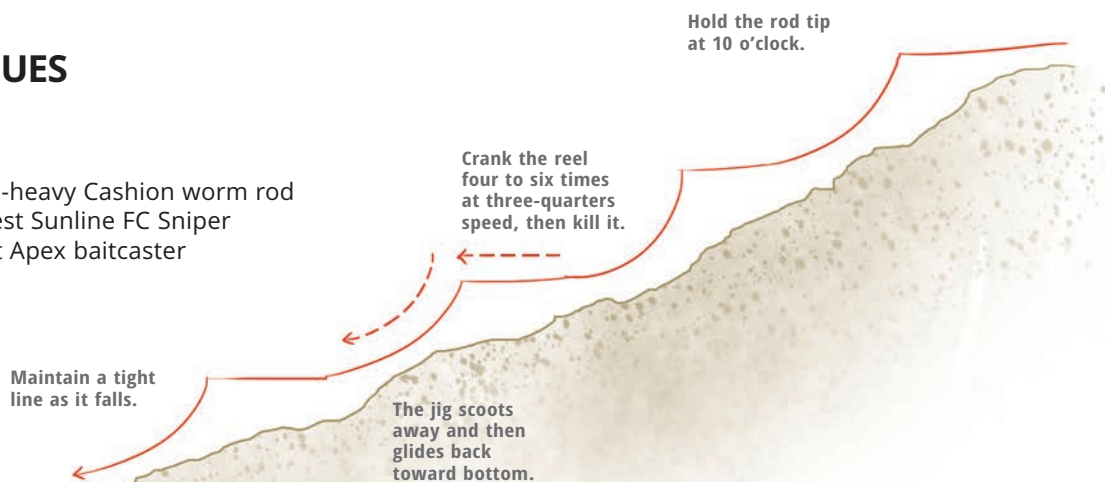
1-OUNCE HOMEMADE JIG WITH BUCKTAIL AND 7-INCH-LONG SYNTHETIC HAIR

1/2-OUNCE WHITE HOMEMADE JIG WITH 5-INCH BIG BITE BAITS JERK MINNOW TRAILER

THE TECHNIQUES

1. Reel and Kill

Jig: 1/2 ounce
Rod: 7-3, medium-heavy Cashion worm rod
Line: 12-pound-test Sunline FC Sniper
Reel: 6.5:1 Ardent Apex baitcaster



2. Slow-Roll

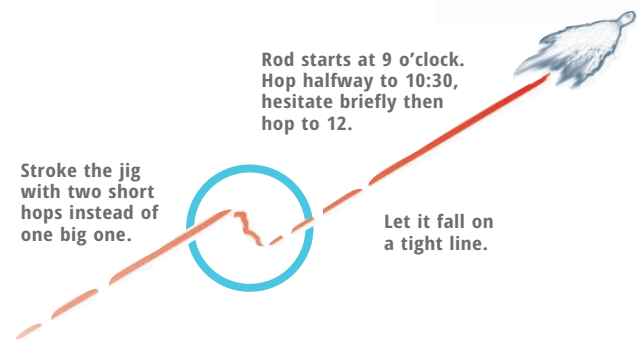
Jig: 1 ounce
Rod: 7-6, medium-heavy Cashion F90476 flipping stick
Line: 20-pound-test Sunline FC Sniper
Reel: 6.5:1 Ardent Apex baitcaster

Wind slowly to keep the jig near bottom.

Stop and let it sink every five to seven cranks.

3. Double-Stroke

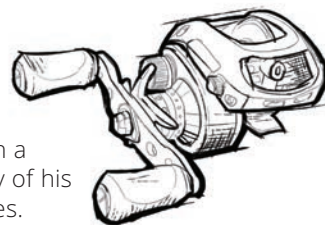
Jig: 1 ounce
Rod: 7-6, medium-heavy Cashion F90476 flipping stick
Line: 20-pound-test Sunline FC Sniper
Reel: 6.5:1 Ardent Apex baitcaster



6.5:1

Though reels with high retrieve ratios have their fans, Neal relies on a 6.5:1 reel for many of his offshore techniques.

"It allows you to slow down if you want to slow down," he says. "You can burn it plenty fast enough with a 6, but if you want to fish it slow, close to the bottom, you can still do that as well."



FISHING MICRO-FLATS IN LATE SUMMER

SMALL OFFSHORE STRUCTURES ATTRACT OVERLOOKED BASS

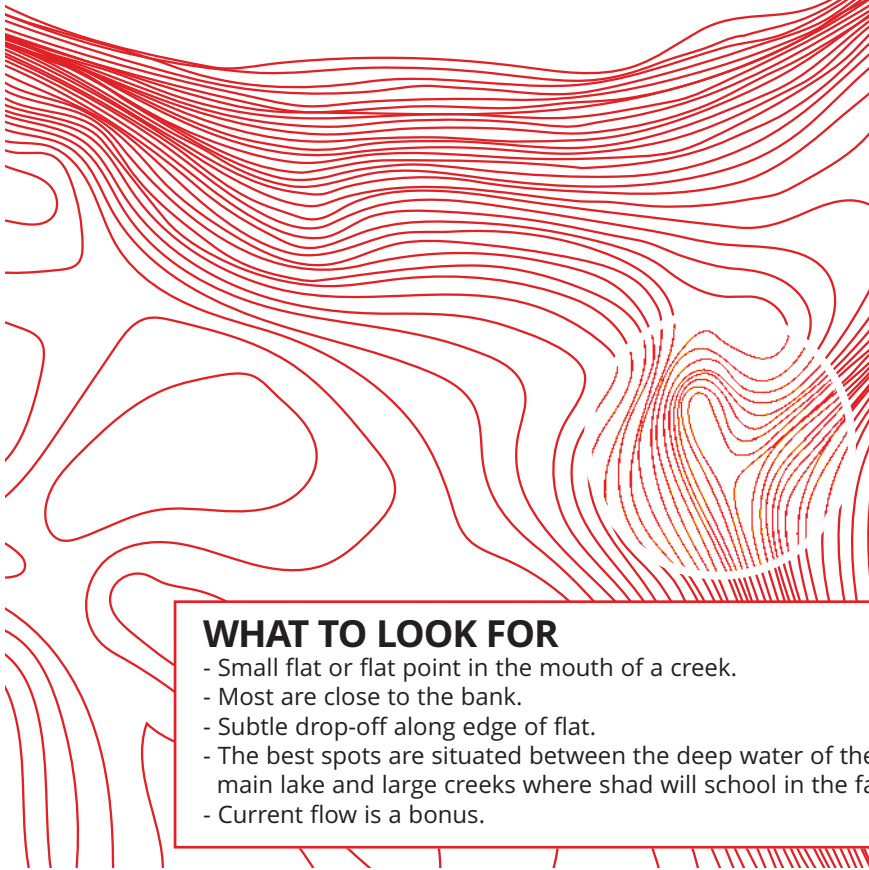
by Curtis Niedermier

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT PACE

By late summer and early fall, bass on obvious offshore structures have been picked on to the point that many anglers resort to dragging dropshots or needling through brush piles just to get bites.

If you want to stick with the power-fishing approach, consider adopting a run-and-gun tactic on small micro-flats instead.

.....



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Small flat or flat point in the mouth of a creek.
- Most are close to the bank.
- Subtle drop-off along edge of flat.
- The best spots are situated between the deep water of the main lake and large creeks where shad will school in the fall.
- Current flow is a bonus.

KEY BAITS



TACTICS AND STRATEGY

Numbers

The key is to locate a series of small micro-flats, which you might also call micro-ledges or micro-drops, because their outer edges drop off into deeper water. Most drops aren't as distinct or as distinguishable as on "more noticeable" ledges.

Presentation

Fishing them is pretty simple. Position out off the drop, cast up top, and work the bait across the flat and down the drop. Be sure to fish the entire structure, from the bank to the bottom, because bass are as likely to hug the shoreline as hang out along the edge.

Time Management

These are generally one- or two-fish spots, so be thorough with your coverage, but don't waste too much time on each stop.

3 MORE OPTIONS FOR LATE SUMMER

- 1. Brush** - Fishing brush piles is a classic late-summer technique. Use a Texas-rigged worm or spinnerbait.
- 2. Shad schools** - The morning top-water bite can be primo around main-lake points and flats or in the creeks where bass are chasing shad.
- 3. Docks and stake beds** - Shallow cover can draw in a surprising number of late-summer bass that are enjoying easy meals in the form of schools of young-of-the-year shad. A swim jig is hard to beat.



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FLW TOURNAMENT COVERAGE AND RESULTS

ON TOUR



WHAT'S INSIDE

- LAMBERT SMASHES RECORDS AT KENTUCKY LAKE
- HOW SCOTT MARTIN WON HIS THIRD CHAMPLAIN TITLE
- ALL-AMERICAN REVIEW: LAWYER'S WINNING PATTERN

PHOTO BY JODY WHITE



KENTUCKY LAKE – JUNE 9-12

PRESENTED BY
MERCURY
 OFFICIAL ENGINE

Hosted by Kentucky Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau

MASTER OF LEDGES

Lambert wins Kentucky Lake ledge-fest in record fashion

A final-day flurry pushed Lambert's limit to 29 pounds and his four-day total to 97-02 — a new Tour record at Kentucky Lake.



PHOTO BY KYLE MOOD

by David A. Brown

Overall, Jason Lambert finds that ledge fishing on Kentucky Lake is far less constrained than on his home waters of Pickwick Lake. Nevertheless, the Tennessee pro knows that when Kentucky Lake turns stingy with its bass, picking the lock requires analytic thought and strategic presentations.

