



BASS ANGLER'S Notebook



TIPS, TRICKS AND ADVICE...

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I firmly believe in the saying "A change is as good as a holiday" and at the time of this writing everybody around me is experiencing that festive season 'holiday feeling', including me. I decided "Diary of a Pro" needed a holiday and would now like to introduce you to 'The Bass Angler's Notebook'. Each month the 'Notebook' will cover a range of different topics, all aimed at the bass angler - novice, social, competitive or experienced.

ALL ABOUT BASS FISHING!! BY CHRISTIE THOMAS

SUMMER BASS – What Makes Them Tick?

A bass is a cold-blooded creature and just like a snake, crocodile or lizard they will take on the same temperature as the environment surrounding them. As temperatures soar during the hottest of the summer months the water will warm up and can reach the high 80- and 90-degree mark (Fahrenheit). Bass will remain relatively active in water up to the 80-degree mark but once the temperature starts exceeding this mark they will spend less time foraging and more time holding to key areas close to an abundant food supply. In short; the bass find themselves a great fast-food restaurant where they can quickly grab a bite to eat and get back to their holding area without too much exertion. This way they are able to conserve energy and avoid overstressing themselves within the heated environment.

Where Do I Look For Summer Bass?

Bass will often hang in the **shade** of aquatic and shoreline vegetation and man-made structure because shady water will be cooler than water exposed to sunlight most of the day. During the summer some dams may suffer from oxygen depletion; when this happens bass will hold close to **weedbeds** and any **flowing water** if it is available.

Photosynthesis produces oxygen and flowing water usually holds a lot of dissolved oxygen. In dams where there is little vegetation or wood cover the bass key on **deep drop-offs** and the **ends of main-lake points**. In dams with muddy or stained water the bass will stay shallow most of the time, even during the hottest months, but hold very close to cover or structure.

Time to go Offshore

Offshore structure fishing is the key ingredient to summertime bass fishing. Bass will move out and away from the smaller arms and creek channels to position themselves somewhere on key main lake structure such as large flats, submerged

humps, long extended points that run close to the main lake channel, submerged roadbeds and ditches. If you can find any kind of cover such as timber, stumps, rock piles, or grass on any of this type of structure you will find bass. Often you can find a good concentration of bass on one or two of these key areas and you do not have to worry about fishing the rest of the dam to weigh in a good bag of fish. Summertime is not the time to go 'bank beating'; use your topo map, depthfinder and a set of marker buoys to find offshore honey holes.

Essential Tackle and Techniques

In your search of productive areas you will initially have to cover a lot of water over large areas to try and pinpoint that one specific spot that will hold a good concentration of fish. There are several very simple methods of presentation that will work exceptionally well in your search for bass; the most productive of them use lures that consistently need to make **contact with the bottom structure**. **Deep-diving crankbaits, Texas- and Carolina-rigged plastics and heavy jigs** are all used very productively for deep structure summer fishing. Heavy **spinnerbaits**, slow-rolled above submerged weedbeds and brushpiles, and **dropshot** rigs can be used to catch suspended bass. When bass are trying to conserve energy in their heated surroundings they will avoid chasing down food for long distances. Most bites on bottom-bumping lures will come when the lure has made contact with some form of cover on the bottom. Summer is also a good time to experiment with larger lures - when bass do not feed often they may be tempted by a bigger meal. This is the time to try 10-inch swimming worms, 0.50 and 0.75 ounce crankbaits and 1-ounce spinnerbaits with large willowleaf blades.

The only time bass may be reasonably active during the summer are during the early morning hours or late in the day when they move up into **shallow cover** to feed.

Topwater plugs fished around shallow wood or weed cover



should be your first choice to try as soon as you start fishing early in the morning. The same principal applies if you are blessed with a cool, cloudy day during your fishing expedition; any low-light and cool weather conditions ought to draw bass shallower to feed for longer periods.

