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FIRST CAST

By Wayne Wasulko

Another fishing season is about to wrap up. Time sure does fly when you are having fun fishing! The wintertime always kicks off "show season" and with the 2012 Bass-A-Thon around the corner, we are starting to get excited. WesternBass will be back at the Anglers Marine event and are thrilled to again be a part of their annual Tackle Expo and Boat Show.

We are looking forward to seeing the seminars with B.A.S.S. and FLW champion David Walker, Bassmaster champ Edwin Evers and this year's Bassmaster Elite Series Angler of the Year, Brent Chapman, as well as the latest and greatest tackle products and specials that the event has to offer. We will again be bringing live video of the show specials and pro angler tips to the site.

For those of you that stay out there ready to brave the winter weather to catch some bass, keep warm, be careful, stay safe and wear your life jacket.

**Good luck and good fishing,
Wayne**

AUGUST 2012 - VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

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SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Unsolicited manuscripts, accepted and, if not used, returned. Unsolicited email attachments will be deleted without opening. Please submit query letters detailing story ideas. Reader-submitted letters and photos may be published without notification, and all rights retained by WesternBass.Com® Magazine.

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WesternBass.Com® Magazine

Volume 2, Issue 4, August 2012

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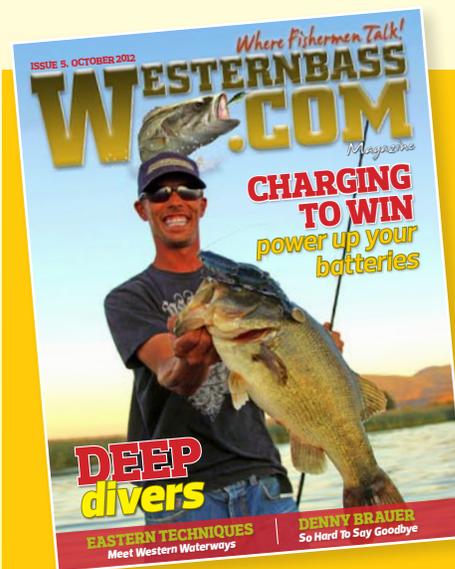
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ON THE COVER:
Swimbait specialist Paul Bailey from the Big Bait Posse on the hunt for Clear Lake bass with the big Tsunaga swimbait.

Photo by Jody Only



CRANK IT UP

Tweaks & Tactical Tips Ensure Success

Right, left, center – all common terms in the political arena, but they also apply to crankbaits. Situations and opportunities may vary throughout the day, but unlike the Democrat/Republican divergence, it's perfectly fine to switch your bait's alignment as your needs dictate.

Sometimes a straight course fits the need, but other times, anglers may want their baits to run more to one side or the other. Maybe you're tracing the edge of a channel, or paralleling a line of riprap. Some-

times you'll find that wind, current and/or sunlight are simply making one side of the structures more productive.

I recently quizzed a couple of Bassmaster Elite pros, Takahiro Omori and Gerald Swindle, on their crankbait strategies. Omori said that he finds most modern hard plastic crankbaits are tuned pretty tightly right out of the package. However, with hand-made balsa wood baits, he expects each one to perform differently, so tuning is the assumption.

For deep cranking, Omori demands crankbaits

that run perfectly straight to maximize depth and remain in the strike zone. Around bridge columns, floating docks or piers with wooden support legs, Swindle tunes his cranks to run right or left so they swing under the topside cover. Such tactics, he notes, are not without their hazards.

"If the bait's running too hard, it's not naturally deflecting off the wood, so it's going to hang more," he said. "When I tune a bait to run up under a piece of structure, I want it to be open water so it can run under there and know that the chances of it hanging are less."

Now when it comes to cranking riprap, ticking that bait off the top of the rocks is standard operating procedure for most. That certainly works, but making the crankbait swing in from a lateral approach gives the fish a different look, so try tuning it to one side or the other. Swindle maximizes a good stretch of riprap by tuning one crankbait to run left and another of the same model and color to run right. This way, he can fish down the stretch of rocks, turn around and fish it the opposite direction with the other crankbait.

A key factor in selecting crankbaits is the wobble – some shimmy tightly; others shake like their tails are on fire. Both have their time to shine and Swindle keeps it simple with this rule of thumb:

"The colder the water, the tighter the wiggle; the warmer the water, the wider the wiggle," he said. "In warmer water, the bait fish are moving faster."

You can do a simple experiment at home to see for yourself. Buy some minnows, put them in a minnow bucket and sit them outside (during cold weather). Let that temperature get down to the upper '40s and then bump that bucket, the minnows won't swim fast at all – they'll just barely flex out. They're not explosive, even when they're fleeing from something. That's the type of (crank-bait) vibration you're looking for in cold water.

But if that minnow bucket was warm and those minnows were all feeling good and energetic, if you bumped that bucket, they'll dart from side to side. That's a harder vibration, which comes back to a wider wobbling crankbait.

HOW TO TUNE

When adjusting his crankbaits, Omori finds that needle nose pliers usually do the trick. Others may opt for tuning tools – those little notches on the sides of





pliers or fishing themed multi-tools. Line clippers have also evolved into multi-taskers and the lanyard hung tools from brands such as Berkley and Rapala Clippers come with crankbait tuning notches built into their bodies.

However you tune your baits, don't overdo it, lest you ruin the tracking or compromise the structural integrity of the line tie. As Swindle notes: "Most of the time, when tuning a crankbait, less is more."

Also, smooth and steady pressure works much better than impatient wrenching. For one thing, too much ill-directed force can lead to over-adjustments that mar the bait's performance. Also, where treble hooks dangle, careful movements and measured force are always the best policy.

Seasoned anglers can feel their baits running correctly or not so, but if you need a visual cue, just tie on a bait, drop it next to the boat and watch how it performs. Omori has a swimming pool at his home and, well, his baits spend a lot more time in the water than he does.

"I call it the 'test tank'," Omori joked. "You have to have crystal clear water. On a lake, you have to have a calm surface with little wind to be able to see (the bait). Most of the time on the lake it's not that clear, so I do it at home."

THE RIGHT OUTFIT

As Omori points out, the type of rod, reel and line you'll need for cranking depends on how you're fishing. Variations are many, but depth is the most important element, so he breaks it down with a shallow-vs-deep analysis. Anglers can build upon these principals to fit their specific preferences.

"If you're throwing a shallow running crankbait and making a lot of short casts, you don't want more than a 7-foot rod, because it's too long, it's hard to make accurate casts," Omori said.

"But if I'm fishing deep-diving crankbaits, I want to have like a 7-10 – the longest rod you can get – so I can have more casting distance."

Omori goes with a low gear ratio reel for deep-diving cranks, so he doesn't wear himself out winding. Conversely, in the shallow game, his 7.3:1 reel lets him cover water quickly, retrieve at a zippy pace and make the most casts possible. For deep water he likes 10-pound fluorocarbon, because it sinks faster than the 20-pound he uses in the obstruction-heavy shallows.

"For shallow diving crankbaits, I'll use shorter handle reels and for deep-, I'll have longer handle reels, so I can have more winching power," Omori adds. "If you (fish crankbaits) all day long, you'll see that those little things make a big difference." ■



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EASTERN TECHNIQUES

meet WESTERN WATERWAYS

Ever heard of Hayabusa? What about Gan-Craft, Ito, Ichiban, Megabass, Decoy, Damiki, Fish Arrow, Bait Breath and the list goes on. You had better start paying attention to the Japanese tackle market, because it is hands down the top secret bait and or baits of all the guys that fish here on the West Coast as well as some of the Elite Anglers who fish B.A.S.S.

Without letting all the secrets out, I am going to leave it up to you to do your homework on the above mentioned. The attention to detail on Japanese baits are getting so vivid and lifelike, it is truly remarkable. Take for instance the new bait from Fish Arrow called the Flash J. This bait is flat out sick!

There is a foil inner lining of this soft plastic bait which gives off multiple colors, depending on the light conditions and the visibility of the water. They even have Brush Hog style baits with hair appendages, which give the bait constant movement even on the slickest of conditions. The Vision 110 was kept under wraps for a couple of years until it went mainstream.

Japanese baits have been winning money for anglers for a long time and it's about time you start getting with the program. Sure, you still have to find the fish; but some of these baits will help you get to them quicker.

Take a look at the new bait called "Knockout" from Damiki. It is a slight spin off of the earlier version

of their Air Craw series. What makes this bait so unique is that it has air pockets in the soft plastic bait. In other words when this bait is sitting at motion on the bottom of the lake the tentacles flair up into an automatic defensive position, just like a real crawdad. The Knock Out bait sits at about a 40-degree angle and the Air Craw sits up more perpendicular. I did a demo tank for the ISE show at the Phoenix Cardinals Stadium about six months ago and it was really cool to see how this bait can make a bass want to eat it. I'm not saying the standby Chigger Craw is no longer useful; but the Damiki Air Craw and Knockout baits are something you may want to throw in your arsenal.

I want to touch on hooks for just a second as well. I recently made a switch to the Decoy Cover Finesse Hook. It is superior to any other hook out on the market for wacky rig presentations. My hookup ratios went up by staggering amounts just by making the switch alone. They have a fluorocarbon weed guard which gives you that extra stealth advantage when throwing your flick shake or Senko for those still fishing with the O ring on your Senkos.

For those of you still throwing the A rig, I have two words for you Dragon Chatter... enough said. Those who are worthy of the research will be rewarded with special multi-rig bait that makes the A rig look a little out of place.



Flash J Minnow - Has a foil inner lining on the soft plastic bait giving off multiple colors, depending on light conditions and visibility of the water.

東の技術は西部の水路を満たしています。

アンディ Manahlによって

I was recently fishing one of the lakes here in Phoenix and had the privilege to take out the owners of Fish Arrow Co. with me. They were using 4 and 5-lb- test line on all of their soft plastic presentations. I was getting my butt kicked to say the least. We didn't have the translator on my boat, but afterwards I learned two very important lessons - buy the best line you can buy and know how to use your drag. If you have a high dollar Shimano or let's say a Daiwa Steez - my favorite - let that drag help you, not hurt you. These guys have the drag set really loose almost to the point of where they can't turn the fish out of cover or towards the boat.

Take a look at Mike Folkestad as he landed an eight pounder up at Havasu on 6-lb test, just by having his drag set correctly. Getting back to the line, Seaguar and Sunline are both great products, but you should definitely try another brand out called Nitlon Darm made by the line manufacturers of YGK.

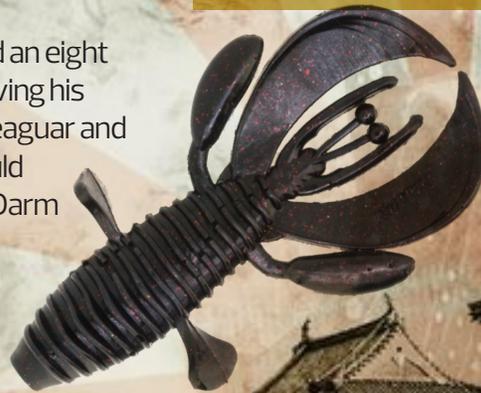
The braid that I have been using is called the G Soul. Not one back lash in about two months with throwing topwater baits. It's so smooth, you will never want anything else on your reel.

The diameter is a touch smaller than the rest of the competition and it's double coated to give you maximum strength and resistance to abrasion. I never lost one fish at the U.S Open while fishing with 5-lb test due to quaggas. Now that's saying something.

In closing, I'm not knocking any other manufacturers out there, but if you're fishing out of a 60k bass boat and have

15k worth of rods and reels in your boats, don't be buying the \$2.99 cent pack of soft plastics. Step it up a notch and put quality baits in your boat. Not quantity! ■

Andy Manahl will be in attendance of the 2012 Bass-A-Thon at Angler's Marine. He can be found at the Lobina Lures booth offering Ricos three for \$25. He is sponsored by Lobina Lures, Never Slip Bait Tape, Fish Arrow Co., Mattress Depot LLC, A and M Graphics, Lowrance, Costa Del Mar and Mercury Marine. You can contact him via facebook or his website andymanahl.com. He also suggests the following websites lobinalures.com to see the new Klicka Shad Rico, neverslipbaittape.com for a demonstration on the bait tape and www.thehookuptackle.com for Decoy hooks.



Heavyweight DROPSHOTTING

Everyone knows, in bass fishing you always use the lightest weight you can get away with. We are taught the purpose of the weight is to allow your cast to reach the fish. Then you want your plastic worm to fall slowly, wiggling as it wafts to the bottom. Light weights increase the amount of time your worm remains in the strike zone.

There are other good reasons to use light weights. It is believed a soft plastic worm rigged with a light weight feels natural when engulfed, because the weight is less detectable. During the retrieve, a light weight tends to be more snag resistant and makes it easier to detect tentative bites.

For many years this "lighter is better" advice has served bass anglers well. Finesse techniques capitalize on the

lightweight theory. Western anglers fishing highly-pressured reservoirs of gin clear water learned to trick wary Florida-strain largemouths with hand-poured worms and split shot rigs. Other tactics built on the lightweight principle include Doodling and Mojo rig fishing. Hair thin fishing line became popular and the resultant decreased water resistance allows even lighter weight to be used. When wary bass see reruns of every lure, it is easy to see why anglers feel they have an advantage when using tiny weights.

Dropshotting arrived on the scene and the lightweight theory continues. In the angler's mind the only thing that changed is the location of the weight (not its size).