This he did to the tune of daily bags weighing 18-09, 24-04, 25-05 and 29-00 at the fifth stop of the Walmart FLW Tour. Tallying a new Kentucky Lake four-day record weight (see page 14) of 97-02 – with nearly an 8-pound margin of victory – earned Lambert a \$125,000 payday.

Notably, Lambert didn't bother seeking untouched schools. He actually leveraged the fact that most of the

more obvious mega-schools were taking a constant bombardment from other pros.

"I think for the most part the fish I was catching were small groups broken off of those big mega-schools," Lambert says. "They're getting pressure, pressure, pressure every day. I wasn't fishing with other people. I was fishing around other people. My fish were sitting on the same bar as the mega-school, only 100 to 200 yards north or south."

To dial in, Lambert idled the perimeter of the schools until he located a small group of fish that had splintered off the main body. These fish, he surmised, would go largely undetected and, therefore, offered greater opportunity.

"I had one school that was on the current-facing point of

TOP FIVE

1. JASON LAMBERT PICKWICK DAM, TENN.

Total Weight: 97-02 (20 fish)

Winnings: \$125,000*

*Includes \$25,000 Ranger Cup

2. BRANDON HUNTER BENTON, KY.

Total Weight: 89-06 (20 fish)

Winnings: \$30,000

3. MARK ROSE WEST MEMPHIS, ARK.

Total Weight: 80-04 (20 fish)

Winnings: \$25,000

4. JAYME RAMPEY LIBERTY, S.C.

Total Weight: 79-05 (20 fish)

Winnings: \$20,000

5. SCOTT CANTERBURY SPRINGVILLE, ALA.

Total Weight: 78-01 (20 fish)

Winnings: \$19,000

Lambert seemed to hit all the right places when the fish were most active in their feeding.



PHOTO BY CURTIS NIEDERMIER

a creek channel, and once they started getting pounded, they shifted to the south [upcurrent] side of the same creek channel," Lambert recalls. "I know it's the same fish; it's not a new group of fish that came out there. They were getting pounded, so they shifted to something that was really similar. It was a safe haven, basically."

Working the Numbers

Covering a 70-mile range from Kentucky Dam down to Richland Creek in Tennessee, Lambert hit about 25 to 30 spots. He mostly targeted river bends and points where a creek channel met the river channel. He never found any "champ" spots that could win a tournament alone. Instead, he hole-hopped. And it wasn't until day four that he was really able to light it up.

CONDITIONS

Weather: sunny, hot, humid and calm all four days

Air Temperature: mid-60s to upper 90s; heat index of 100-plus

Water Temperature: upper 70s to low 80s

Moon Phase: waxing crescent

Predominant Lake Features: river-channel ledges, points, humps, stumps, shell beds

"There wasn't any one particular place I caught them good every day, but there was a place every day where I caught a couple of key fish," Lambert adds. "I never caught a great big one – my biggest fish all week until day four was 5 1/2 pounds – and I never got one of those Kentucky Lake schools fired up until Sunday afternoon. With only 10 of us fishing [on the final day], I had actually fished that school and caught a 3 1/2-pounder, but I came back over them later in the day and it was lights out. I absolutely crushed them for about 30 minutes."

This exemplifies one of his rules for offshore fishing: Let 'em rest. With miserably hot conditions and little current or wind, the only thing that would put the fish back into feeding mode was downtime.

"I think that with these ledge fish, there are windows that open, and when they feed, they all feed," Lambert explains. "That's not to say you can't catch a fish or two at any time, because that's kind of what I did the first three days. I caught one or two fish off a spot, and it was over. It's really hard to put a finger on why they trigger. I do know that if you have a school that has quality

fish, it's imperative that if they don't bite that you cycle back through them in a couple of hours."

This freshening-up period allows the fish to settle back down, relax, regroup and get their appetites back online. Lambert could actually discern a school's disposition from their proximity.

"It's almost impossible to catch them when you see them and there are two here, two there, three over there," he says. "But when they're in a group – five, 10, 30 or however many – most of those fish will feed if they've had time to get fresh."

Lambert says community holes seldom enjoy such refreshment periods, as the fish see a constant stream of baits from boats moving in and off. The tournament's final day brought a different picture.

Every fish he weighed on day four came off big schools and community holes. It was part of Lambert's strategy. On Sunday, about the only tournament pressure was from the 10 guys who made the cut at the Tour event. Coupled with extreme heat that kept the locals away, low angling pressure freed up some key spots.

That gave Lambert free run of the area he was fishing.

"I could fish like 15 schools within sight of each other, and there was no fishing pressure on them at all," he says. "They'd had the whole day to sit there, and by the time I got there around 10:30 or 11 o'clock, I could catch two or three fish out of every school I pulled up on."

Bait Plan

Although he caught some of his keepers on a Castaic Heavy Metal Spoon and a V&M J-Proz Series J-Mag Worm on a 5/8-ounce V&M Pacemaker shaky-head jig, Lambert did most of his damage with a 1-ounce Scrounger head fitted with a 7-inch green shad Castaic Jerky J. The straight-tail bait working in concert with the Scrounger's wobble presented a look that was less-intrusive, yet more intriguing.

"A traditional paddle-tail swim-bait is a little more aggressive in the water, but that straight tail is a little more subtle," he says. "It's almost like finesse power fishing. It's still a great big bait, but it's a softer vibration than a paddle tail, and it's something that I don't think a lot of people use."

On its own, the Jerky J offers little motion, but the Scrounger imparts enough wiggle to overcome this deficit. Maintaining bottom contact is the only key to the presentation.

For the big shaky head and the Jerky J, Lambert used a 7-foot, 10-inch, extra-heavy Duckett Micro Magic rod with a 6.3:1 Duckett 360RW reel and 17-pound-test Vicious Pro Elite fluorocarbon. For the big spoon, he used a 7-foot, 8-inch Duckett White Ice Series flipping rod with a 7.1:1 360RW and 20-pound-test fluoro.



PHOTO BY MATT PAGE

"I threw the spoon and the shaky head a lot the first two days when I couldn't get the fish to bite the moving bait," Lambert says. "On day two, I spent the last couple of hours trying to build confidence in that swimbait [Jerky J] because days three and four we fished by ourselves and we didn't have a net guy. That spoon is very likely to lose one for you. So I fished a big single-hook swimbait to avoid catastrophe."

HORTON TOPS CO-ANGLER FIELD



PHOTO BY JODY WHITE

Co-angler Mark Horton of Nicholasville, Ky., faced two different scenarios on Kentucky Lake, but he adapted well and sacked up the winning total of 33 pounds, 8 ounces to claim the \$25,250 top prize.

Paired with Jacob Wheeler on day one, Horton caught five keepers at a community hole by fishing a morning dawn 6-inch Roboworm on a drop-shot with a 3/8-ounce weight and also a 3/8-ounce shaky head with a 9-inch plum NetBait Super T-Mac. With limits secured, Wheeler went looking for quality by long-lining crankbaits in deep water, and Horton took advantage of a golden opportunity to upgrade using a deep-diving Z-Boss crankbait, Nichols Magnum Spoon and football jig to compile the 21-05 sack that fueled his victory.

For day two, Horton fished with Jason Meninger and spent the entire day on a flat adjacent to where a creek channel intersected the main river channel in 20 to 24 feet of water. The fish were scattered across the broad area, and Horton caught all of his fish on a wacky-rigged redbug Zoom Magnum Trick Worm with an O-ring, 1/0 Roboworm Rebarb hook and 1/8-ounce nail weight in the tail.

"I think it was just something different," Horton says of his bait choice. "My boater had four different variations of a morning dawn Roboworm on a drop-shot – different sizes, wacky-rigged, Texas-rigged. I don't like to fish the same thing as my boater, so I wanted to give them a different look." ■

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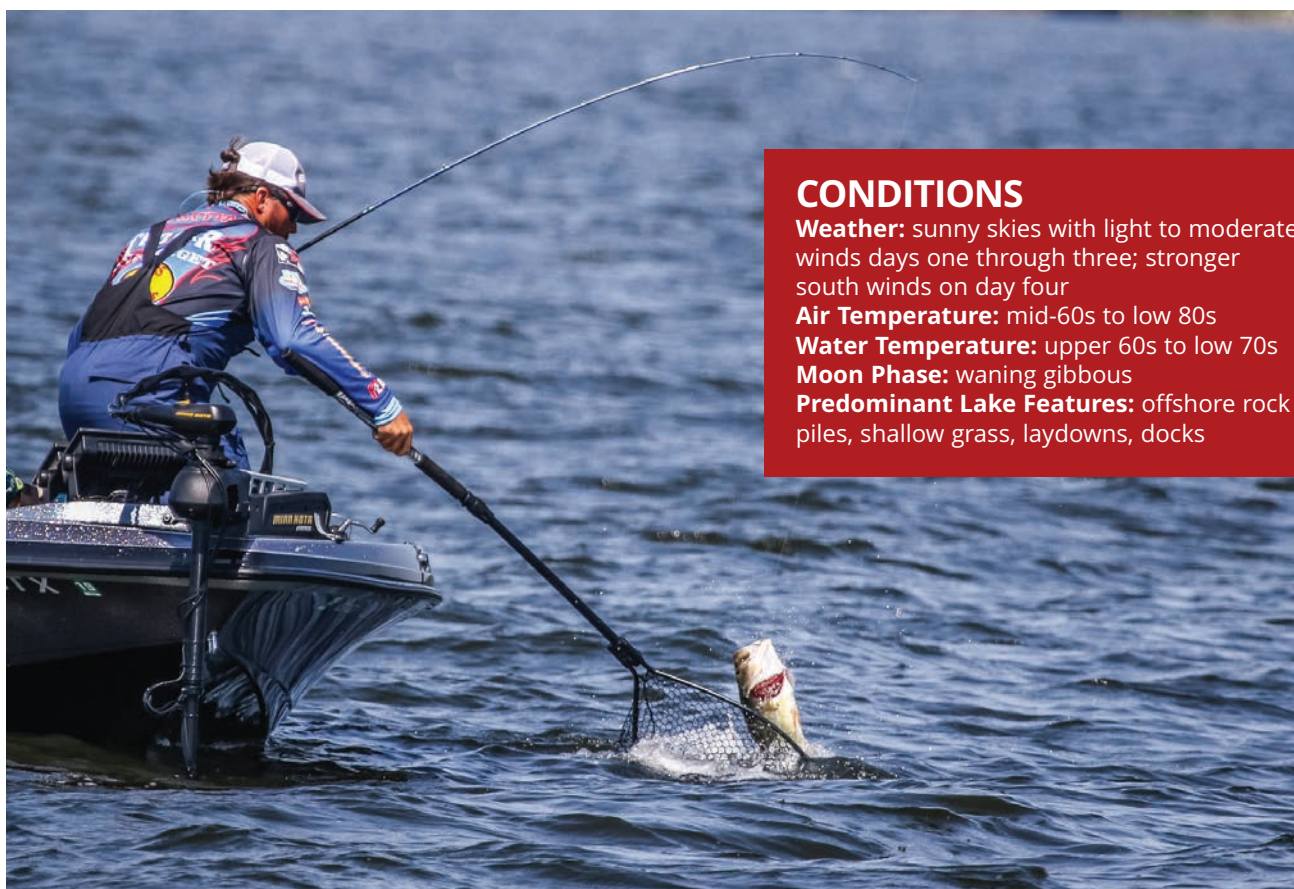


LAKE CHAMPLAIN – JUNE 23-26

PRESENTED BY



Hosted by City of Plattsburgh and Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau



CONDITIONS

Weather: sunny skies with light to moderate winds days one through three; stronger south winds on day four

Air Temperature: mid-60s to low 80s

Water Temperature: upper 60s to low 70s

Moon Phase: waning gibbous

Predominant Lake Features: offshore rock piles, shallow grass, laydowns, docks

PHOTO BY KYLE WOOD

STILL THE MAN AT CHAMPLAIN

Scott Martin gets his third Tour victory up north

by Rob Newell

One Walmart FLW Tour win on a particular lake could be chalked up to a strong pattern and getting a few good breaks at the right times.

Winning two on a particular lake demonstrates a strong understanding of that fishery, constituting an advantage.

But to win three Tour events on the same lake, now we are talking about master's status.

In June, Scott Martin of Clewiston, Fla., earned his third FLW Tour win on Lake Champlain, proving that he is among the masters when it comes to Champlain in the summer.

His two previous Tour wins on the "Sixth Great Lake" came in June 2004 and July 2009.

Martin now holds records for the most FLW Tour wins with six, and the most Tour wins on a single lake with three.

Looking Back

A brief look back at Martin's two previous Champlain wins is sort of a prerequisite to better understand how he "strategized" his way to win No. 3.

"Lake Champlain is a real strategy lake," Martin says. "What I mean by that is sometimes tournaments are more about strategy than technique. At Champlain I can utilize the two species – smallmouth and largemouth – across four days to formulate a strategy that has a better chance at winning than just saying, 'Hey, let's just go fishing and see what happens.'"

Martin's 2004 win came as a result of what he calls "the smallmouth numbers game," which involves sizing up dozens upon dozens of bedding smallmouths during practice to see which ones are slightly bigger than the others. If he finds 50 or 60 smallmouths on beds during a day of practice, he carefully identifies which 10 to 15 percent of them are slightly bigger than the rest by catching fish and weighing them.

"If I have a pod of smallmouths bedding in one little area and one of them weighs just 2 or 3 ounces more than the other ones, that's the one I'm going to catch in the tournament," Martin details. "And when I roll in there during game time, I'm not looking at six or seven smallmouths wondering which one is the biggest. I know exactly which one it is. I catch it and move on to the next pod of bedders. It's all about efficiency."

Even if Martin's smallies are just 2 to 3 ounces bigger per fish over his competitors' fish, that's 10 to 15 ounces more per day and potentially 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 pounds better over the course of the tournament.

In 2009, Martin's win demonstrated his knowledge of Champlain's largemouths, specifically how they relate to reefs and isolated objects in the Missisquoi Bay region.

"Missisquoi reminds me of a teeny, tiny Okeechobee," Martin says. "In the summer, Okeechobee bass get out on off-

Scott Martin's combined stringer of hefty largemouths and smallmouths earned him his record-setting win.



shore rock piles and grass beds much like those Northern bass in Champlain. And if you can find one area that is maybe a little deeper or where the weeds are a little thicker or the rocks a little higher than the rest of the area, that's the juice."

Given Martin's knowledge of the numbers game for smallmouths and the northern portion of Champlain for largemouths, he was able to borrow from both wells of knowledge to formulate a strategy for his third win.

This Time

When the FLW Tour visited Champlain in June, the water was 2 to 3 feet lower than normal, and the water temperature was hovering in the 68- to 72-degree range. Both largemouths and smallmouths were at the end of their spawning cycle. There were still plenty of smallmouths on beds, but they were a smaller class of late spawners, and the better ones on beds had already lost weight from spawning.

From this, Martin figured the best smallmouth bag he could "assemble" would top out at maybe 18 pounds.

"At that point I knew pure smallmouths would not contend for the win like they do earlier in June when they're fatter during that prespawn-to-spawn stage," he says. "Largemouths were going to be needed to push a bag past that 20-pound range."

But when Martin went to sample his largemouth lairs in Missisquoi, the pattern was not as strong as it was in 2009.

"I think the lower water may have hurt my Missisquoi deal," Martin says. "I have a lot of isolated targets in Missisquoi that didn't have much water on them, so I lost a big part of my milk run in there."

Martin spent half of his practice logging bedding smallmouths in his GPS and the other half sampling targets in Missisquoi and decided to combine the two for a mixed bag.

"Once practice was over, I was caught in the middle," Martin explains. "Smallmouths weren't enough to win, and the largemouths were too inconsistent to bank on for four days. That's when I decided to use both parts of the equation for the tournament."

MIXED BAGS OR NOT

Martin won at Champlain by mixing smallmouths for consistency and largemouths for heft. Others who cobbled both species together to score a top 10 included Shin Fukae (third), David Dudley (fourth), Chris Johnston (fifth) and Wesley Strader (ninth).

Meanwhile, Austin Felix (sixth), Cody Meyer (eighth) and Stetson Blaylock (10th) stuck with bedding smallmouths, which got tough to catch on a windy day four. Jason Meninger (second) and Bryan Schmitt (seventh) made the long run to Ti, but both came up short the final day with a finesse and power approach, respectively.

TOP FIVE

1. SCOTT MARTIN
CLEWISTON, FLA.

Total Weight: 74-10 (20 fish)
Winnings: \$125,000*
*Includes \$25,000 Ranger Cup

2. JASON MENINGER
GAINESVILLE, GA.

Total Weight: 73-10 (20 fish)
Winnings: \$30,000

3. SHINICHI FUKAE
PALESTINE, TEXAS

Total Weight: 72-00 (20 fish)
Winnings: \$25,000

4. DAVID DUDLEY
LYNCHBURG, VA.

Total Weight: 71-00 (20 fish)
Winnings: \$20,000

5. CHRIS JOHNSTON
PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO

Total Weight: 69-15 (20 fish)
Winnings: \$19,500

Martin's winning formula was to start with a gamble on largemouths and save his smallmouths. If he could get out of the blocks on day one with a big largemouth lead, he would back himself up with smallmouths to hold on for the win, which is exactly how it played out.

Martin caught all largemouths on day one for 22 pounds, 5 ounces. The following day he brought in mostly largemouths for a 20-pound limit. On day three, he gave his Missisquoi largemouths a rest and picked on his premium smallmouth numbers for 16-05. On the final day, he picked up what was left of his best smallmouths while working his way to Missisquoi, then nabbed a couple of 3 1/2-pound largemouth kickers for 16 pounds even to win with a four-day total of 74-10.

"I love it when a plan comes together," Martin says. "Saving my smallmouth game until the third day and then being able to turn that smallmouth 'insurance policy' into a decent limit while letting Missisquoi rest was the ticket.



PHOTO BY JOEY WHITE

This lake requires a lot of careful fish management. It's all part of fishing a tournament-winning strategy."

Winning Elements

As far as techniques employed, Martin is the first to admit that there is not a lot of skill in catching bedding smallmouths on Champlain.

"They're so defensive, they'll bite just about anything," Martin says. "Finding the right size [fish] is what takes work. I covered miles of bedding flats in the 5- to 10-foot range in the Plattsburgh area of the lake, taking a lot of careful notes about which fish were the bigger ones."

During the tournament, Martin easily plucked the bedders with tubes, craws and Tightlines UV finesse worms.