As a manufacturer of dropshot weights (QuickDrops Dropshot Weights), in 1998 sales records clearly show that the two most popular sizes were 1/8-ounce and 3/16-ounce. For more than ten years, these two small sizes dominated 90 percent of sales, compared to the next four heavier sizes. Then anglers gradually learned to try the heavier 1/4-ounce size, which for the past four years has accounted for the majority of sales.

More recently, the 3/8-ounce and the 1/2-ounce sizes have made a surge in sales and with each year more and more are discovering that even 3/4-ounce and one ounce QuickDrops are important tools for catching bass. If you still believe in using the lightest weight possible, continue reading. Heavyweight Dropshotting turns old theories upside down, and may be the only way to trick wary bass during certain conditions.

Often when I fish with others, they ask why I am using such a heavy dropshot weight. I usually answer, "Why not?"

Consider that the dropshot rig places your lure *above* your weight, which is usually resting on the bottom. From the perspective of your lure and the bass, why would a light weight resting on the bottom be better than a heavy weight resting on the bottom? Both allow the angler to twitch their rod tip and make the lure dance and when a bass grabs the lure the weight is not felt like a traditional Texas-rig weight.

With a dropshot rig, the weight pulls the line tight as a bass swims away and the bass feels the worm trying to escape its grip and just clamps down even harder. Hook sets are often automatic from this tension and deep in the mouth. Try a heavier dropshot weight than you would normally and when you get a bite hold off on setting the hook; you may be amazed the bass will hold the worm harder.

Consider noise and the visual value created by a heavier dropshot weight. When fishing a heavier weight, the angler can choose the noise level they desire. A heavy weight allows you to keep it in place, and shaking the rod only moves the lure and not your weight for a silent approach with visual attraction. Should the angler choose to make noise, moving the weight up and down, or by dragging it across a rocky bottom, will make a louder sound than a light dropshot weight.

Ever see a crawdad scoot across the bottom and then dig into the bottom to hide in a cloud of silt? A heavy dropshot weight allows an angler to duplicate this visual stimulus, so the weight and worm both attract bass. Use a heavy dropshot weight to create your own clouds of silt and when a bass sees your worm darting in and out of the cloud of silt, you can expect the hardest strike you will ever feel when dropshotting.

Everyone knows the hardest time to dropshot is in the wind. Even a mild breeze can put a bend in your

line, making it difficult to control the manipulation of the worm and difficult to feel a bass engulf the worm. In a strong wind most anglers don't even try, but instead reach for a Carolina-rig or football jig, or reaction bait. Next time you find the bass are feeding on the bottom and the wind comes up, instead of putting the dropshot rod away reach for a half ounce or heavier QuickDrop and gain control of the wind.

Current in a river or tidal situation also makes line control troublesome in dropshotting situations. Again, upsize your weight and downsize your control problem.

Winter bass fishing in cold, deep reservoirs is often productive in depths from 40- to 80-feet of water. A dropshot rig is ideal when fishing vertical presentations common in the winter, since the worm is above the weight, making strike detection easier. **The best way to detect sluggish bites by cold, lethargic bass is to keep your fishing line as straight as possible between your rod tip and your weight.** A heavy weight sinks as fast as possible, and the design of a QuickDrop is hydrodynamic so it sinks perfectly straight. When a bass strikes, you will feel the strike when your line does not snake back and forth (like lighter, less hydrodynamic weights act).

Heavyweight dropshot sinkers cast farther. Casting into a headwind with a lightweight dropshot results in less distance and control. In calm conditions bass are easily spooked by boats and anglers, so the added distance of a heavyweight dropshot can be the difference between loading the boat and striking out.

One day when fishing for smallmouth bass, I learned a dropshot rig can provoke a *reaction strike* from lethargic bass. My Lowrance graph showed bass were sedentary on the bottom in 28-feet of water during a cold front. The bass would not touch my 1/4-ounce dropshot rig. Since the wind was blowing and I was adjusting my boat position with the electric motor, I moved up to a 3/4-ounce QuickDrop. I opened the bail of my Shimano 2500 reel loaded with 6-pound-test and vertically dropped the wacky-rigged dropshot Senko below the boat. Immediately after the heavy weight slammed into the bottom, a 3-pound smallmouth slammed my Senko! In the next half hour I put five nice smallmouths into my Ranger, all by provoking a heavyweight dropshot reaction strike.

Anywhere you would normally throw a heavy Carolina-rig, consider instead using a heavyweight dropshot rig. A popular technique in the west is "DropSwimming," where the weight constantly moves across or even above the bottom and the worm appears to swim through the water. To employ this technique, the rod is held no higher than the nine or ten o'clock position and the reel handle is steadily turned while the rod tip is shaken (imparting action to the worm). This is a great technique for covering a lot of water in a hurry and provokes reaction strikes and feeding strikes in a horizontal presentation. Using a heavyweight dropshot weight is the key to achieving a fast retrieve and covering deep water.

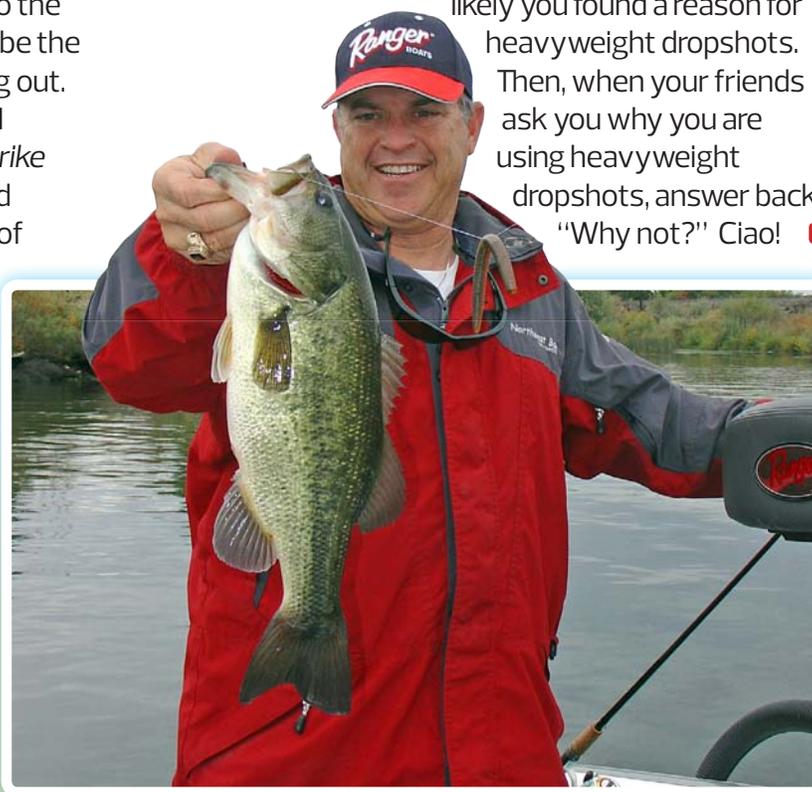
When sight fishing, one of the biggest problems is that lure movement (necessary to induce a reaction strike) also moves the lure out of the strike zone. Enter the heavyweight dropshot sinker.

Try punching weed beds and floating debris with an ounce QuickDrop weight for a different look. The weight punches the hole and then pulls the lure through the hole. Lifting the bait and shaking it in place provides action no other punching presentation can create.

Using the lightest weight you can get away with makes sense for Texas-rigs, but not for dropshot rigs. Think outside the box and of all the situations you normally would NOT use a dropshot rig, and

likely you found a reason for heavyweight dropshots.

Then, when your friends ask you why you are using heavyweight dropshots, answer back "Why not?" Ciao! ■



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ESSENTIALS

of Surviving Collegiate Bass Fishing



The new school year has started and all you can think about is college bass fishing. There are a few tips any of the seasoned collegiate fishermen would tell you are essential to your survival in this sport. It doesn't matter if you're just starting out or consider yourself the next Brandon Palaniuk, this article will help you be prepared.

Think college fishermen have devoted enough time to have superstitions? Whether it's a lucky lure, or no bananas, you bet everyone has their own quirk and you better believe it helps them fish harder and better. Wondering what yours is yet?

Derrick Hicks of Humboldt State can't leave for a tournament without having a new playlist made and being ready to rock, he says, "Whether it is on the drive to the lake or while waiting to blast off, I need music to get me awake and pumped...as if I'm not already!"

Recent FLW Western Regional champions Long Beach State is letting you in on their superstition - ready for it? Smelly Jelly XXX-Crawfish, on their hands before every event. "Its our good luck charm and tradition, we make everyone on the boat do it.

At the qualifiers and regional events, all observers and cameramen had to put it on before we fished – no joke," said Justin Gangel of Long Beach State.

When college fishermen are trying to find information on a lake, while not interrupting their hectic study schedule, information can get twisted and they have to decide who to trust? Take "dock talk" for example, everyone gets caught up in it at some point. I will say, personal knowledge through personal gain is best; however, that is not always an option.

Justin says it best when it comes to word of mouth, "I take dock talk with a grain of salt. I can use it to get an idea of what to do first; but it rarely proves to be as legitimate as the person giving the information says it is. In reality if said person was sacking them up on a spot with a certain bait, I can almost guarantee that he's going to keep that info to himself. If anything he will give false facts to move others further from his pattern."

Derrick can agree stating "I think it is more beneficial to fish our strengths and what we truly have confidence in than just hearsay."

Fishing is as much mental and physical as it is catching fish. Making sure your school and workload is all good before you leave for a road trip is vital. Last thing you want is to be thinking about that report you really didn't do enough on or needing more hours at work, because you've taken too much time off.

When you hit the water, you want to be focused on every cast. Plus, you will enjoy the trip more if you are in a good state of mind outside of fishing. Enough mental preparation, let's get down to the good stuff, catching fish at the college level. Even though every lake fishes somewhat differently, one commonality in tournaments is pressure.

Fishing pressure is difficult to deal with, so be prepared. Most often, college tournaments occur right after hundreds of pros and co-anglers pound the lake. This makes the fishing even tougher for college anglers. When the fishing gets tough go with your comfort baits. One technique everyone agrees they would not go anywhere without is a drop shot. Gear for a drop shot can be as simple as you want it, I usually say simple is best. Keeping in mind bait choices on a drop shot rig are endless.

Justin thinks, "anyone that can master a drop shot will qualify for a regional. For the most part, I feel it is the most effective for our time restraints and lack of pre fish."

Most college circuits limit each angler to five rod and reel combos, which is a hidden benefit. It makes

you slow down and use what you have, a drop shot rod (or two) is a must on the deck and secondly, I'd have my comfort lure or choice of technique on another rod ready to go. The rest may be tailored to the specific lake or just color/lure variations of the same setup.

Most importantly, in college fishing, you are ultimately representing your university. So, as a team, make decisions, help each other out. A few schools have two or three teams and the ones who make it the furthest and have the best results come weigh-ins are the schools who act as a team and prepare, travel, question, teach each other, and learn together.

There are also a few forums and websites, like WesternBass.com who devote sections to the college anglers, take advantage of those. Keep in mind, you are the future of the sport, people and your peers want you to succeed. Succeed in the class room as well as on the water! ■

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DEEP *divers*

We are moving in to the wintertime and the water temperatures are starting to cool. One of the baits that I like to keep ready in the winter is deep crankbaits. When I start out, I fish areas that are about halfway back in the creeks up towards main lake points. I'm looking at depths of 14-foot down to 20-foot for this technique. The best places in the winter are steeper rock wall banks with river or creek channel bends into them. Bonus spots on these areas include trees, rock piles and brush piles. These and other structure points are the best places to bang your crankbait into and trigger a reaction bite. I also fish humps, rock piles and other offshore structure with deep water access nearby.

It is important during this colder time of year to think **vertically**. I know I am going to catch most fish on steeper, vertical structure from 45-degrees to rock-sheer walls. The fish just want to go vertical in the winter. In the spring, you will find them on horizontal structure; but in the winter, they just like that vertical placement.

In some circumstances there are pieces of structure that hold baitfish. This is always a good place to run a crankbait; because it gives a point or a place for the bass to ambush the baitfish and that is something that definitely helps out for getting bit during this cold time of year.

I find the bite is good enough first thing in the morning to pick up a couple of fish; but it really gets good as the water starts to warm - maybe, after 10:00 a.m.

Most of the time I am going to fish with Seaguar AbrazX in 10 or 12-lb-test, sometimes 15-lb. In clearer water, I am going to use lighter line and in dirtier water then I'm going with heavier line.

When I fish a deep crankbait, I keep the retrieve slower - almost a crawl - when the water is colder and then I will go faster if it is warmer. There are those occasional times when you can burn it in cold water and get a fish to bite; but I only try that in the afternoon, when there is a little bit of warmth in the water compared to the morning. I never try it in the morning.

When you are going super-slow, you want to keep it on the bottom going so slow it is almost like you're going to get stuck in the rocks. You want to keep it crawling on the bottom; because in cold water the bass will hug the bottom for warmth and you want to get down there where they are. Sometimes you will feel your crankbait run over them and if you hit

them, they will turn around and hit it. They may not really want to eat it; but you are making them eat it with that reaction strike. I like to make super-long casts and allow for a long, lingering retrieve - slowly grinding it in to the rocky-bottom and causing this reaction strike. Remember, you are not always hitting structure, if you're really in tune to your bait, you will be able to feel the difference in hitting a bass or hitting a rock or wood etc.

When I am deep crankin', I use one of three Powell Rods. I use an 804 CB, a 706 CB or a 754. For my reels, I also can use three different ones. I like a 5:1 in the morning to keep me going slower and then a 6.2:1 or 7:1 later in the day, when I can speed up. I don't



often use a 7:1 – it is harder to use.