When fishing in Missisquoi for largemouths, Martin used several lures, including a LIVETARGET Threadfin Shad crankbait on the offshore reefs, a vibrating jig in scattered milfoil and a LIVETARGET Frog Hollow Body on any matted vegetation he encountered. But above all, his most productive lure in the bay was a 1/2-ounce green pumpkin M-Pack jig teamed with a Tightlines UV Jig Trailer. He intentionally trimmed the jig's skirt way down to give the combo a more compact profile.

"The jig was the biggest adjustment I made this year," Martin says. "Last time I won, a crankbait was my go-to on the reefs. I caught a few key fish cranking this year, but that M-Pack jig was the deal everywhere I went in Missisquoi. I dragged it around on rock reefs, pitched it to docks, rocks, laydowns and even clumps of grass. For some reason they really liked that jig this time."

Martin also says that 10-foot Power-Poles were great aids in stealthily fishing the rock piles. He was able to lock down in 9 feet of water, far off the key spots, and accurately fish them. ■

GAGLIARDUCCI WINS CO-ANGLER TITLE WITH SMALLMOUTHS

Former Tour pro Al Gagliarducci of West Suffield, Conn., capitalized on being paired with two smallmouth-focused anglers on Lake Champlain to earn the co-angler win in the Tour's 2016 finale.

Fishing with Barry Wilson on day one and Glenn Chappelear on day two, Gagliarducci used a secret craw bait, which was given to him by pro Luke Dunkin, to pick off bedding and cruising smallmouths. The fish were aggressive and usually ate on the first cast. His limits weighed 18 pounds and 15-11, for a total weight of 33-11.

For the win, Gagliarducci earned \$20,000.



PHOTO BY ANDY HAGEDON

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by David A. Brown

PHOTOS BY JODY WHITE



WINNING ANGLER

CASEY SMITH
MACEDON, N.Y.

Stat Line: Smith fished his first FLW College Fishing tournament on the Potomac River in 2009. This win came in his first-ever Costa FLW Series event.

Tactics and Target Areas

On day one, Smith opted for the more active strategy of “chasing the tide,” which involved moving from spot to spot as the tide went out to stay on the outgoing stage that he preferred. He caught a good limit of 14 pounds, 14 ounces, but on day two he decided that parking on his most promising spot and working through the day’s water movement would work better.

Day two saw him camping on a large grass flat in about 4 feet of water outside the mouth of Aquia Creek, which was downriver from the tournament site in Mattawoman Creek. The entire area bore a lush mix of healthy hydrilla and milfoil, but dialing in a specific hot zone proved intrinsic to catching a 20-pound bag that gave him the lead.

“Adjacent to the flat is a hole that’s about 6 or 7 feet deep, and coming from the hole into the flat is a ditch that’s about a foot deeper than the rest of the flat,” Smith explains. “Right on the corner of where the ditch, the hole and the flat meet is a really good-looking milfoil grass bed. That’s what the fish were on. They would slide from the top of the flat down into the hole and use that ditch to travel.”

Considering that most tournament boats stayed near or north of the takeoff site in Mattawoman Creek and local traffic was minimal, Smith enjoyed free run of his spot on day one and, largely, on day two. This dream scenario facilitated his big limit.

“That was definitely important,” he adds. “On day two, my co-angler [Dean Gibbs] caught ‘em good too. I put the Power-Poles down, and we sat there and smashed ‘em for six hours. I could meander through the ditch and into that hole as I wanted. I could move off, let it rest and then move back onto it.”

Keys to Victory

Smith tried to match his bait colors to what the bass were likely eating. The grass held three different types of forage, all with a similar hue.

“There were these small 3-inch shad that were gray-colored, a lot of perch and fry, which I believe were bluegill fry,” he says. “Everything had a pale or gray hue to it, and that’s why I used the bluegill flash color for my swimbait.”

A “super-sensitive” rod with a good tip was important for determining the difference between bites and grass. Smith used a 7-foot, 6-inch, heavy-action Duckett Micro Magic bait-casting rod and 15-pound-test fluorocarbon line.

“Normally, I like to fish that bait on a 7-3 medium-heavy, but I was having some trouble getting them out of the grass, and that 7-6 was really important for getting them out of there,” he explains.

PRESENTATION KEYS

Smith found that his main spot offered a good morning and afternoon bite, but as is characteristic of tidal fisheries, consistency was elusive. Daylong diligence was essential. He had to keep baits in the water and keep fishing the entire time.

He reports a strong morning bite, when bait was in the area and the fish were active. Plus, the outgoing tidal stage provided a good bite. The tide bottomed out at about 10:30 on day one, 11:20 on day two and 12:10 on day three in his primary spot. After that, the action really slowed.

Day three saw Smith wrapping up his effort with a limit of 16 pounds, 8 ounces, most of which came on that morning tidal drop. His three biggest keepers – including a 5-pounder – bit within the first hour of competition.

During a late-morning lull, Smith briefly left his ditch area and worked an outside grass edge inside Aquia Creek. Only a glacial pace could tempt a bite, and doing so added one keeper.

“I had cast my worm, and I was drinking a bottle of water. When I stood up, I had one on,” Smith says. “That’s how slow it had to be. That’s the only reason I got that bite. With the nerves and other boats in my area on day three, I could not slow myself down enough. So, the only worm bite I got was when I stopped for a drink.”



Smith caught most of his fish on a 4.8-inch Keitech swimbait in bluegill flash rigged on a 6/0 wide-gap hook with a 1/4-ounce belly weight. He added a few more keepers on a 7/16-ounce Gambler Southern Swim Jig with a purple Yamamoto Swimming Senko, a 1/2-ounce watermelon ChatterBait with a Keitech Swing Impact trailer and an unweighted green pumpkin Yamamoto Senko.

CONDITIONS

Fishery Type: tidal river

Air Temperature: mid- to upper 80s on days one and two; low 90s on day three

Water Temperature: 76 to 84 degrees

Wind: NE at 5 to 10 mph on day one; E-NE at 10 to 15 mph on day two; NE at 5 mph on day three

Precipitation/Cloud Cover: cloudy with occasional light rain on days one and two; mostly sunny and warm on day three

Moon Phase: waxing gibbous

Water Clarity: from several inches to 2 feet depending on wind, flow and vegetation

Predominant Lake Features: shallow wood, grass, docks and ditches



CO-ANGLER CHAMP

DAVID WILLIAMS

FREDERICKSBURG, VA.

Total Weight: 44-15 (15 fish)

Winning Program: A big day-two limit of 16 pounds, 7 ounces lifted David Williams to the lead, and capitalizing on his final-round opportunities allowed him to run away with the co-angler win.

Williams relied mostly on a SPRO popping frog in the leopard frog pattern and occasionally backed that up with a Dave’s Tournament Tackle swim jig with a Zoom Super Chunk trailer. Making long casts across the milfoil, Williams worked the frog with a mixed cadence of repetitive pops and pauses. ■

TOP FIVE

1. CASEY SMITH
MACEDON, N.Y.

Total Weight: 51-06 (15 fish)
Winnings: \$39,208

2. CHARLIE MACHEK
MIDLOTHIAN, VA.

Total Weight: 49-11 (15 fish)
Winnings: \$15,481

3. RON NELSON
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICH.

Total Weight: 48-02 (15 fish)
Winnings: \$11,763

4. AARON HASTINGS
MIDDLETOWN, MD.

Total Weight: 47-00 (15 fish)
Winnings: \$9,802

5. BRYAN SCHMITT
DEALE, MD.

Total Weight: 45-12 (15 fish)
Winnings: \$9,110



ALL-AMERICAN

LAKE BARKLEY – JUNE 9-11 | Hosted by Cadiz-Trigg County Tourism

IT'S LAWYER ALL THE WAY

Missouri angler wins 2016 BFL All-American on Barkley

by Colin Moore

Fishing an almost flawless tournament under trying conditions, Missouri angler Jeremy Lawyer won the 2016 FLW Bass Fishing League All-American on Lake Barkley in June with a three-day total of 50 pounds, 12 ounces. It was his first All-American victory, but not his first time to finish near the top of the championship. Lawyer was runner-up in 2015 on Kentucky Lake, and his second-place finish there might be considered not so much a near miss as a promise of things to come. As if destined to be an All-American champion, the Missouri pro returned in 2016 as a qualifier from the BFL's powerful Ozark Division and proceeded to take control of the tournament in workmanlike fashion.

Lawyer, of Sarcoxie, Mo., eased into the lead on day one with 18 pounds, 6 ounces, then followed with a 14-

Jeremy Lawyer finished runner-up at the 2015 All-American, but rebounded in 2016 to win the title.



PHOTO BY KORY SAVAGE

pound, 12-ounce limit that gave him 33 pounds, 2 ounces. That put him more than 4 pounds ahead of another pre-tournament favorite, LBL Division stick Drew Boggs of Lebanon, Tenn. In the final round, Lawyer notched his third consecutive limit, 17-10, to turn back a challenge from eventual runner-up Todd Walters, who had 17-01 and finished with 44-10.

Bad Practice, Good Tournament

Lawyer spent six days pre-fishing for the tournament and summed up the results with one word: "lousy." He failed to catch a bass on two of those days, and expected bank fishermen such as Boggs to dominate the event unless conditions changed in his favor. Local anglers who visited the daily weigh-ins opined that the best fishing at Lake Barkley was still several days away because the water hadn't warmed up as quickly as nearby Kentucky Lake, and the schools of threadfin shad hadn't started congregating offshore up to that point.

For whatever reason, most of the contestants struggled to catch limits of any size and had to adjust their strategies as the tournament progressed. Prior to the off-limits period, Lawyer located spots where, experience told him, bass were likely to congregate as they transitioned from the spawning coves to the deeper ledges in the main lake. These included a variety of structure: stump- or brush-laden flooded points that butted up against creek channels, underwater humps with hard bottoms, and flats that were adjacent to places where a creek or river channel swung in close to



PHOTO BY CURTIS NIEDERMIER

the bank. Lawyer had waypoints on dozens of such spots, which was a good thing for him, because most of them were unproductive.

"I fished 40 or 50 places the first day to catch eight keepers," Lawyer says. "The biggest drawback is that there wasn't a lot of current being pulled. There was practically no current to activate the fish. It's not like Kentucky Lake where you can count on something happening at some point during the day

because of the current. Here it [the current] wasn't positioning the fish at all."

Spot on, and Lawyer's assessment characterized the entire tournament for everyone: lots of good places for feeding bass to be, but not many aggressive fish actually there.

"I ran to Dover [Tenn.] the first morning," Lawyer recalls. "Then I started back, fishing the spots I had saved. By Saturday, I was staying a lot closer to home."

Several other anglers who made the 20-mile run south to Dover, Tenn., with Lawyer also changed their minds about prospects there. In fact, it turned out that the Little River, where takeoff was held, probably produced most of the fish weighed in. The problem there and elsewhere for those who mined shoreline cover or skipped jigs under docks was not with the quantity of keepers they caught, but the quality. Only Lawyer seemed capable of boating a toad or two every day.

CONDITIONS

Weather: sunny in the mornings, with scattered clouds building during the afternoon

Air Temperature: upper 60s to upper 80s on day one; 70s to low 90s on days two and three

Water Temperature: low to mid-80s

Moon Phase: waxing crescent

Predominant Lake Features: docks; flooded willows and buck brush; chunk rock; scattered logs and branches washed against the main-lake bank; off-shore brush piles, stake beds, and stump beds in larger coves and bays

TOP FIVE

1. JEREMY LAWYER
SARCOXIE, MO.

Total Weight: 50-12 (15 fish)

Winnings: \$120,000

*Includes Ranger Cup bonus

2. TODD WALTERS
KERNERSVILLE, N.C.

Total Weight: 44-10 (15 fish)

Winnings: \$20,000

3. CLABION JOHNS
COVINGTON, GA.

Total Weight: 43-03 (15 fish)

Winnings: \$23,000*

4. JOHN VANORE
MULLICA HILL, N.J.

Total Weight: 40-07 (15 fish)

Winnings: \$21,000*

5. KYLE WEISENBURGER
OTTAWA, OHIO

Total Weight: 40-05 (15 fish)

Winnings: \$13,000



PHOTO BY KORY SAVAGE

Catch as Catch Can

The first day of the All-American, which involved 49 boaters and an equal number of co-anglers, Lawyer alternated among about a dozen baits, but wound up catching his keepers on four different baits that included a Bandit crankbait custom-painted in a herring pattern by Fallcreek Lures, a Zoom Brush Hog (green pumpkin, Texas-rigged), a Chompers Wobble Head with a Reaction Innovations Kinky Beaver and an unnamed football jig. His biggest fish in the opening round was a 5-pound, 4-ounce smallmouth that engulfed the Bandit in Taylor Bay, on the west side of the lake.

By the end of the second round, Lawyer had winnowed his lures to the Bandit and the Brush Hog, plus added a Zoom Magnum Trick Worm (green pumpkin with a dyed chartreuse tail) on a 3/8-ounce football jighead to his arsenal. In the final round, the Magnum Trick Worm accounted for one keeper in Hopson Creek and four more inside the mouth of Little River. One of those, which he caught at about 8 o'clock that morning, weighed 5-8.

Lawyer had been using the Magnum Trick Worm periodically the first two days, but switched to it almost exclusively late in the second round after his co-angler, John Farmer of Sherrills Ford, N.C., caught two solid keepers within minutes of each other on a shaky head.

"I was cranking; he was fishing a shaky head. He caught fish; I didn't," notes Lawyer. "That's all the encouragement I needed to fish a shaky head at that spot [the mouth of Little River] the last day – good thing."

SMITH WINS CO-ANGLER TITLE

Even fishermen have to suffer for their art sometimes. Wesley Smith, the All-American's co-angler champion, qualifies in that regard. On the practice day prior to the tournament, Smith's legs got so badly sunburned that he could barely walk the next morning. As painful as it was, it didn't keep him from fishing. His three-day haul of 11 bass that weighed a collective 26 pounds, 14 ounces earned him a \$50,000 paycheck.

Smith, of Vinemont, Ala., benefited from three great draws in the tournament, including eventual runner-up boater Todd Walters on day one, pre-tournament favorite Brent Anderson in the second round and third-place finisher Clabion Johns in the final round.

"I fished docks and shallow cover with Todd [Walters], and we never got out of sight of the state park," comments the 21-year-old. "I started out using a 1/2-ounce Strike King Denny Brauer Structure Jig that was green with some orange strands in the skirt, and a Strike King Rage Craw in green pumpkin blue [sapphire], and that's what I wound up fishing the whole tournament."

Smith says that sometimes he fished the jig in conventional fashion, hopping it along the bottom slowly, but that he also caught fish by swimming it through and around cover. He was in sixth place with four keepers and 8-15 after the opening round, then followed with three fish and 7-06 on day two. He and Anderson spent much of their time south of the Highway 68 bridge in Tennessee waters, fishing isolated stickups and buck brush.

In the final round, when he and Johns ranged from Fords Bay, which is south of the bridge, to Little River, Smith picked off the rare fish that Johns missed. That amounted to four fish and his best weight: 10-09.

"We fished the very back ends of coves and creeks, and I mean way back," says Smith. "We fished as far up in there as the Ranger would let us."

Smith qualified for the All-American by winning the co-angler title in the Lake Hartwell Wild Card tournament last year. He plans to fish the Choo Choo Division as a boater in 2017. ■



PHOTO BY KORY SAVAGE

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SLIPPERY ROCK SACKS ITS FIRST WIN

by Dominick Schenewerk

Maryland's Potomac River, where running tides and adjusting accordingly are keys to success, was the site of the second stop of the 2016 FLW College Fishing Northern Conference season. The top 10 weights were tight, but Logan Pollman and Tyler Sheppard of Slippery Rock University came out on top with 18 pounds, 1 ounce.

Pollman and Sheppard began their day just outside of the Mattawoman Creek launch site. They dropped the trolling motor and started slinging black Snag Proof Isha's Phat Frogs at any weeds that they could see.

"We were very surprised that there weren't more boats in there, and we shared that area with one boat for most of the day," says Sheppard, a senior majoring in biology "We pulled in, and within 10 casts had one close to 6 [pounds] in the boat."

Soon the tide began to recede, and it was time to switch techniques.

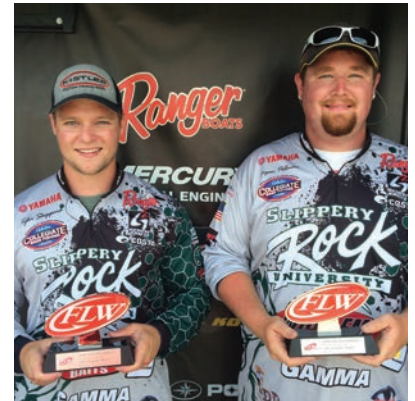
"The tide started high in the morning, and the spot that we were fishing had a good population of fish, so we didn't need to really run with the tide," says Sheppard. "As the tide dropped out the grass began to fold over, but the fish positioned themselves differently."

The fish relocated just off the folded grass and in or on top of the deeper submerged grass. The Slippery Rock anglers targeted them with a black and blue Buckeye Lures jig and a Tennessee shad-colored Keitech swimbait on a Buckeye Lures swim jig and were able to sporadically catch and cull throughout the day.

At 2 p.m., Pollman and Sheppard determined it was time to pull up the trolling motor and begin to head for weigh-in. Pollman, in the back of the boat, decided to toss his frog one last time.

"We were checking the time, and I was getting a little stressed because we were cutting it pretty close," recalls Pollman, a senior exercise science major. "I saw this one patch of grass, and I told Tyler I would cast in there one last time. I was walking it, and then I stopped it right on the piece of grass, and I heard that *whooph*."