Sometimes there are some extra things you can do to get an extra bite when you are fishing deep crankbaits. You can add feathers to your hooks. Add them to the front or the back or both.

If you have got the fish activated and they are biting, but then it stops, just change color and try a color change.

You can add Suspend Dots to your crankbait. These will make the crankbait suspend more and also have a gradual rise compared to coming up fast.

Lead wrapping on your treble hooks is another customization you might try.

Making your hooks red can also trigger an extra bite. You can color them or dye them or just change them out with Gamakatsu red hooks. I use round bend treble hooks in size 2. ■



With nearly half a million in career earnings and victories in both the Bassmaster and FLW circuits, Charlie Weyer boasts a phenomenal 32-lb five fish limit Delta during last year's FLW EverStart event on the Calif. Delta. He is currently sponsored by Phoenix Boats, Mercury, Lowrance, Power-Pole, T & H Marine, Seaguar, Powell Rods, Yamamoto Custom Baits, Delta Marine, Bass Angler Magazine, Little Creeper Baits and BladeRunner Tackle.

ISH TRANSITIONS

baits that take you from fall to winter

Bassmaster Elite Series pro Ish Monroe travels the nation each fishing season in both the B.A.S.S. and FLW circuits. While Monroe calls the Calif. Delta home, his angling career takes him from coast to coast every year where his fishing prowess has earned him championship titles on his home tidal water as well as on the other side of the country on Lake Okeechobee in Fla. and Oneida Lake in N.Y.

With much of the pro's season on hiatus during the winter months, Monroe finds an abundance of time to hit his two favorite bodies of water – the Delta and Clear Lake – as well as some of our Northern Calif. lakes during the fall transition into the winter months. He shared with WesternBass readers what he likes to tie on to keep the bites coming during this time of year.

SPINNERS AND CRANKS

“Out here, I like a spinnerbait and a crankbait as it starts to cool down,” said Monroe. “If there is a lot of grass, I will use a spinnerbait and if there is less grass then I will start with a crankbait.”

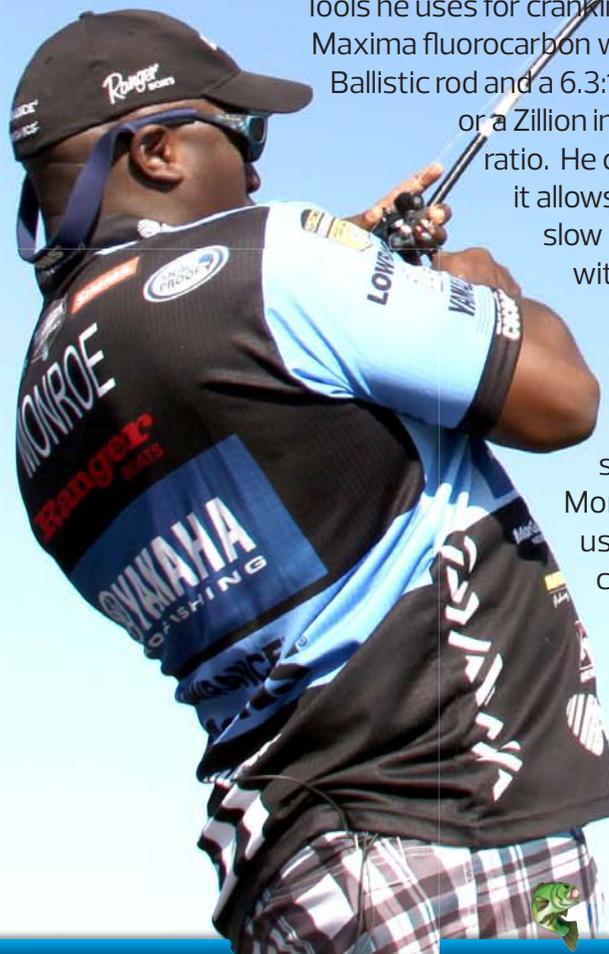
Monroe likes these two baits so much, he designed his own – just the way he wanted them. The spinnerbait is his River2Sea Bling and the crankbait is his Biggie series also from River2Sea. “If there is a lure that is good and you like it,

but it can be made better, why not do it,” said Monroe. “That is what I did when I made mine.”

His targets for crankbaits are areas that allow bumping off rocks, wood, pumps, poles and other structure. Color choices are a deep, dark red as it is a natural color for the crawdads as they transition from their red hue to their darker black color this time of year and also a shad pattern. The Biggie shade he prefers in red is known as Cold Blooded or Delta Craw and in the shad shade it is I Know It.

Tools he uses for crankin' are 10- to 12-lb Maxima fluorocarbon with a 7'2" Daiwa Ballistic rod and a 6.3:1 Daiwa Steez reel or a Zillion in the same gear ratio. He chooses the 6.3:1 as it allows him to speed up or slow down his retrieve with ease.

“As it gets colder, you want to fish the crankbait a lot slower,” explained Monroe. “I'm going to use a fiberglass or composite rod for a better hook set. When I'm looking at close targets, I've got on mono and if I am deep crankin', I've got on fluorocarbon.”



Biggie cranks come in Bumpin' – with rattles and Creepin' – silent. As the fall weather sticks around, Monroe is compelled to keep a rattlin' version rollin', but as the temperatures drop off and the seasons change into winter, he changes out for a quieter approach with Creepin'.

With Bling tied on, his main focus for his spinnerbait casts are on outside weed lines. He starts with a 1/2-ounce size and again

opts for a red color or shad pattern lure. The Bling spinnerbait name colors are the same as the Biggie – Cold Blooded for red or I Know It for shad coloring.

“You’re going to fish a spinnerbait with a slow presentation in a lot of grass,” reminded Monroe. “The water is dropping off and it is slowing down the fish and their metabolism and they just don’t want to chase as much. Maybe there are some warmer days and that would be the time you may want to speed it up a little.”

Spinnerbait gear on Monroe's deck is a 7' or 7'4" Daiwa Ballistic rod, depending on presentation – the medium-heavy for nearer targets and the heavy rod for long casts. Typically a 6.3:1 Daiwa Steez is his reel choice, again for an easy mix of slow rolling and quicker retrieves as necessary. He again chooses the Maxima fluorocarbon in 10- to 12-lb-test, but did say he will move up to 15 or 20-lb, if there is a lot of cover.

PUNCHIN'

“As long as there are mats, I am not puttin' the punch rig down,” said Monroe. On an



October trip to the Delta, he proved that even though the air temp was on the decline, the mats were quite productive. Using a 1 1/2-oz River2Sea Trash Bomb, a 5/0 Paycheck Baits Punch Hook and Punch Skirt in Cash Money with a Candy Grass Missile Baits D Bomb, Monroe punched his way through the hyacinth mats collecting bass after bass.

"You want to find areas where there is a mix of grass to throw your punch rig," stated Monroe. "Pockets of pennywort bordered by hyacinth around a pole, pipe or wood lay down is the sweet spot. If you can find a mix of three kind of grasses, that is even better."

A FEW OTHERS

"A football head jig is a good bait at this time, also," he added. "I like to fish a 3/4-oz, Rivers2Sea brown/purple jig." He adds a Missile Baits Twin Turbo in Cinnamon Purple to the jig and fishes it on 15- to 20-Maxima fluorocarbon line.

"You cannot forget the topwater bite



if you're on one of the lakes like McClure, Melones or Don Pedro," added Monroe. "It can be your deadliest big fish bait this time of year."

Monroe recommended the Jerry Rago Swimbait, both the BV3D and SKT. He also liked the River2Sea S-Waver and Rover. "I use the Rover when I want more noise, like at times when there is a slight breeze," said Monroe. "I fish this over tops of dying grass and in holes. On lakes, I target main lake points and steep, sloping points near the banks. On the Delta, I will fish it on hydrilla points on berms." ■

Two tour pro and Delta local Ish Monroe fishes the country in both the Bassmaster Elite Series and the FLW Tour. Monroe has amassed over half a million in career winnings in the FLW and over 1.1 million in B.A.S.S. tournaments. He is a Forrest Wood Cup and Bassmaster Classic qualifier who resides in Hughson, California.

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Getting Started in Tournaments

Iwould like to talk about some of the mystery perceived by some fishermen, especially newbie's, when they are trying to figure out how to have success on the tournament trail or at least develop consistency on those weekend outings.

My personal story is not unlike most guys who get interested in tournament fishing. I started bass fishing with friends on weekends and caught a few bass on crankbaits. Then I learned how to catch bass on jigs, because I found that they don't always hit a crankbait. I figured out how to make and tie my own jigs and caught bass on those too. This was fun; but the competitive spirit that lives within me, kept calling me to want more from bass fishing.

In the mid 1990's, I tried to find someone to partner up with to start fishing the local team tournaments here on the central coast of Calif. What I found is that no one wants to team up with the "new guy", that unknown entity. So in 1996,

when the WON Bass Western Classic was held on Lake Nacimiento – my home lake by the way – I hung around the festivities before the tournament and met some of the co anglers that had qualified for the Classic that year. I explained my dilemma trying to get a team partner to enter the local tournaments and the guys said that if I entered the Pro/Ams as an amateur the next year, the two pro's that I would draw were obligated to take me fishing. I loved that idea so the next year I entered the WON Pro/Ams and started my tournament career.

I fished my first tournament when I was 42-years-old. I think I was the oldest newbie in the tournament. I was in awe of how these guys could find and catch bass in any weather, on any body of water. I had lots of questions and I wasn't afraid to ask the pro's I drew.

Some were very helpful and some weren't very talkative. One of the most common sayings I would hear from the pro's that I talked to was that if I wanted





to be able to catch fish consistently then I would need to “listen to the fish”. All I could think was “What does that mean?” I was supposed to listen to what the fish are telling me during the day. This had to be one of the most mysterious sayings that I had ever heard.

Then the next key tip I heard was that I had to “put together a pattern” to be consistent. I know these pro’s were trying to help; but they might as well have been talking in a foreign language when they said to “listen to the fish” and “put together a pattern.”

LISTENING TO THE FISH

Let’s start with “listen to the fish”. Each and every bite you get, whether you hook the bass or not, will “tell” you something about where the fish are located, how aggressive they are, if you are fishing with the right bait and if it’s the right color for the conditions.

A good example would be a Booyah jig with a YUM Mighty Bug for a trailer. If you get a bite and don’t hook the fish; but one or both of the legs of the Mighty Bug are missing then you may be using the wrong color, because the bass just grabbed the Bug instead of taking the whole jig into its mouth allowing you to hook it.

It could be the wrong color or it may be too heavy or light of a jig head. A heavy $\frac{3}{4}$ -ounce jig head will fall

fast and create a reaction bite and a $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce jig head will fall slower and be in the bass’ strike zone longer.

You can also vary from the bulky skirted jig with a trailer to a YUM Gonzo Grub for a completely different look and feel in the water for a contrasting jig presentation. Change up the color of the Gonzo and the size of the football head to find the one that the fish want at the moment. Different days need different presentations and all the various size heads can be the difference between only bites and having bass in the livewell.

Another example is if you are throwing a Booyah Spinnerbait – the bass will hit the bait; but you can’t get a hookup. The bass may be reacting to the bait, but just hitting the blades. You can change the vibration that is emitting from the bait by changing from single to double blades, Colorado to willow or tandem, which is a small Colorado and a larger willow blade or the skirt may be the wrong color.

You can also put on an Excalibur trailer hook and get those short strikes in the boat. The way the fish bites and how aggressive the reaction of the fish is “tells” you something about the bass’s mood. Pay very close attention to each bite you get and every fish you catch. Pay attention to things like speed, cadence, bait color, the depth where the bite came from and type of structure or bottom makeup where

the fish was positioned when you got the bite and figure out different presentations to try to increase your success. This is listening to the fish!

PUTTING TOGETHER A PATTERN

As you "listen" to the bass and try a bunch of the various combinations mentioned above, this will lead you to start to "put together a pattern." Look at the area you are fishing when you get bites. Is it a point, flat, rock or mud? Is it an edge where rock turns to sand or mud or an edge of weeds? Is it backs of coves or inside of coves, secondary points, outside points, main lake points, on the tip of the point, on the side of the point, shady side or sunny side of the point? Is it near weeds, tules, bull rushes, cattails, drop offs, logs, trees or brush?

The amount of features that influence where bass position, hold, feed and move around or through are almost endless; but they all need to be thought about to put together that all important "pattern".

Another influence to watch are the weather patterns during the season you happen to find yourself fishing either in a tournament or just fun fishing on a weekend. My contention is that bass are where you find them on your fishing day based on weather patterns over the **last three or four weeks**.

A low-pressure or high-pressure system that moves through your area can change the bass' mood and effect where they stage and feed. From day-to-day, the bass move and the accumulation of this movement will position them where you find them on that particular day. Analyze each bite, look at all the above-mentioned influences and you will start to see common threads of information. Again, putting together that "pattern" to keep you catching bass.

The more you do this, the easier it will become and as you do this your success will lead you to do develop your own fishing style. Some guys are reaction fishermen, some guys jig fishermen, some flip and pitch the heavy/shallow cover and some are finesse fishermen. This is not something you can force. It will happen naturally over time. Just fish with all different baits and styles in every season on as many different bodies of water you can get to and you will have success.

Once you start fishing tournaments, you may find that you will practice differently than you fish during a tournament. This means trying areas that you won't go to and baits that you wouldn't use or covering water in a manner that you may not in a tournament.

For example, you may start on a point in practice and work your way into the adjoining cove, fishing all the way to the back and around to the next point checking all the available cover to see if you can capture some of those important bits of information via bites that start the formation of a pattern.