Pollman's final catch added nearly a pound to the team's total weight, which sealed the deal and earned the victory along with \$2,000 and a berth in the 2017 FLW College Fishing National Championship. ■



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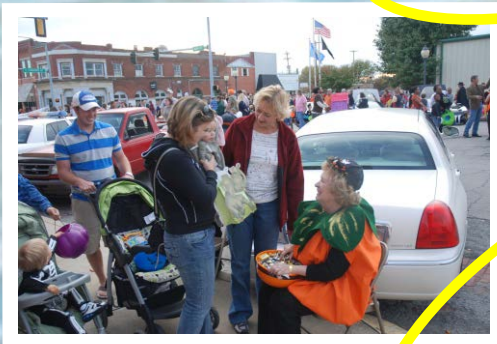
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TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Division	Arkie
Event Location	Lake Ouachita
Date	6/4
Winning Angler	Quincy Houchin
Hometown	Mabelvale, Ark.
Winning Pattern	Fished grass, wood and bushes in the mid- and upper lake
Winning Lures	white Heddon Zara Spook, leopard-colored SPRO Bronzeye Frog and perch-colored 6th Sense Lures jig
Winning Weight	15-13
Winning Co-Angler	David Tierney
Hometown	Fayetteville, Ark.
Winning Weight	12-02
Division	Bama
Event Location	Lay Lake
Date	6/25
Winning Angler	Coby Carden
Hometown	Shelby, Ala.
Winning Pattern	Began fishing shallow willow grass then hit main-river ledges
Winning Lures	SPRO Bronzeye Pop 60, citrus sparkle Livingston Lures Dive Master crankbait and junebug red Big Bite Baits Jeff Kriet Squirrel Tail Worm
Winning Weight	18-02
Winning Co-Angler	Garrett Stevens
Hometown	McDonough, Ga.
Winning Weight	11-02
Division	Buckeye
Event Location	Indian Lake
Date	6/18
Winning Angler	Jim Vitaro
Hometown	Wooster, Ohio
Winning Pattern	Fished a 30-yard section of lily pads and milfoil on north end of the lake
Winning Lures	leopard frog-colored Strike King KVD Sexy Frog
Winning Weight	13-01
Winning Co-Angler	John Long
Hometown	New Bremen, Ohio
Winning Weight	9-02
Division	Great Lakes
Event Location	Wolf River Chain
Date	6/25
Winning Angler	Clayton Reitz
Hometown	Morton, Ill.
Winning Pattern	Fished offshore rock piles and seawalls
Winning Lures	green pumpkin Chompers Ultra Tube and 1/2-ounce chrome Blitz Lures Blitz Blade
Winning Weight	16-06
Winning Co-Angler	Matthew Frisk
Hometown	Sparta, Wis.
Winning Weight	11-13
Division	Hoosier
Event Location	Patoka Lake
Date	6/25
Winning Angler	Chris Martinkovic
Hometown	Hamilton, Ohio
Winning Pattern	Fished shallow bluegill beds and points
Winning Lures	bone-colored Heddon Zara Spook and green pumpkin football-head jig with a green pumpkin Zoom Ultra Vibe Speed Craw trailer
Winning Weight	18-14
Winning Co-Angler	Darron Read
Hometown	Elizabethtown, Ind.
Winning Weight	8-04

Division	Illini
Event Location	Lake Shelbyville
Date	6/18
Winning Angler	Donnie Dill
Hometown	Dieterich, Ill.
Winning Pattern	Targeted mid-lake points in 12 to 16 feet of water
Winning Lures	redbug Zoom Ol' Monster Worm, green pumpkin and brown Custom Craft jig and Yo-Zuri crankbait
Winning Weight	15-03
Winning Co-Angler	Benton Peoples
Hometown	Bardstown, Ky.
Winning Weight	11-03
Division	Michigan
Event Location	Detroit River
Date	6/25
Winning Angler	Scott Dobson
Hometown	Clarkston, Mich.
Winning Pattern	Targeted postspawn bass on flats and in current breaks in creek mouths
Winning Lures	chartreuse shad Lucky Craft Pointer jerkbait and sexy shad Keitech Swing Impact swimbait
Winning Weight	23-10
Winning Co-Angler	John Lovin
Hometown	Fayetteville, Ohio
Winning Weight	21-04
Division	Mississippi
Event Location	Ross Barnett
Date	6/4
Winning Angler	Timmy Smith
Hometown	Petal, Miss.
Winning Pattern	Dragged ledges and humps and picked apart brush piles
Winning Lures	Carolina-rigged plum apple Zoom Ol' Monster and green pumpkin Strike King Rage Craw on a green pumpkin jig
Winning Weight	20-04
Winning Co-Angler	Tim White
Hometown	West Point, Miss.
Winning Weight	16-09
Division	Mountain
Event Location	Barren River
Date	6/18
Winning Angler	Chris Gerrein
Hometown	Villa Hills, Ky.
Winning Pattern	Fished a channel swing in 6 to 8 feet of water near Browns Ford ramp
Winning Lures	Strike King Pro-Model 5XD crankbait
Winning Weight	23-02
Winning Co-Angler	John Vice
Hometown	Owingsville, Ky.
Winning Weight	17-10
Division	North Carolina
Event Location	Lake Wylie
Date	6/18
Winning Angler	Joseph Marks
Hometown	Duncan, S.C.
Winning Pattern	Rotated through five brush piles on the lower end of the lake
Winning Lures	morning dawn Roboworm and green pumpkin custom jig
Winning Weight	16-03
Winning Co-Angler	Tommy Swicegood
Hometown	Salisbury, N.C.
Winning Weight	12-13

Division	Okie
Event Location	Fort Gibson Lake
Date	6/18
Winning Angler	Steve Sommer
Hometown	Norman, Okla.
Winning Pattern	Fished a main-river hump
Winning Lures	plum Zoom Ol' Monster and watermelon red Zoom Brush Hog
Winning Weight	20-09
Winning Co-Angler	Benny Williams Jr.
Hometown	Poteau, Okla.
Winning Weight	19-02
Division	Ozark
Event Location	Table Rock Lake
Date	6/25
Winning Angler	Kelly Power
Hometown	Cape Fair, Mo.
Winning Pattern	Targeted suspended bass in the James River
Winning Lures	Hog Farmer swim jig rigged with a pearl Keitech swimbait
Winning Weight	16-07
Winning Co-Angler	Stephen Delgado
Hometown	Lee's Summit, Mo.
Winning Weight	13-08
Division	Shenandoah
Event Location	Chickahominy-James River
Date	6/4
Winning Angler	Derek Brown
Hometown	Charlottesville, Va.
Winning Pattern	Fished lily pads and wood
Winning Lures	Lobina Lures Rico and junebug Zoom Trick Worm on a shaky head
Winning Weight	18-04
Winning Co-Angler	David Williams
Hometown	Fredericksburg, Va.
Winning Weight	13-07
Division	South Carolina
Event Location	Lake Wateree
Date	6/4
Winning Angler	Chuck Howard
Hometown	Elloree, S.C.
Winning Pattern	Fished mid-lake grass and docks
Winning Lures	black and blue Dirty Jigs swim jig and junebug Zoom Trick Worm
Winning Weight	17-11
Winning Co-Angler	David Hunt
Hometown	Camden, S.C.
Winning Weight	17-11
Division	Volunteer
Event Location	Cherokee Lake
Date	6/4
Winning Angler	Brant Grimm
Hometown	Church Hill, Tenn.
Winning Pattern	Fished shallow bars and flats in the Holston River where bass were feeding on shad
Winning Lures	Foolin' Bass Custom Baits swim-bait
Winning Weight	17-15
Winning Co-Angler	Ty Ball
Hometown	Rogersville, Tenn.
Winning Weight	11-02

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by Dan Johnson

WHAT'S MAKING NEWS IN THE BASS FEDERATION

THREE DIVISION CHAMPIONSHIPS IN THE BOOKS

At press time, the dust had settled on three of The Bass Federation's seven Division Championships set for 2016. As expected, each event provided hard-fought competition as TBF anglers battled for bragging rights and coveted berths in the 2017 TBF National Championship.

A Northwestern Slugfest

The action began May 11-13 on the Bonneville Pool of the historic Columbia River out of Port of Cascade Locks in Oregon, with the Northwestern Division Championship presented by Ranger Boats. The Bass Federation of Oregon

served as divisional host for 56 TBF members from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

Washington's Peter Koshi started the first two days with solid 15-05 and 16-09 weights, then finished even stronger with a 21-01 limit. Koshi's grand total of 52-15 earned him the Northwestern crown and a trip to the national championship.

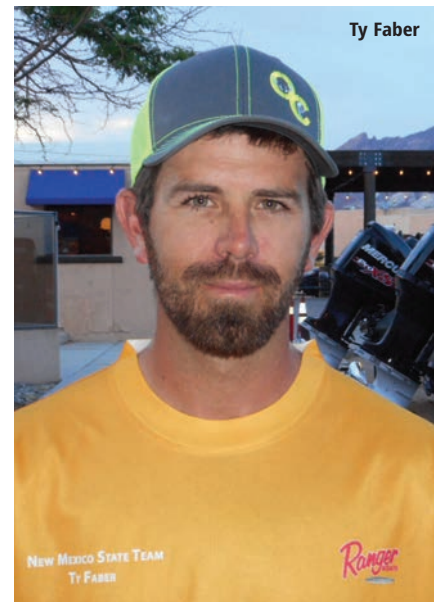
Oregon's Kory Ray finished hot on his heels with 50-04, while hard-charging David Simmons of Oregon brought 19 pounds to scale on day three to land in third with 50-02.

Idaho's Bill Golightly took fourth with 50-01, and Jon Bial of Washington won a tie-breaker over fellow Washington angler Nicholas Fitzsimmons to claim fifth with 48-00.

Of the five state teams, Oregon's contingent topped the ranks with 174 bass for 510-15 and claimed the big bass award on all three days of the tournament. Washington had 176 fish for 435-10, followed by Idaho with 171 bass for 412-03, Wyoming with 130 bass for 298-09 and Montana with 130 bass for 290-06. In all, 781 Columbia River bass came to the scale throughout the event, weighing a total of 1,947 pounds, 11 ounces.

A Desert Duel

The action continued May 18-20 with the Southwest Division Championship on Utah's massive Lake Powell. Presented by Cabela's, the event was hosted by Aramark - Lake Powell



Resorts and Marinas, along with The Bass Federation Utah.

TBF members from Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah launched out of Bullfrog Marina to compete on Powell.

As it turned out, day three of the Southwest Division Championship was canceled due to severe weather and high winds. Places were awarded based on anglers' two-day totals.

First-time TBF competitor Ty Faber of Colorado, who was fishing for the brand-new New Mexico Federation, set the bar high right out of the gate with a 15-12 limit, which included a 4-pound kicker that was big fish of the day.



Faber followed up with a 12-03 limit on day two, giving him nearly a 2-pound cushion over his closest rival, Travis Graham, with 28-09. When day three was canceled, Faber claimed the divisional victory.

Graham, who's from Colorado but fished for the Utah team, landed in second with 26-12, while Evan Buchanan, also of Colorado but fishing for New Mexico, scored day two's biggest bag with a 13-13 limit to place third with a 25-12 total. Arizona's Jon Griffith took fourth with 25-09, and California's Timmy Wells rounded out the top five with 25-03.

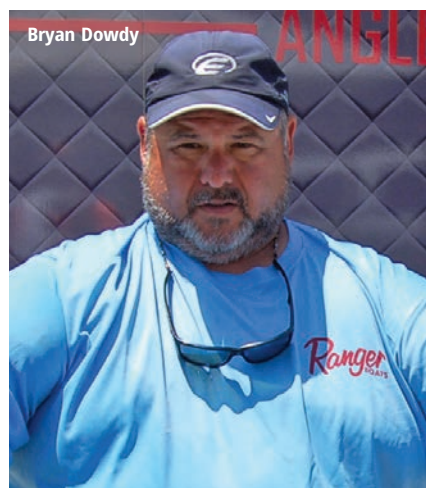
By state, California handily defended its conference title with 114 bass weighing 225-10. New Mexico took second with 110 fish for 198-10, followed by Colorado with 106 bass for 192-09, Utah with 108 bass for 187-15, Arizona with 100 bass for 183-10 and Nevada with 105 bass for 175-13. In all, Lake Powell produced 643 bass that totaled 1,164 pounds, 3 ounces.

A Southern Showdown

The storied Santee Cooper system comprised of bass-rich lakes Marion and Moultrie was the battleground for Southern Division rivals June 15-17 as 84 TBF members from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee squared off in the Southern Division Championship presented by Berkley.

Hosted by the Clarendon County Chamber of Commerce and The Bass Federation of South Carolina, the event launched out of the John C. Land III Sport Fishing Facility in Summerton.

Alabama's Jason Hester topped the leaderboard on day one with a five-fish, 17-06 sack that was one of only 13 opening-day limits.



Bryan Dowdy

On day two, however, Tennessee team member Bryan Dowdy of Florence, Ala., made a run up the ranks with a 19-11 limit. Anchored by a 9-06 Santee Cooper showstopper, it pushed Dowdy's total to 34-08, good for the lead going into the final day of competition.

With the rest of the talented grassroots field in hot pursuit, led by South Carolina's Herman Vining in second with 33-09, Dowdy couldn't count on coasting into victory lane. He boated a 7-07 brute that would prove to be big bass of the day. The behemoth helped take the pressure off, but Dowdy couldn't manage a limit and nervously climbed the TBF stage with just four bass in his weigh bag. As it turned out, his 13-11 catch was enough to hold the lead with a 48-03 total weight.

Georgia's Justin Lanier placed second with 46-09, followed by Michael

Warden of Tennessee with 42-04. Tracy Hewitt of South Carolina finished fourth with 41-06, and Alabama's Taylor Watkins rounded out the top five with 38-03.

In the battle between the states, Georgia claimed the division title with 100 bass weighing 274-07. Alabama placed second with 84 fish for 247-5, followed by South Carolina with 98 bass for 232-14, Tennessee with 71 bass for 196-15, Kentucky with 56 bass for 140-14, North Carolina with 55 bass for 135-11 and Florida with 56 bass for 128-13. A total of 520 bass weighing 1,356 pounds, 15 ounces came to the TBF scale during the event.

The top two anglers from each of the states competing in TBF Division Championships will advance to the 2017 TBF National Championship next spring, along with qualifiers from the new Semi-Finals program.

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TBF MEMBERSHIP SOARS NATIONWIDE

BASS ANGLERS EMBRACE NEW SEMI-FINALS SYSTEM AND OTHER GREAT BENEFITS

With double-digit percentage increases in member numbers and a pair of brand-new state Federations swelling its ranks, The Bass Federation is off to a great start in 2016.

"Membership is up by an average of 10 to 20 percent across most of the seven TBF divisions," reports TBF President and CEO Robert Cartlidge. "Plus, we've welcomed new state Federations in New Mexico and North Dakota."

TBF members have long enjoyed a variety of perks. Benefits include a chance to compete in TBF-sanctioned events from the local level up to the TBF National Championship for a shot to win the \$100,000 Living the Dream prize package and fish the Walmart FLW Tour as a pro, plus the chance to win invitations to compete in the Forrest Wood Cup and FLW Bass Fishing League All-American.

TBF members also enjoy access to the TBF Members' Only Online Store and TBF auctions, and are eligible for contingencies from Ranger, Lowrance and Evinrude, as well as TBF Federation Insurance coverage for official TBF events.

Such a variety of benefits helped build TBF's national grassroots membership base to more than 20,000 anglers. But Cartlidge believes a new twist for 2016 is also helping to fuel the current increase in member numbers.

"With unanimous support from all state Federation presidents, TBF adopted a new National Semi-Finals Program that offers expanded opportunities to qualify for the biggest events in bass fishing," he says.

The new framework expands the qualification process while cutting travel costs with 22 "close-to-home" events.

"The new Semi-Finals format is great," says North Dakota TBF President and founder Paul Reinbold. "It's a perfect example of how TBF is putting the qualification process in the members' hands, and says a lot about the organization."

Reinbold completed the paperwork for the fledgling North Dakota Federation in early 2016 and reports that the state is already near its minimum membership requirement.

A youth director has already been lined up with a conservation director to be added shortly. The state also has a series of qualifiers and a state championship scheduled. Top finishers from that event will move on to the Semi-Finals event on Lake Francis Case with South Dakota and Nebraska.

"We're excited," Reinbold adds. "North Dakota has great bass fishing that's largely overlooked."

Framework Details

For 2016, the TBF qualifying season includes seven Division Championships for anglers who qualified under the old system in 2015. At these events, the highest two finishers from each state will advance to the 2017 TBF National Championship. Each state's top angler goes as a boater and the runner-up as a co-angler.

The new National Semi-Finals Program adds 22 events to the schedule. Held in two- and three-state groupings to cut travel costs, they also provide a "first-ever" benefit directly to every TBF-affiliated club in good standing to send their top two club anglers directly to their local National Semi-Finals tournament.

All active TBF states advance 10 percent of their annual statewide participation, or a minimum of 12 anglers, to their region's National Semi-Finals Program qualifier.

Entry fees for the new National Semi-Finals are \$200 for boaters and \$100 for co-anglers. One boater and co-angler advance to the TBF National Championship from each state, and one additional boater or co-angler will move forward for each 50-boat milestone the state reaches at its Semi-Finals event.

In addition, the new program features a 100-percent payback plus additional prizes, with three-quarters of the pot going to individuals at the event, 10 percent to the states and 15 percent toward the National Championship.

State Federations will also compete against one another in the Semi-Finals for bragging rights, using weights of their top four boaters and four co-anglers.

All TBF events require membership in The Bass Federation. For more information about state or individual memberships, TBF tournaments and the new Semi-Finals schedule, visit bassfederation.com, or call 580.765.9031.



PHOTO BY MARC ROGERS

HIGH SCHOOL FISHING UPDATE

The FLW/TBF Student Angler Federation High School Fishing program enjoyed strong participation in the second quarter of 2016 as it continued providing young anglers with exciting bass fishing events. Highlights from mid-April through June include:

April 23 – Kentucky KHSAA Region 1 Championship – Barkley Taylor Harris and Drew Mendoza won with 12-15.

April 23 – Kentucky KHSAA Region 2 Championship – Cumberland Trevor Sagrecy and Michael Shelton topped the field with 16-8.

April 23 – Kentucky KHSAA Region 3 Championship – Cumberland Tad Barton and Matthew Woods tied Tray Hardwick and Bradley Dunagan with 16-08. Barton and Woods claimed the crown thanks to their 4-09 kicker, which edged out Hardwick and Dunagan's 3-09 anchor in the big-fish tiebreaker.

April 23 – Kentucky KHSAA Region 4 Championship – Cave Run Robert Powe and Colby Kerr won with 13-11.

April 23 – Arkansas State Championship – Lake Dardanelle Cole Trotter and Cody Jackson won with 16.02.

April 23 – Mississippi State Championship – Tenn-Tom Waterway Parker Humber and Kody White won with 13-01.

May 7 – Ohio State Championship – Alum Creek Cousins Rocky and Tanner Jordan won with an 11-13 limit.

May 13-14 – Kentucky KHSAA State Championship – Kentucky Eric Price and Noah West won with 34-04.

May 14 – Connecticut State Championship – Whitehall Reservoir Ryan Kuzmit and Tyler Baksay earned the win.



Max McQuaide and Ryan Richardson

May 14 – Massachusetts State Championship – Whitehall Reservoir Max McQuaide and Ryan Richardson won with 18-07.

May 14 – New Hampshire State Championship – Connecticut River Joshua Roy and Joe Reppucci won with 15-10.

May 14 – Oregon State Championship – Columbia River Lane Olsen and CJ Couch won with 10.83.

May 14 – Rhode Island State Championship – Whitehall Reservoir Tyler Conde and Cameron Rhodes earned the victory.

May 15 – Alabama State Championship, FLW/TBF Open – Wheeler Brody and Grant Robison caught a winning stringer of 13-15.