In the tournament you may skip all that unproductive water and only fish the areas that were productive in practice. The goal during the tournament is to have every cast in the "zone" - the zone being that productive area where most of the bites are coming from. I often find myself changing my starting pattern with adjustments that I discover during the fishing day. The bass are constantly changing not only from week-to-week and day-to-day and at times even from hour-to-hour. That pattern you found last Saturday will probably have changed at least a little



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this Saturday. Then, if there is a weather change there is more to think about.

BOAT POSITIONING

Another thing to think about is how to position your boat in relation to the cover you are fishing and the bait you are using. If the bass are hitting your crankbait 3-feet from the shore, don't stay 20-feet off the bank and cast to the bank. Get that boat 6 or 8-feet off the bank and cast parallel to the bank with your crankbait. This will keep the bait in the zone longer and allow you to cover water more efficiently and find more bass.

Work into the wind for better boat control. If fishing offshore structure and the wind is blowing, use a marker buoy to keep your position on the structure. Be a thinking fisherman and pay attention to all the variables that affect your success.

MOVING UP

Talking about success, if you are anything like me, as you have success you may start thinking of moving up the ladder to bigger tournaments. I went from being an am – a co angler – to the pro in the front of the boat. This is a natural progression and I learned more the first year as a boater than I learned in three years as a non-boater.

As I had success, I also found a team partner for those local team tournaments I wanted to fish. Then successes in those tournaments lead me to try to find some partners to help me with my "overhead". I started sending out resumes and making phone calls to various companies whose products I had my success with. I started looking for sponsors. This was something I chose to do; but, it's not for everyone.



Although I have plenty of questions asked by guys who are looking for sponsors that I think this is something that could be addressed to help those of you who want to go further in this sport.

I'll warn you now that a sponsor is not just someone who gives you free stuff. I'll need more time to explain what I'm referring to about sponsorships; so come back to the December issue of this magazine and I'll talk more in my article on "How to Get and Keep Sponsorships". ■

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ARMY BASS ANGLERS ARE HEADING WESTWARD

BY JOHN CAULFIELD

The Army Bass Anglers continue their westward charge and are signing on new coalition and task force members along the way. For those of you who don't know, WesternBass recently formed a strategic alliance with this growing organization of dedicated anglers who have served or are currently serving our country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard or National Guard. Collectively, this group of Army Bass Anglers are a growing force in the fishing industry and are carving a strong new niche for themselves.

The Army Bass Anglers as a group have a mission. The following Q&A will help everyone understand their mission, the goals and the benefits of becoming involved with this new force to reckon with in the fishing world. I connected with Marine Bass Anglers Coalition pro staff Tom Inmon and Army Bass Coalition pro staff Jeff Foley to ask some questions that will help everyone to better understand what this organization is all about.

WB: Who qualifies to become an ABA member?

Army Bass: To be on the Coalition pro staff, you have to have served or be on active duty, retired, or an honorably discharged veteran. Everyone else can join our task force.

WB: What does it take to become a member of Army Bass Anglers?

Army Bass: To join the Coalition, go to our website, and fill out a coalition application at: <http://armybassanglers.com/prostaffteam/coalition.html> to join our task force, fill out a task force application at our home page <http://armybassanglers.com>.

WB: How would an ABA member go about connecting with other ABA members locally?

Army Bass: Once you are a member, we have our network established through our "base camp" there you can connect with not only members in your area; but, throughout the world. We will have a Western section on

our base camp very soon that will be geared towards all of our operations out West.

WB: Is there a point of contact (POC) for ABA in the west? If so, how would somebody reach them?

Army Bass: Yes, I am the point of contact, you can reach me by email at marinebassanglers_tominmon@yahoo.com or you can reach out to any member of Army Bass Anglers and they will get you squared away and pointed in the right direction.

WB: Will there be any ABA only events?

Army Bass: Most of the events we take part in are not ABA only events, but in direct support of a club or tournament trail that is hosting an event to benefit one of our non-profits, such as Returning Heroes Home, Heroes on the Water and Veteran Outdoors. With that being said, we do conduct booth operations at various venues such as the Bassmaster Classic and coming in 2013 various ISE and Fred Hall fishing shows out here in the West to spread our mission of SUPPORT, DEFEND, FISH and to recruit new Coalition and Task Force members.

WB: What are some of the benefits of being an ABA member?

Army Bass: The primary benefit, in my mind and I know most if not all of my fellow ABA team mates (agree) as well, is not a tangible benefit, but the feeling of pride in helping others. This is our small way of saying thank you to the many men and women that have sacrificed so much for our freedoms and allowing us to do the things we love such as fishing. A secondary benefit are the products and discounts we get from our great sponsors that help us continue our mission.

WB: What are some of the things ABA members can do to help grow the coalition?

Army Bass: Some of the main things ABA members can do to help the organization grow are recruiting more Coalition and Task Force members –

like fellow Coalition pro David Burns of Nevada says "strength in numbers". Other ways are (to help) to spread our mission at outings and tournaments, when they can and to support booth operations at shows as I have mentioned earlier.

WB: What are the short and long term goals of ABA out West?

Army Bass: Both short and long term goals are tied together. Short term goals are to recruit as many members as we can to support our mission. That recruitment ties into the long term goals. Having a large and stable organization would allow us (to) further our mission and support our non-profits with the resources they need to provide for our veterans that have sacrificed for us.

WB: How much does it cost to join ABA and are there renewal costs?

Army Bass: It costs \$39.99 to join and \$39.99 annually to renew. The member gets a product package and discounts that are equal to or greater than the cost, but most importantly they become members in a great organization that supports all our veterans, regardless of branch of service. For more information in joining

the Coalition or becoming a Task Force member go to <http://www.armybassanglers.com/>. The Coalition pro staff position was created and designed for all active duty, retirees and veterans. The Task Force was set up for those individuals that were not in the military, but still have the desire to support our veterans.

WB: What can non ABA members do to help with events like Returning Heroes, Purple Heart Veterans, Wounded Warrior tournaments, etc.?

Army Bass: Help is greatly needed and appreciated! There are several ways to help – either by joining us in our fight as a Coalition pro staff, or a Task Force member. You can also help by donating to our non-profits, Returning Heroes Home, Heroes on the Water, and Veteran Outdoors. You can purchase our Coalition gear. Proceeds from purchases of our gear go to our non-profits. Another way to help is, to help us spread the word about our mission. If you know someone who wants to get involved, send them our way. There is nothing more rewarding than helping out others. And our wounded warriors have given so much of themselves for us, that the least we can do is give back! All the information about us and our non-profits is on our website at www.armybassanglers.com ■

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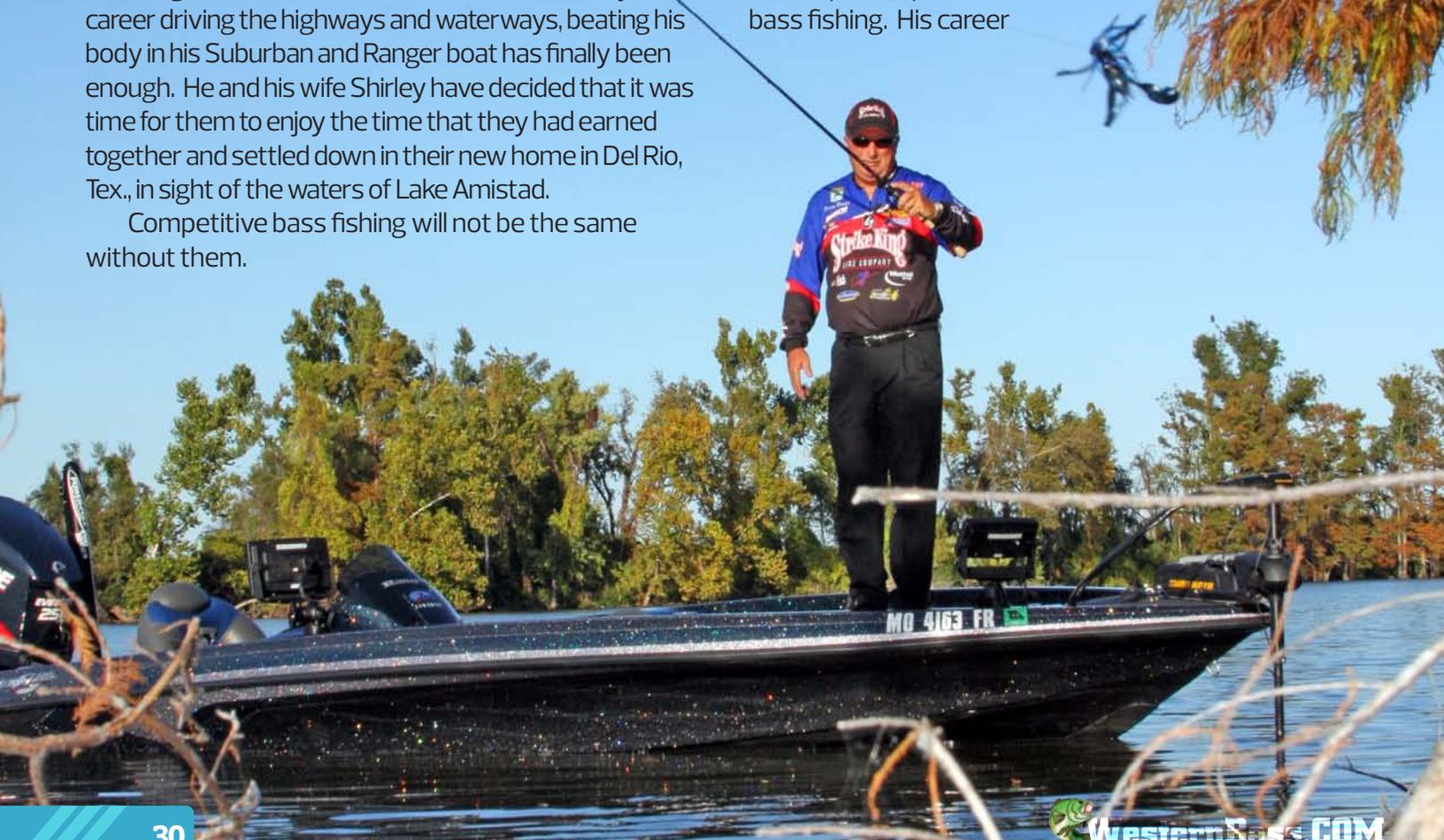
In 1975, Motown husband and wife team Freddie Perren and Christine Yarian wrote a song for a movie that reached number 38 on the Billboard Music Charts. In 1991 the R&B group Boys II Men covered the song in an a cappella form and the song reached the top of the Billboard Charts. That song was entitled "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday."

Now, I find myself struck by the lyrics to that song. By the time this issue of Westernbass.com Magazine is released, the news of the retirement of bass fishing legend Denny Brauer will have become public. At the age of 63, Brauer has decided that the 32-year career driving the highways and waterways, beating his body in his Suburban and Ranger boat has finally been enough. He and his wife Shirley have decided that it was time for them to enjoy the time that they had earned together and settled down in their new home in Del Rio, Tex., in sight of the waters of Lake Amistad.

Competitive bass fishing will not be the same without them.

*How do I say goodbye to what we had?
The good times that made us laugh,
Outweigh the bad.
I thought we'd get to see forever,
But forever's gone away
It's so hard to say goodbye to
yesterday.*

A little history lesson. Brauer steps down from what is highly regarded as one of the greatest career records in the sport of professional bass fishing. His career



statistics began with his first Bassmaster entry in a Federation Chapter Championship on Lake Eufaula, Ala. in 1978. That entry would spawn his full time venture into Bassmaster competition in 1980 and the rest as they say, would become history.

Brauer steps down from tour level competition after a career that includes 317 Bassmaster entries. Those many events have produced 17 wins, 79 top-10 finishes and 197 finishes in the money. He has competed in 21 Bassmaster Classics, winning the 1998 event on High Rock Lake in N.C. He was also the 1987 Bassmaster Angler of the Year and retires as one of only 12 anglers to have won both the Bassmaster Angler of the Year and Bassmaster Classic titles. He retires having earned \$2,579,394 in Bassmaster competition; a total that ranks him third amongst all competitors in the history of B.A.S.S.

He also found success on the FLW Tour. In 38 FLW Outdoors entries, Brauer recorded nine top-10 finishes, four appearances in the Forrest Wood Cup, collected \$132,350 and earned the 1998 FLW Angler of the Year title.

His 1998 year still ranks as the most impressive single year a professional angler has ever recorded. In 1998, Brauer won four B.A.S.S. events including the Bassmaster Classic, and placed in the top-10 five out of seven times on the FLW Tour. His Bassmaster earnings of \$406,000 still ranks in the top-10 of all time highest single season earnings. He earned an additional

\$52,500 in FLW competition that year en route to winning the FLW Tour Angler of the Year award.

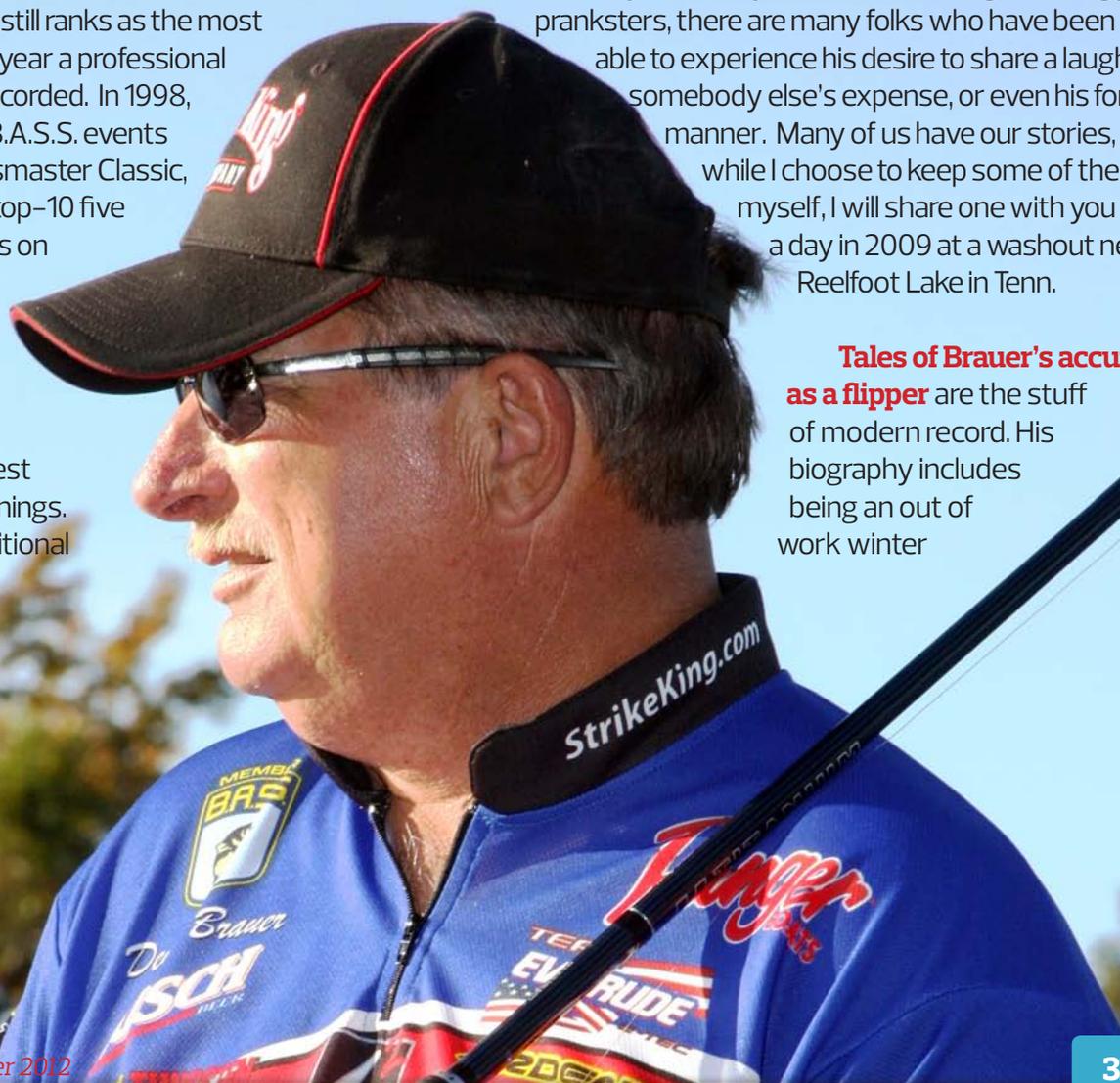
But, he was so much more to so many.

*I don't know where this road is going to lead
All I know is where we've been,
And what we've been through.
If we get to see tomorrow,
I hope it's worth all the wait
It's so hard to say goodbye to yesterday.*

While one of the fiercest competitors to ever stand on a trolling motor pedal, Brauer was always one of the biggest hearts as well. He and Shirley have been the stabilizing force to several of the pros and their families who make professional bass fishing and the periphery occupations their home. They have served as surrogate parents, uncles or brothers and sisters to many. In fact, several of the top anglers in the business today could easily call the Brauer's mentors; and in some cases, I'm sure, guardians.

Denny has always been one of the game's biggest pranksters, there are many folks who have been able to experience his desire to share a laugh at somebody else's expense, or even his for that manner. Many of us have our stories, and while I choose to keep some of them to myself, I will share one with you from a day in 2009 at a washout near Reelfoot Lake in Tenn.

Tales of Brauer's accuracy as a flipper are the stuff of modern record. His biography includes being an out of work winter



tradesman in the Midwest who practiced flipping in a corner of the living room of the Brauer home under one of Shirley's potted plants. Shirley tells of the wall being beaten paintless and the plant being minus its foliage after the winter was over. That was how Brauer passed the winter months and became a better angler.

Fast forward to October of 2009, it is the day before the annual Strike King Lure Company Writer's Conference and myself and two other photographers decide to get a head start on the work week by taking Brauer, Greg Hackney and a regional Strike King staffer named Luke Estel to the wash before dinner to get some photo shoots out of the way early.

We made our first rotations and my second one was with Denny. I - in the water - climb into a submerged bush and ask him to position his boat so that he can pitch his signature 1/2-ounce Denny Brauer Strike King Premier Pro Model Jig and 3X Chunk Trailer towards the lens with some of the branches in the lens out of focus in the foreground, a perfect setting for one of the best flippers on the planet.

Brauer, 30-feet away on the deck of his Ranger, asked me, "Do you want me to pitch it at the lens, or splash it in front of it?" I respond by telling him, "go ahead and do the first one at the lens so that I get a clean first shot." He said that was okay and asked if I was ready, to which I told him, "go ahead."

He wound up and let the jig fly with a whoosh of his rod and reel; the sounds of the action being augmented by my shutter bursting at more than six frames a second. But, instead of stopping in front of my lens, the jig proceeds past it, and bounces off of my forehead next to the flash mounted atop my

Canon camera body and falls into the water next to my right arm.

"Doink... bloop," were the sound effects I heard in my mind as I'm sure a more than puzzled look came across my face. Then, all I could hear was the guttural chuckling coming from Brauer as he tried to subdue his amusement with the result. "Oops... sorry," was the response I heard from him between chuckles as he retrieved his jig for another pitch. "Oh, sure Mr. Accuracy, like that was an accident," I said while giggling myself."

"Yeah, it was, I didn't mean to do it," he said as his giggling turned to laughter. "SSSuuuurreee," was my response, and we both began to laugh aloud before finishing the photo shoot in time for dinner at Blue Banks Resort.

Such is the way of a Hall of Fame bass angler and a Hall of Fame person.

I know that he is not gone, but the sport will certainly not be the same without him on a day in and day out basis. It will be hard to begin the 2013 Bassmaster Elite Series schedule knowing that he won't be in the field to have a chance to whip up on all of them youngins.

But, he has left us with a career full of memories both on and off the water. While he is busy saying thank you to everyone that has made his career so special, it is us that should be saying thank you to him, for giving us so much of himself.

Some memories are from his competitive career and public for all, some are private for individual participants, but nonetheless, they are all mental images of a career and a man worth remembering. ■

*And I'll take with me the memories
To be my sunshine after the rain
It's so hard to say goodbye to
yesterday.*

*And I'll take with me the
memories*

*To be my sunshine after the rain
It's so hard to say goodbye to yesterday.*

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BASS ANGLERS SCHOOLED

in more than just fishing

College fishing continues to grow at an astonishing pace. The growth has allowed many young anglers to advance to the regional and national tournaments post-college. This year was a major year for collegiate fishing. It was the first time that college fishing alumni were fishing at the top-level in bass fishing.

Brandon Card on the Bassmaster Elite Series and Clent Davis on the FLW Tour angler showed they had what it takes to compete with the pros. Both of these anglers won Rookie of the Year awards in their leagues, an impressive feat considered they were part of the first class of collegiate anglers to make it to the pros. The skills they learned on the water and in the classroom have proven to be valuable to their success.

Brandon Card is a graduate of the University of Kentucky, where he majored in landscape architecture and received his Bachelor's Degree. He believes that his public speaking and sponsor relations skills were an important part of his growth as an angler. After graduation, he chose to focus on his career as a pro bass angler and qualified for the Elite Series in his first try after fishing the Bassmaster Southern Opens. Card believes the college fishing schedule and stiff competition prepared him for the Opens and the Elite Series. His rookie year started off very strong on the

Elite Series and he cashed a check in his first five tournaments on the way to his Rookie of the Year title.

Clent Davis of Montevallo, Ala. studied kinesiology and history at the University of Montevallo. After his college graduation, he fished a season as a co-angler on the FLW Tour. His success from the back of the boat prompted him to make the jump to the pros. His rookie season was one of consistency and he

qualified for the Forrest Wood Cup and



the Toyota Texas Bass Fishing Championship as a result of his 15th place season-ending points standings.

TOURNAMENT PREPARATION

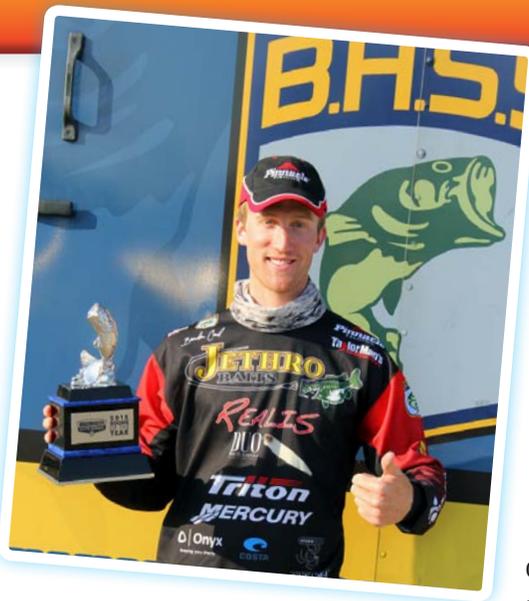
College fishing often takes anglers to new bodies of water outside of their home region and forces them to find fish quickly on unfamiliar waters. Just like the professional tours, college anglers are forced to adapt and make the most of limited practice time. "When I was in college, we would often just show up and fish and if we were lucky we would have a day of practice. We always had a test or presentation for school, so it made us fish with instinct and make the most of what we had," added Card.

Clent Davis echoed those statements and agreed that it made him find his own fish. He added one piece of advice for college anglers, "don't go out and get a guide or call all the locals for the best spots. You are better off learning to find fish on your own, especially if you plan to do this as a pro," stated Davis. The fact that college tournaments are often multi-day events also prepared them for life as a touring pro. College anglers are forced to find enough fish to last the entire event and also have to learn how to manage the fish they've found. Davis and Card see this as a valuable lesson they learned from college.

THE BUSINESS SIDE OF FISHING

Tournament bass fishing and the search for sponsors continues to become more difficult with the growing popularity of the sport Davis and Card learned early in their college careers that being able to find sponsor support is vital towards being able to fish tournaments.

Both of these anglers served as the president of their bass club and feel that the lessons they learned in organizing a team and creating sponsorship proposals and presentations helped them land the sponsors they have today. Card signed multiple sponsors immediately after he qualified for the Elite Series and is quick to point out that college helped prepare him for the business side of fishing. "When I was in college, I



was responsible for meeting with sponsors and giving presentations to multiple people in order to obtain financial support. Whether I was a potential sponsor or the Student Government Association, I had to be prepared to show why we deserved support" added Card.

Davis has a similar perspective and mentioned that two of his current sponsors, B & M Baits and TheFishRanger.com were sponsors of his university's bass club and continued with him as he moved up the ranks. This alone helped him make the transition from college to the pros more seamless.

HITTING THE BOOKS

While both of these young anglers admit that their majors are not directly related to bass fishing or business, they both feel that college studies in general were important to their current success. "I think that the public speaking and study skills were crucial to being successful in fishing. Public speaking is important for being able to present yourself and studying textbooks and preparing for a test is much like preparing for a new lake and studying maps," stated Card.

Davis takes a different look at how his studies prepared him for bass fishing professionally, "I studied kinesiology and our entire program was about staying in shape and being able to be healthy. When you fish all day for multiple days that plays an important role in being able to stay focused," added Davis.

With their success, these young anglers have shown, it will not be the last time we hear about a college angler transitioning to the pros. Davis added "college anglers should take advantage of all of the great opportunities out there for them and really support the organizations who are investing in college."

"College prepares you for much more than just catching bass, there is so much more to it. Catching fish is important, but you have to have the whole package to be successful at the highest level," concluded Card.

Two of the first college anglers have become Rookie of the Year, that may be a coincidence, but chances are that we are looking at whole new perspective on the professional anglers. ■

DESERT LAKES

I'm excited. It's fall again and the heat of summer is over and the winter is on its way in the desert areas of the west. I will be talking about the fall transition in the western desert pertaining to Lake Mead, Lake Mojave and Lake Havasu. With daytime temperatures and water temperatures dropping, the bass will be more comfortable and active in the lower water temperatures of fall to winter. Consequently, the bass will be feeding more and bulking up for the long winter when everything slows down.

With shorter days and cooler nights, the crisp mornings and water temperatures dropping, generally the shad schools move more shallow and closer to the shore for longer durations of time during morning hours before moving out. They move in during the night when the water cools and stay shallower and closer to shore for longer periods of time following their food source, the plankton. Just as the shad follow their food source, the bass will be sure to follow the shad. Schools of largemouth and smallmouth bass will have discontinued their suspended summer pattern following the shad schools in open water. The bass will become more catchable as they move into the shallows chasing the shad which are the main forage base in the desert lakes.

Don't forget crawdads in all the rocky areas that have football size or smaller rocks. The smallmouth and largemouth love these areas. Jigs will become a great lure during this time of year for the crawdad feeders.

Topwater, jerk baits, cranks, worms, jigs, buzzbaits, Senkos, grubs, dart heads, swimbaits, and everything will work this time of year, you will just have to break it down and find a pattern that will work for you.