Lane Olsen and CJ Couch

May 15 – Maine State Championship – Alamoosook Lake Doyle Bailey and Jake LaFrance topped the field.

May 15 – Oklahoma FLW/TBF Open – Grand Lake Eli and Tate Brumnett caught 17-03 to win.

May 22 – California State Championship – California Delta Joshua Gonzales and Garrett Bradshaw won with 18-06.

June 4 – Tennessee State Championship – Norris Lake Spencer Peters and Austin Kirby caught a winning weight of 13-02.

June 5 – California Open Tate Smith and Hadyn Evans took first with 17.44.



Jordan Evans and Robbie Gonzales

June 5 – Colorado State Championship – Pueblo Reservoir Jordan Evans and Robbie Gonzales won with 10.76.

June 5 – Virginia State Championship – James River Landon Siggers and Jacob Johnson won with 15-05.

June 5 – West Virginia State Championship – Sutton Lake Caleb Glycagdis and Dustin Vance won with 5-09. ■

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green waters, had turned into an aquarium. Bradley Hallman won the event sight-fishing down to depths of 6 feet, something previously unheard of in Grand. It's not that sight-fishing on Grand was anything new, but the outer limits of where the technique could be applied had been extended generously.

In the last two decades, various new baitfishes have infiltrated waterways, changing the ways bass pursue their prey as well. In the mid-1990s, well-known smallmouth experts such as Steve Clapper, Joe Balog and Mark Zona tapped the goby invasion of the Great Lakes, putting a lot of tournament cash in their pockets with goby imitations.

In the East, blueback herring added another fishing dimension to lakes in the Carolinas. Apparently, the blueback herring is a rather tasty morsel to a bass, but the blueback is also a pelagic species, roaming the lakes at will. Consequently, bass in herring lakes have become more "nomadic" and open-water oriented.

Two of South Carolina's best bass pros, Anthony Gagliardi of Prosperity and Casey Ashley of Donalds, grew up fishing herring lakes. They know the intricacies of the herring-bass relationship better than most. Maybe that explains why Gagliardi possesses a Forrest Wood Cup title from Lake Murray and Ashley won a Bassmaster Classic title at Lake Hartwell. Herring-influenced bass played a role in both of those wins.

Asian carp are also altering the way anglers pursue bass. While the rampant spread of carp into waterways is certainly considered an environmental threat, Ray Hanselman of Del Rio, Texas, used the prolific carp to his advantage to win the Costa FLW Series Championship on the Ohio River by throwing an umbrella rig that featured a baby carp imitation. Hanselman wanted the trailing swimmer on his rig to be big, lazy and cumbersome – like a beleaguered carp that could not quite keep up with the rest of the school.

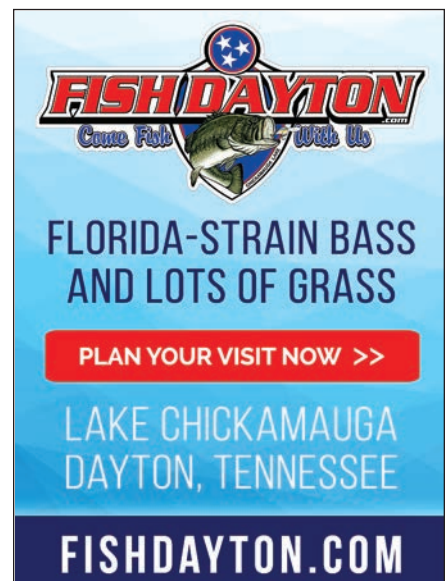
Whether it's vegetation, mussels or new species of fishes, these "invaders" are not going away. Chances are, there will be new ones in the future, and they will likely impact the way bass relate to the habitat and feed in their ever-changing environment, creating new fishing "secrets" that we don't even know about yet. ■



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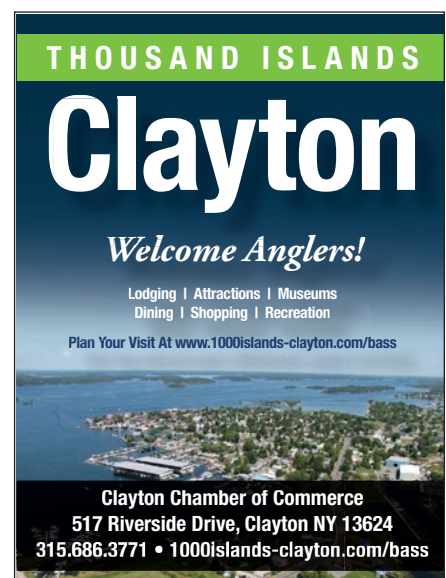


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by Rob Newell

SECRETS ON THE SEAMS OF CHANGE

Back in May, Walmart FLW Tour rookie Buddy Gross of Ringgold, Ga., could sum up his Tour win on Pickwick Lake in one word: eelgrass.

"Eelgrass?" I questioned, making sure I heard him right during an interview on the second day of competition.

"Yes," Gross responded. "I'm catching them out of eelgrass. I don't think any of these other guys even know it's growing in Pickwick."

Gross was right. No one else in the tournament was onto his eelgrass game. Even Pickwick experts Randy Haynes and Mark Rose were unaware of the eelgrass propagation in the lake. In essence, Gross had cornered the market on eelgrass in Pickwick for that event, and it turned out to be a highly profitable week for him.

Gross' eelgrass discovery – and subsequent win – is yet another example of how new bass fishing patterns are born from the seams of ecological changes in lakes. Whenever a new species invades a lake where it previously didn't exist, the influx impacts the aquatic environment, which in turn affects bass and ultimately adds new wrinkles to fishing in some form or fashion. The anglers who are the first to recognize such changes are the ones who get a jump on the learning curve and score big. In the case of Gross, he had become familiar with eelgrass by fishing it in Guntersville over the last few years. So when he discovered it in Pickwick, he capitalized on it.

Looking back over the last 20 to 30 years, these kinds of environmental changes have been a fertile ground of sorts from which new techniques, innovations and bass fishing "secrets" have sprung up.

Other than perhaps floods, nothing changes a lake faster than an influx of new vegetation. Gross' win in eelgrass is one example, though minor

when compared to the milfoil and hydrilla infestations that swept the country during the 1980s. Once these aquatic plants found their way into lakes, they proliferated quickly, changing the entire landscape of the bass fishing business with everything from "weedless" lures to "weedless" props for trolling motors.

The spread of zebra mussels constitutes another environmental change that has had a domino effect on bass fishing across the country. One of the primary impacts of zebra mussels is increased water clarity. A serious infestation can turn normally off-colored water the clarity of spring water in just a couple of years. Great Lakes anglers have witnessed it, but a more recent example was seen at the Costa FLW Series event on Oklahoma's Grand Lake in April 2015. Grand, a lowland impoundment known for its fishy, off-colored, fertile

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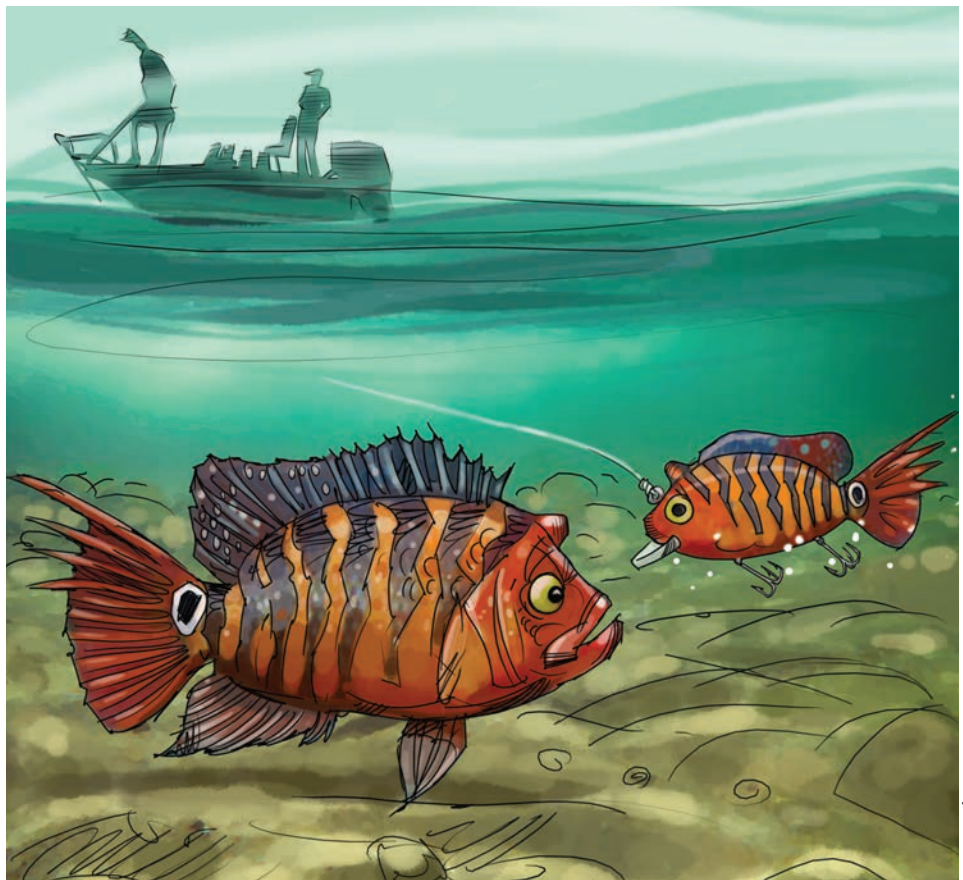


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