Our clear water lakes of the desert cool quicker than our stained water lakes such as the Calif. Delta and Clear Lake which hold the heat longer; but the storm fronts in the north parts of the west have larger temperature drops from the 70's and 50's in the day time and nights of 40's to 60's which drops the water temperature much quicker in the northern part of the west,

When the water temp reaches the low 50's, which it can be in Dec., the bite becomes really, really tough and you need to slow down and fish deeper down in the 25-ft or deeper range with jigs and dropshots. You need to watch out for shallow schools of shad in the morning and get some aggressive active fish in the morning.

Electronics are very important for looking for bait balls that will tell you what depth they are in. Generally in desert lakes they are in 25- to 30-feet and on deep ledges or points.

Consequently, this makes the western desert lakes easier to pattern for a longer duration of time. The fronts in the desert lakes this time of year do not have as great a temperature change, so the water cools down more gradual making the patterning of largemouth and smallmouth bass more consistent.

At the river of Lake Havasu, you should find the largemouth and smallmouth bass next to the current. Look for eddies, current breaks, and deeper water areas.

In the main lake bays on the desert lakes look for bays that have some depth and secondary channels coming into them with cover such as grass beds and brush. Look for the shad, baitfish, or bluegill. Even though you don't see any bass, they will be there. They know where their food supply is holding.



Try the secondary points, drops and channels in the bays. The bass will hold on these until they feel like traveling into the back to feed on the shad, baitfish or bluegill. When you know the bait is in the back of the bay or cove and they are not visible the bass are around and in the mood to feed and the bait fish know it's time to hide out.

The biggest key is to follow the forage and the largemouth and smallmouth will be close by. During high skies fish the light breaks in these areas where the forage is present.

Stay slow and deep and look for the schools of shad - you are fishing for five bites, it is tough. If you are fun fishing, net some live shad first thing in the morning and fish those on the same place you fish artificial baits you will get ten bites to every one bite on live bait that time of year.

Consider these baits when fishing the desert lakes . For topwater, use Chuggers, Rio Rico in Klicka Shad (the new hot color) & Manahl's RX. For walking baits, try a Spook, Vixen, Gun Fish or Sammy. For a jig, try 3/4 and 1/4-oz football in browns, greens, purples with Yamamoto Twin Tail or Single Tail trailers in four or five-

inch size. For Senkos, use a four or five-inch in greens, browns and milk. You can fish them wacky-rigged, nose weight, or no weight, depending on the depth you want to fish. For Jerk baits use Lucky Craft in shad colors. For crankbaits, try Normans, Jackall, in shad and crawdad colors. For lipless cranks, use a Rat-I-Trap or Lucky Craft LV in chrome and shad colors. For worms, use a drop shot with light line, a 12-inch leader in colors Folkestad Special, oxblood light, and Aaron's Magic, in a four or six inch size. Try a Texas-rigged Roboworm in browns, greens, and purples with 1/8- to 1/4-oz slide sinker and for a swimbait, try small sizes in shad colors and be sure to use Shaun Bailey's new swimbait. ■

Mike Folkestad has been inducted into the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame for 2013. He is a Professional Bass Angler sponsored by Daiwa, Ranger, Mercury, Motorguide, Lowrance Electronics, Roboworm, Angler's Marine, and Seaguar Fishing Line. He is the host of TC Sports Report News and the co-host for Tami Curtis's TV Show Fish'n 4 FUN!

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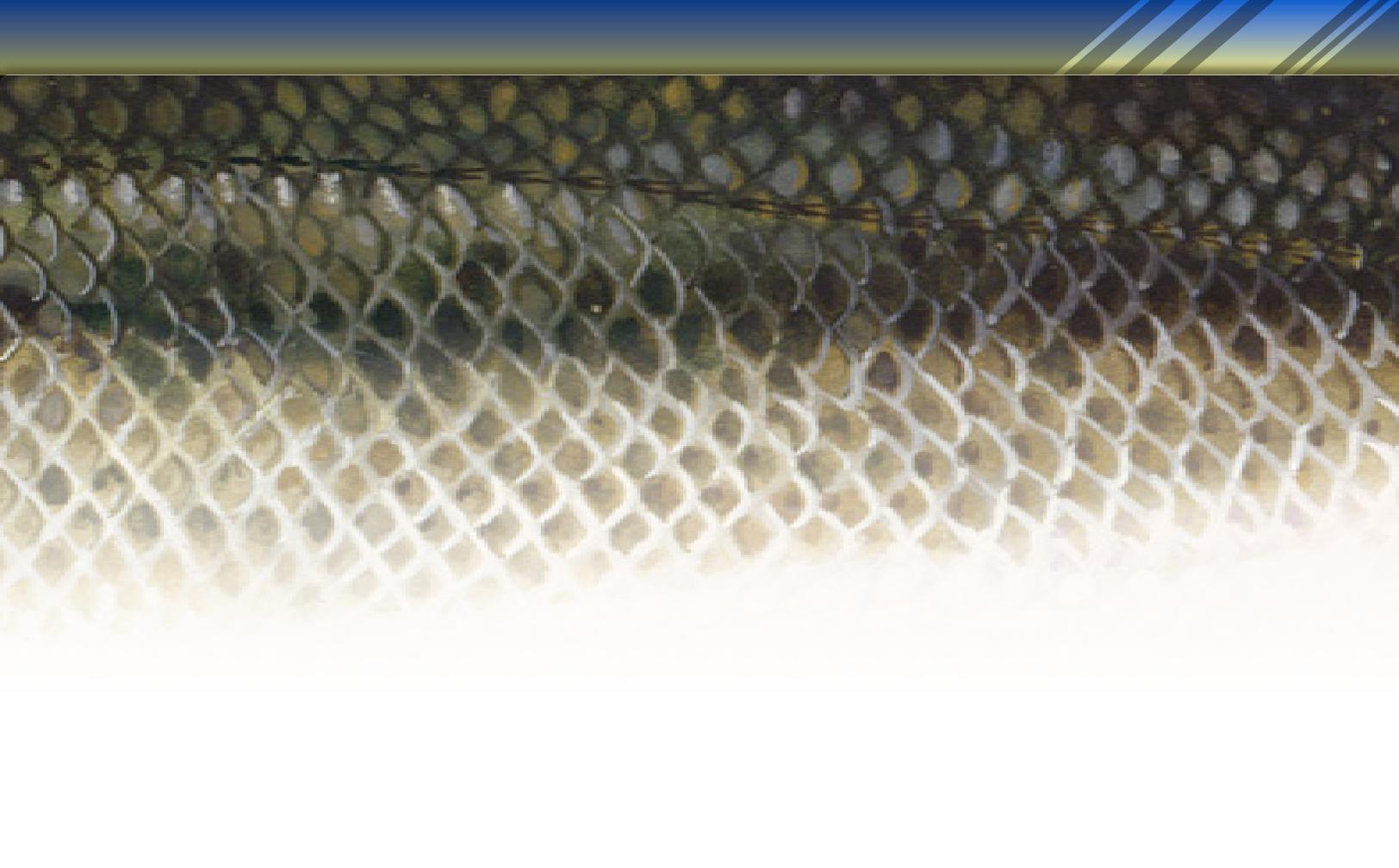
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an insider's look at **CLEAR LAKE**



On the Northern Calif. fishery known as Clear Lake, the months that stretch from the fall to winter typically welcomes a myriad of competitive bass fishing events that often include yearend Classics, Tournaments of Champions (TOC's), circuit stops by such organizations WON Bass or the FLW EverStart trail as well as annual, branded specialty tournaments such as Triton Owners West. Events can range from one to three days and can greet upwards of 100 participants.

The popularity of the big bass fishery is not only for the competitive bass angler, it also draws the fun fishermen and the big bass hunters. This is a time of year, when it is not uncommon to catch such quality and quantity of



fish that an angler finds himself culling four and five pounders.

For a closer look at the lake and to get an insider's view on the fishing during this season, Western Bass checked in with a couple of the resident locals to find out how they approach the fish in the late fall to and early winter.

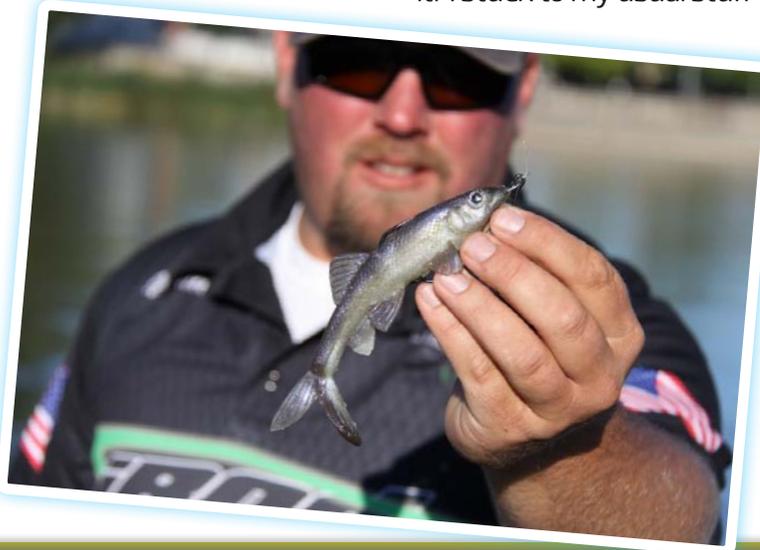
BILL O'SHINN

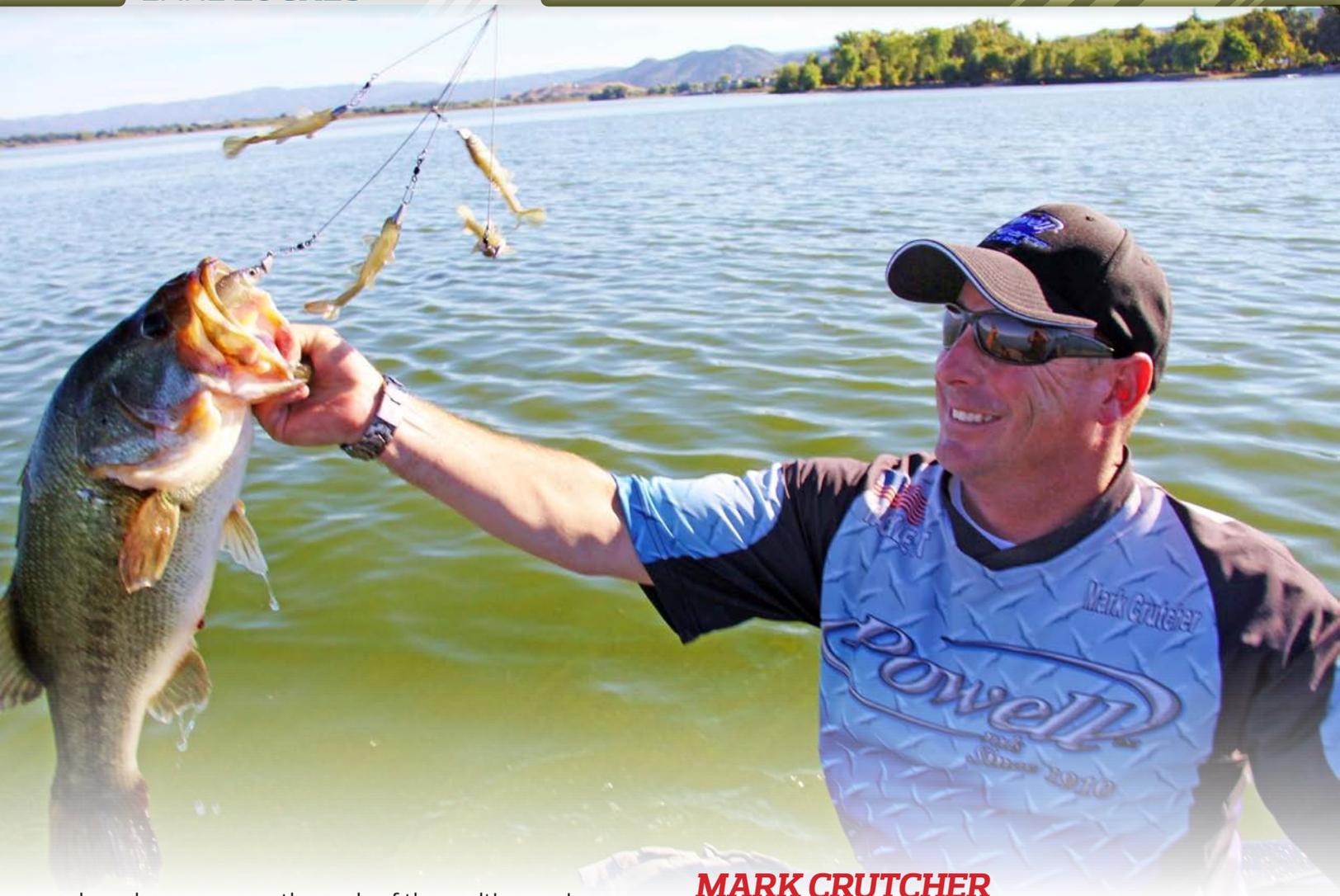
Clear Lake resident Bill O'Shinn also weighed in on the lake's fishing this year, prior to the kick off of the onslaught of October/ November tournaments. He stated the most important factor this time of year was the baitfish and a key bait would be the lipless crankbait. He tipped off anglers that a quieter, lighter lure such as the LV 200 as opposed to the LV 300 would be a good bait early in the change of the season for a more subtle,

quiet approach. He also recommended the River2Sea Whopper Plopper as another subtle bait in contrast to the Spook or buzzbait. "You can work it super-slow," said O'Shinn.

He also likes multi-rig arm lures as the winter chimes in. O'Shinn expressed that the umbrella rig would continue to be a game changer in the tournament scene, this year as it was last year - during this season. "I do think that it will work here again, maybe another year or two," said O'Shinn. "But, truthfully last year, I found success here by not using it; because there were so many guys fishing it. I stuck to my usual stuff and it seemed to do alright."

He noted that the overall umbrella rig fishing, remained more traditional on the lake with plastic swimbaits rather than the spinnerbait, Carolina rigs, chatterbaits or other options that





MARK CRUTCHER

have been seen on the ends of the multi-arm rigs in other locations. "I have seen some guys puttin' a blade on here or there; but that is about it," said O'Shinn. "I've seen a lot of different variations of wires and such, I get sent a lot of 'em to try out, like a seven-arm rig and even a nine-arm rig."

His multi-rig advice included having a shallow and deep water rig ready on deck. The Trash Fish Jumbo Minnows rigged weedless on the River2Sea BumberShoot made up his shallow water rig. He suggested this version for earlier in the transition time. His deeper water umbrella rig had the River2Sea Rig Walker 100 tied on.

Another O'Shinn choice was the River2Sea S-Waver. He likes this bait for the inactive fish and recommended, "maybe in the afternoon, when they just need something rollin' by real slow."

He wrapped up his seasonal suggestions with "general plastic swimbaits", saying "smaller for earlier in transition time, when the bait fish are smaller." He explained he will upsize to the Trash Fish as he gets deeper into the winter.

A Clear Lake local for more than a decade, Mark Crutcher has fished his way to countless victories that have included four boats. When he was asked what he would be fishing for the season, Crutcher said, "My favorite five baits are topwater frog and buzzbait, Alabama rig, a big swimbait and then I'm going to yo-yo a rattle trap."

He noted the frog and buzzbait will be fished through the warmer fall days and put away as the temps drop into the colder winter months. Fifty-two degrees was the magic number that ends his frog fishing days.

The cooling patterns that occur on Clear Lake at this time of year have Crutcher thinking that the Little Creeper Trash Fish will be a productive bait through the month of October. Fishing the Trash Fish on Seaguar 20-lb fluorocarbon, his target areas are on the north side of the lake in the vegetation. "You are going to throw this in the weeds - the same places you would throw a chatterbait or a swimbait," said Crutcher. As for



EDITOR'S NOTE

Mark Crutcher and Bill O'Shinn both participated in the first tournament on Clear Lake in October - the Triton Owner's Tournament West. O'Shinn and his partner captured a 3rd place finish with a two-day total of 42.30. Crutcher and his teammate climbed to 24th in a 93 boat field with a tournament total of 32.20.

his Rat-I-Trap, he has this tied on to 15-lb Seaguar fluorocarbon. He chooses a clear colored trap; Ghost Minnow is his preference.

As the calendar pages turn into November and the cold fronts begin to show themselves causing the grass to further die off, he expects to find success with a 9-inch Jerry Rago SKT Inline Swimmer in Light Hitch. He plans to throw this on Seaguar 20- to 25-lb fluorocarbon. "I'm hitting bottom with an open hook," said Crutcher. "Throw this on deep rocks like you would an Alabama Rig. When it's time to catch 28 to 30 (pounds), this and the Alabama Rig is what you are going to use."

Crutcher opts for a Snakebite Baits umbrella rig with baby Trash Fish on 20-lb fluorocarbon for his multi-arm setup. "Occasionally, I will use a Basstrix," he added. ■

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WINTER

is on its way

Winter water reaches high 40 or low 50 in Nov. or Dec., depending on how many cold fronts we've had. During this transition, we need to slow down and fish a four inch worm on rock piles or ledges and small baits.

Be sure to remember that there will be good days and slow days of fishing in the end of the fall and winter so don't get discouraged on the slow days, because the next day can be a great day!

Things to keep in mind with the cooling, that the green grass beds start turning brown and dying off. What you should look for is the remaining green grass, because it is more oxygenated these patches will hold pan fish and bait fish. Consequently the bass will use these for an easy meal.

If you're at an area with a lot of docks and you should look for the ones that have transitions from shallow to deep with a hard bottom. Some of the docks will have grass patches around them. These types of docks will have crawdad and bait fish populations around them also and should be the better docks for bass fishing. Other good places are ledges and rock piles. They are also great places that can hold lots of crawdads and bait fish. These places are also great for largemouth bass to push shad schools against causing them to disperse and make an easy meal.

Just remember that largemouth are schooled up and once you find one of these places they are using, it can be a real hot spot. Be sure not to leave after catching one bass. Schools will continue to use these places for trapping shad all day long.

Jigs and crank baits are always a good bet around the rock pile and ledges, and also the hard bottoms around the docks. Also dropshotting and don't forget that the swimbaits start coming into play and become stronger as we head into winter and the multi-rig could possibly be on fire!

Important things to keep in mind in the late fall/winter bass fishing is continually keeping up with the water temperature and knowing the forage base in each lake and their movements in the fall, because the bass will be sure to follow. Locate all shallow water adjacent to deep water and location of remaining grass beds and patches of which will be continually breaking down as the water cools and we head toward winter.

In the winter when the water cools from fall temperatures, the bass will stay active until the water reaches low 50's then the metabolism slows and they don't feed as actively. Remember to match colors and size of forage when choosing a lure. This is always a good starting point.

During the fall in the northern part of the west, remember that weather fronts can be more drastic which could cause large water temperature drops into the winter months. Also with the barometer falling it will generally push the bass from the shallows into the deeper water, or they will stay put and hold tight to cover. So you will need to fish tighter to cover and check the deeper water. In addition slow down your retrieve. Sometimes you will need to scale down your bait size.

Here are some baits I like to fish at Clear Lake

during this time of year – lipless crank baits such as a Rat-I-Trap and Luck Craft LV's in shad colors, deep diving crankbaits like Deep Little N's and DD22s in shad and crawdad colors and a multi-rig. I like Roboworms in Folkestad Special and Maverick's Tami's Rock 'n Roller in Mangler color. I like Huddleston, Trash Fish and Triple Trout swimbaits and Zara Spooks, Gun Fish and Frogs for topwater. The jigs I would suggest are a 3/8-oz or 1/2-oz, football head in browns, greens, and purples.

The Delta follows the same basic fall/winter transitions except you have to deal with incoming and outgoing tides.

Stay away from the dead end sloughs which are good in the spring. Once again, find shallows next to deep water, grass patches and so forth. The bass start moving more toward the current areas and more toward main channels. The best bites will be at the time the tide changes and as long as there is moving water. The bass should be catchable. The slack times are generally slow. This is always typical throughout the year.

California Delta Baits I like are surface lures like buzzbaits and wake baits which can be great this time of year with a slow steady retrieve, walking baits such as Spooks, Gun Fish, Vixens, and Frogs and also crankbaits around current edges in red and oranges. Rat-I-Traps and LVs are good around grass beds and edges of current in red and shad colors.

On drop off edges at low tides when the bass move to the deeper edges, jigs are a good bet in reds, blacks, orange, browns, and purple colors. Roboworm, Power Worms, Maverick's Tami's Rock 'n Roller are recommended worms and don't forget to try curl tails.

Pitch in holes and grass in hyacinth, using up to 1 1/2-oz sinker pinched off with a bobber stopper with a Paycheck skirt with a sweet beaver. ■

Tami Curtis is a tournament bass angler sponsored by Daiwa.

She is the producer of Fish'n 4 FUN TV Show and www.TCsportsREPORT.com

Photos by Jody Only

BY BRIAN CARPENTER

CHARGING TO WIN *power up your batteries*

Iwould like to relate a battery issue I had experienced recently while fishing a local Anglers Choice Pro/Am on the California Delta. I had pre fished for a day and a half prior to the event without knowing my batteries were not being charged. Early Saturday morning, before the Pro/Am tournament, I notice that the electrical cord had been unplugged from the outlet. I was completely stressed as I opened my battery compartment and plugged the charger in to check the battery levels. The trolling motor batteries showed near complete discharge; so here I am the first day of the Pro/Am and I have no trolling motor batteries. How am I going to fish with a 40-mph wind forecasted?

I connected jumper cables in parallel to the start battery, as my big motor was running, positive to positive, negative to negative to trolling battery #1. I rotated between troll battery one, two and three all morning while, fishing different areas. I was able to fish in 10-mph winds for most of the

morning until the wind came up to 30 or 40-mph at 11:00 a.m.

Fortunately, I was able to catch a semi-decent bag using black and blue chatter baits before 11:00 a.m. and I was completely out of power at noon.

My pattern was relatively easy. I was targeting stained water with current on ambush points next to deeper water. I would look for rocky points with weeds and fish 50-yards on either side of the points and tule islands with current on the sides next to deep water. The clarity played a big role in positioning the fish shallow enough to be caught on reaction baits. The black and blue chatter bait is perfect for these presentations.

The cold morning pretty much eliminated the topwater bite in the areas I was focusing on. Later in the day I used a black and blue jig to probe off the sides of the points and deeper water. One very important aspect of this pattern is to throw the chatter bait in heavier current and the jig in less current. The more current present, the shallower the fish will be. The fish will position themselves shallow in stained fast water for one reason, "to eat". The slower current areas next to the ambush points will hold fish that can be caught with a slower presentation.

At noon, I was forced to tie up to a dock and run my big motor at 1500 rpms to charge the dead batteries, so



that I could actually move around a little in some sort of protected area and keep fishing. My options were very limited at that point. I ended up 3rd place in the event after a heavier bag on Day 2 with fully charged batteries.

I vowed to never let this happen again. I contacted Stealth Charging Systems in Tenn. immediately after that tournament after hearing about an onboard charging system. I had heard about onboard charging systems a few years ago, but I just dealt with the low batteries as usual business at the end of the day.

During my win of the FLW EverStart Delta event this year, I had used my batteries so hard during each day of practice, competition, and in the tournament, by the end of the day, every day the batteries were very weak. This actually effected which areas I could fish late in the day, depending on the wind direction and velocity.

Stealth Charging Systems charges on the run or from an electrical outlet and it works great. The smart technology looks at your start battery voltage first and then distributes power accordingly to your trolling motor batteries as you run. I found out later that you can also charge your trolling motor batteries from your vehicle's alternator as you're traveling. The technology also prevents overcharging your batteries as well.

The system comes with an onboard gauge that mounts on your boat dash, so that you are constantly aware of your battery status. The personnel at Stealth are battery experts. They do recommend plugging in your Stealth battery charger at the end of every day to top the charge off. They are competitive fishermen as well; so, I give their opinion great weight.

After using the Stealth Charger I could not be more pleased with the results. My batteries are as strong at noon as they are first thing in the morning. I am the type of fisherman who moves around an area with moderate speed on the trolling motor, and runs with the big motor frequently during the day, so the Stealth Charger is a perfect fit for me. Hopefully, all fishermen can benefit from an awesome new technology like Stealth Charging Systems.

FLW EverStart champion Brian Carpenter lives on the Calif. Delta and spends much of his time fishing his home water. He is a 3-time California bass Federation State Team qualifier and has five top-3 finishes on the big bass fishery in tournament circuits that include the FLW National Guard, Angler's Choice and WON Bass. Carpenter's sponsors include Power-Pole, Powell Rods, Stealth Charging Systems, TNT Baits and Costa Del Mar. ■

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inside BAILEY'S BRAIN

catchin' bass with one of the big bait posse

You know the story, big swimbaits, bigger bass and the biggest bass catchin' action ever caught on film – Mike Iaconelli, Matt Newman, Justin Kerr, Dave Holoubek and the Bailey's – It was the Big Bait Posse. It's been a couple of years since the video caught swimbaiter's attention, but the Posse is still chuckin' their giant baits and reelin' in giant bass.

At this stage, the guys can be found on different fisheries with Iaconelli on the East Coast, Newman in the southern part of the Golden State, Kerr in the South West, even the Bailey's – Shaun and Paul now find home water in separate states, but their big bass battles live on, regardless of their locale.

WesternBass dropped in for a day on the water with the younger Bailey – Paul, who now makes his home on one of the West's biggest bass fisheries – Clear Lake. Free to see the swimbait specialist's secrets in action and ask any questions that came to mind, Bailey gave us a look into his bass catchin' brain.

For him it was a bass hunt, for WesternBass a quest for bass knowledge. Here's how the Q&A panned out.

WB: Let's start with what have you got tied on, right now.

BAILEY: I've got a D&M chatterbait, a frog, a Tsunaga (by SwimBaits Inc.) and a Punker. Everything I'm throwin' is reaction, I've got no finesse baits tied on at this time of year and that pretty much will be the case throughout the fall and into the winter.

WB: Since, you're starting with the chatterbait, tell me everything – what are you going to target, what are you throwin' it on, what do you do to make it different.

BAILEY: It's fall right now – we've had some cooling, the days are still warm, the nights can drop off into the 40's though, but it still not winter weather, so I'm going to hit the shade pockets. You get a bite in every shade pocket, whether it's a four a six or a two, you're going to get a bite in every shade pocket right now – the two pounders miss it a bunch, but they bite. Shade pockets and wooden

docks are going to be my main focus. I've got on a 1/2-oz D & M Baits chatterbait with a Zoom watermelon fluke trailer. I used superglue to hold it on better and I'm using 40-lb braid. I haven't had any problems breakin' off or losin' in pillings - it cuts the grass good- some guys fish on fluoro; but the braid is more sensitive and it makes my whole rod and reel rattle. I feel it a lot better with braid. You can feel everything from when you get stuck on a blade of grass or hit a pole or if he just ticks it, with braid, I know more of what is going on.

WB: It seems like a lot of guys say crankbaits for this time of year - what about you?

BAILEY: I do throw crankbaits and I got one on it just recently; but it was killin' me thinkin' that every cast I could be throwing a chatterbait. It is something I might try practice with a shallow 1.5 in bluegill or shad and throw into the shade pockets and see if they'll eat. If they will eat it then it's something that may work better come 11:00 a.m. when it slows down; because it is more subtle.

WB: How long before you stop throwing the chatterbait?

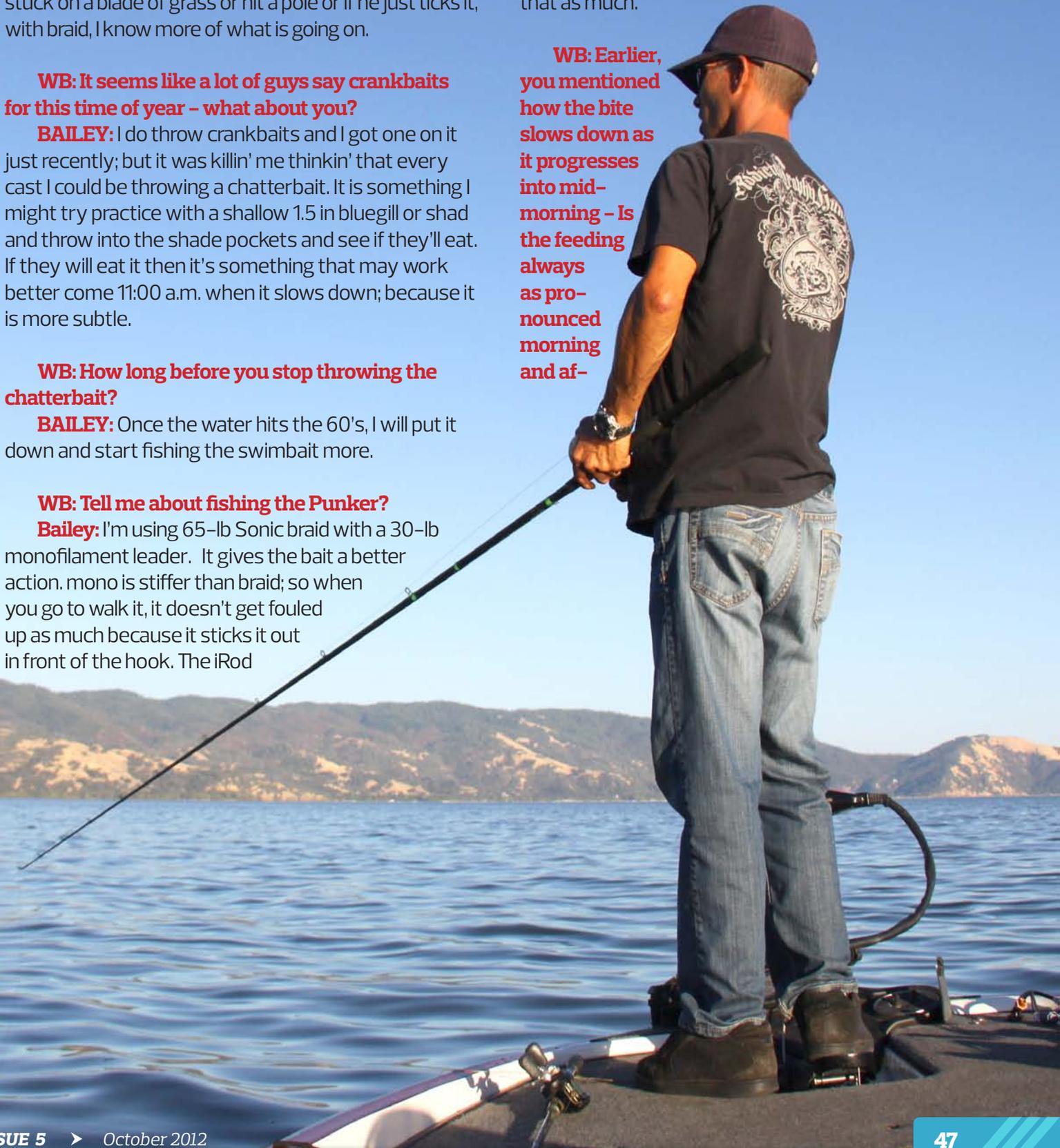
BAILEY: Once the water hits the 60's, I will put it down and start fishing the swimbait more.

WB: Tell me about fishing the Punker?

Bailey: I'm using 65-lb Sonic braid with a 30-lb monofilament leader. It gives the bait a better action. mono is stiffer than braid; so when you go to walk it, it doesn't get fouled up as much because it sticks it out in front of the hook. The iRod

Large Swimbait rod makes walking this effortless -this rod is money. I am adamant about this rod with a Punker, because the right rod gives the bait the right action, I'm tryin' to get that chuggin' noise with the Punker and a lot of rods require too much work to work it right. When you cast the Punker up shallow, let it sit until the rings disappear, if you're fishing in more open water with some chop, you don't have to worry about that as much.

WB: Earlier, you mentioned how the bite slows down as it progresses into mid-morning - Is the feeding always as pronounced morning and af-



ternoon with a lull in mid-day or is that a seasonal characteristic on this lake?

BAILEY: In the winter feeding evens out some. It's almost like about 1:00 p.m., they get warmed, so they really get goin' and start eating. For some reason the fish eat at night a lot during the winter, you can go out there and catch more eight to ten pounders in December than any other month at night, which is kind of odd to me.

WB: It's October and you're throwing the frog - when will you stop throwing one?

BAILEY: Depends on the temperature, but usually the start of November, pretty much October is when it changes enough to make me stop. Plus, I fish it pretty slow right now, those big ones are pretty smart; so I fish it slow and leave it there for them as long as I can.

WB: As it continues to get colder - what else will you change about your bait choices compared to what you're fishing today?

BAILEY: I'm fishing three things, a chatterbait,

an Alabama rig and a Rat-I-Trap. With those three baits, you can fish fast and you're going to cover a lot of water and you're going to find schools on the lake. As it keeps getting colder, I'm going to say the main baits are the A-rig and a swimbait.

WB: What are your favorite target areas?

BAILEY: Wood docks are good for some reason it seems like bass like the older wood docks. I'm also looking for rock, the fish won't necessarily go deep, they sit shallow. I'm fishing shallow rock. I like tules - anywhere in front of tules you find rock, the locals know that and I like isolated rock piles, not necessarily the big, big ones like Shag Rock and that stretch; but I like the isolated rock that not too many guys are fishing, seems like I can pick one or two up there and that's how I like to fish the wintertime here. I like the fine gravel. They'll hold on to it in the winter; they will get on the asphalt and concrete ramps in the morning next to rock piles, so that is a pattern that we will actually run in the winter time.

WB: What about when it's raining, does your strategy change at all?

BAILEY: If it is raining, you better be throwin' a jig here, that's what I've learned. If you're not throwin' a jig, you better be throwin' a swimbait, bouncin' on the bottom. The fish here just get stuck to the bottom in the rain, unless you're fishing the creek and then they go right to the wood and up shallow; but pretty much they go straight to the bottom and you've got to fish slow.

WB: Does it matter if it's a cold winter rain or a warmer spring rain for the jig?

BAILEY: Cold rain, warm rain - they eat the jig way better in the rain.

WB: What color, what size and what specifically are you looking for with your jig?

BAILEY: Chunky, big "bouldery" type rock - a black and blue jig - when it's dark - oxblood colors, purple and brown. I throw a big jig with a double wide Beaver. The smallest I would throw is a 3/8 with a regular Beaver not a Smallie. Because there's always something going here, these fish are so keyed into the bait you can always get 'em on a reaction bait, I've caught 'em on a swimbait here when the surface water was 39-degrees. It was wide open five pounders, temperature below the surface was 45 or 46; it was 29 degrees out-



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side, everything was frozen and we were whackin' five pounders we were practicing for a tournament.

WB: What are you willing to say about swimbait fishing?

BAILEY: Most of the time, I'm going to use Huddleston – it looks too real and I have too much confidence in it. I will start using it when the water hits 57 and they start gettin' on that real steep rock. For me, here, any blue top swimbait works really well. Everybody knows that I fish that blue back Huddleston and I throw it all winter long; but I have to get in the mix with the a rig – I think the A-rig bite will run all winter. Last year if you weren't throwin' one, you weren't in the top-15; but it ended by spring. The guys trained the fish all winter long.

WB: Tell me about the swimbait you're using today?

BAILEY: This is the Tsunaga. It is real special, it looks like a real fish. It's 8-inches. You've got to work this, it doesn't work itself. You've got to work it like a Spook, rippin' it, twitchin, chuggin'. It comes down to cadence with this one. I fish it on the same setup as the Punker. This one is blue; but I think a white belly and silver sides is what is most important. I fish this in ambush spots, it's a direct cast bait. I don't use it for a search bait, but once I've located my fish – this is the one to get 'em to bite.

WB: Is the umbrella rig going to win all the October/November tournaments.

BAILEY: I think the start of the October tournaments will be both the Trash Fish and a rig; but you can fish the rig so much faster, you just get more casts in. Sometimes it takes me three minutes to wind in the Trash Fish, so it's just a slower fishing bait, but still deadly.

WB: Tell me about fishing the umbrella rig?

BAILEY: I will throw it steady when the temps are constantly in the 60's. I use the iRod Genesis II Bama Rig Special. It's a 7'10" rod with 65-lb braid. For the a-rig, on the lakes, it is about the angles, when you've got the right angle, you can just get 'em one after another. Some days they're going to eat it on the fall and



some on the wind. Stay on the rock piles. I am going to fish the steep rock, mid-lake to the Rattle Snake arm to the Red Bud arm.

WB: There are a lot of night tournaments here – got any night fishing tips you will share.?

BAILEY: Stay on the rock at 20-feet or deeper with a jig.

WB: Do you ever fish a dropshot?

BAILEY: In springtime, I am. I'm pitching it in tule holes and certain docks I've seen big ones on during the year. I fish it a lot then actually. I throw it on 8-lb-test to get more bites with a Roboworm in Peoples and that special red Aarons color.

WB: Do you ever fish a Senko?

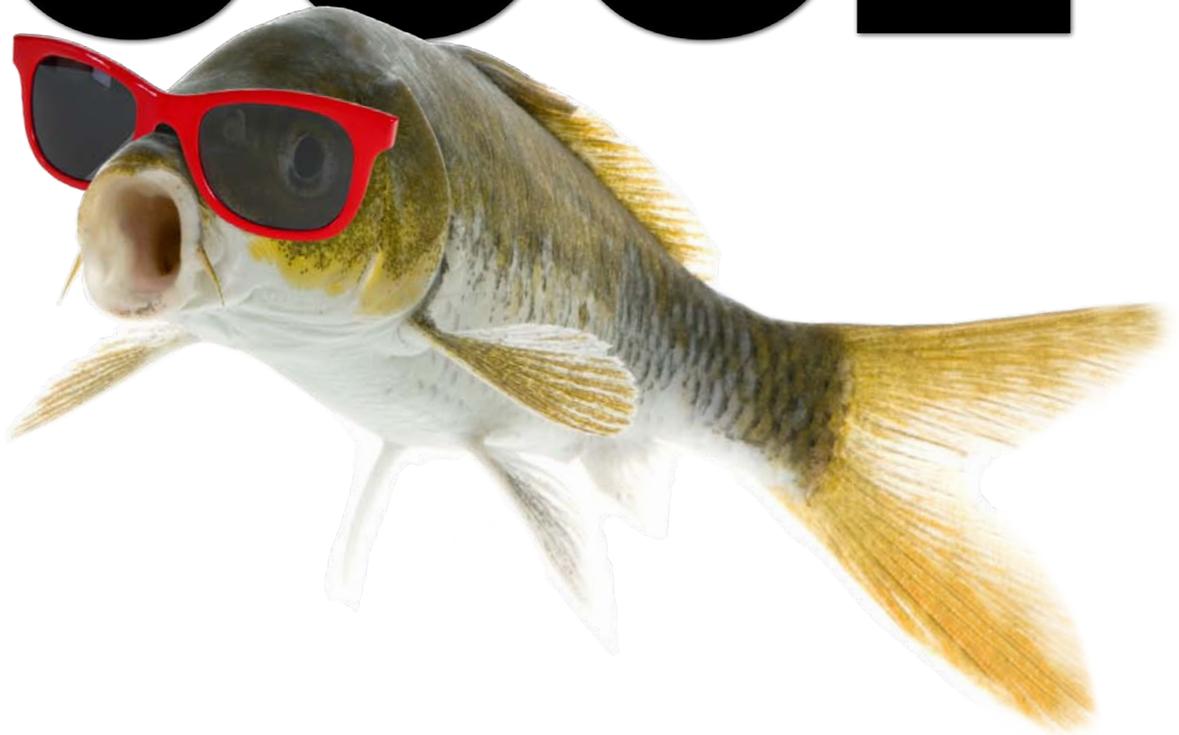
BAILEY: I do; but I use it as a follow up to a buzzbait.

WB: Is there any item that you never go fishing without?

BAILEY: My Reactor watch. It never fails. It's the toughest sport watch there is and it comes preprogrammed with moon phases and tidal charts for 250 locations. ■

Paul Bailey and his partner pulled 41.08 from the lake to earn a 4th place finish in the Triton Owner's Tournament – West this month.

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