Some of the shallower more fertile dams may become weed/grass ridden during the warmer summer months and it is easy to feel overwhelmed when faced with a mass of **aquatic vegetation**. Where, amongst all this grass, do I start to look for bass? Bass will not be everywhere amongst the grass; they prefer to concentrate around scattered **isolated grass patches, points and pockets** along the edge of the grass bed and **weed-lines** where the grass meets open water. It is essential to fish grassy areas with weedless lures that will not hang up or get their hooks fouled with snagged vegetation. Weedless surface lures such as **Zoom horny toads** and **hollow frog/rat-type baits** that can be swum across the top of the vegetation can be a deadly summer bass catcher; nothing is as exciting as a huge bass that explodes out of the matted vegetation to grab a swimming frog. **Light Texas-rigged plastic baits** (bullet weights of 1/8-ounce and lighter) such as tubes, lizards and Superflukes can be slowly 'crawled' across the surface and allowed to flutter down into open pockets amongst the mats. **Heavy Texas-rigged plastics** (pegged) such as Zoom brushhogs and creature baits can be used to probe the edges of the weed beds and the pockets. Cast the lure onto the grass and shake the rod tip until the bait falls through the grass; covering the lure with an oil-based fish attractant helps it slide through and over the grass better. The edge of a weed-line is often a good indication of a sudden depth change - the grass grows on the shallower side of the drop-off. Bass like to hold just inside the grass line waiting to ambush prey swimming past in the deeper water or cruise along the edges of the drop-off in search of baitfish. **Spinnerbaits, Texas-rigged plastics, lipless crankbaits and floating/suspending jerkbaits** are all good lures to be used when fishing weedlines.

Do not allow yourself to be discouraged when you hit the 'dog-days' of summer because with a little bit of knowledge, some confidence and a whole lot of sunscreen you can have a great day on the water.

ASK A PRO...

In 'Ask a PRO' three different anglers will each month answer a selection of relevant bass fishing questions sent in from you, our readers. If there is anything you would like to ask us please send your questions to my email address at: twchristie@aol.com



The CAROLINA RIG is simply described as a "running sinker trace"; the weight is left to run on the main line and is rigged with a small glass bead that is placed between the weight and the swivel. Photo: C Thomas



The MOJO RIG normally consists of a Mojo weight that you slide onto the line and peg with a Mojo rubber. The rubber strand stays inside the weight and helps to keep the weight from sliding up and down the line. Photo: C Thomas






The most important rule to fishing with a Zoom Super Fluke is to rig it straight. See 'A Pro's Tip' Photo: C Thomas

This month's panel of experts will consist of three Protea bass anglers from across the country; **Nico Oosthuizen** - Limpopo, **Carl Gutzeit** - Natal and **Richard Watson** - Western Cape. Richard just recently competed in the BASS Federation Nation Championships in America and has qualified to fish the 2008 Bassmaster's Classic in South Carolina early next year. Richard is only the second South African who has managed to qualify for this extremely prestigious event.

The following three **Questions** were put to each **Pro**.....
 I need to ask you what the difference is between a MOJO RIG and the CAROLINA RIG?
 I read that I am supposed to keep a diary of every dam.....how do I do that?
 Where's the best place to look for bass? >>>

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<p>THIS MONTH'S PANEL OF EXPERTS:</p>	<p>NICO OOSTHUIZEN  Letaba Bassmasters, Mpumalanga. Protea Angler.</p>	<p>CARL GUTZEIT - NATAL  Tugweni Bassmasters, Natal. Protea Angler.</p>	<p>RICHARD WATSON  Western Cape. Protea Angler, Wrangler Angler-2005. Bassmaster Classic Qualifier-2006</p>
<p>What is the difference between a MOJO RIG and the CAROLINA RIG?</p>	<p>The general MOJO RIG normally consists of a Mojo weight that you slide onto the line and either peg with a Mojo rubber that is fixed inside the weight or you thread the weight onto the line and then use a bobber stopper to keep it in place. Once the Mojo is fixed onto the line, tie the hook onto the loose end and adjust the weight to the desired leader length. You can quickly adjust the leader length.</p> <p>The CAROLINA RIG normally consists of a weight which you slide onto your main line then you can slip glass, tungsten or plastic beads behind the weight and then attach your swivel. Normally you use a lighter leader than the main line. This helps if you fish relatively heavy cover, so that once you hang up you break off only your leader and not the whole Carolina Rig. Tie the leader to the other end of the swivel, get the correct length of the leader, and tie your hook onto the end of the leader.</p>	<p>In my opinion a mojo-rig would be classed as a finesse Carolina-rig, the benefits of the mojo being the cylindrical weight that is fixed allows you to fish the rig through cover such as grass of timber without getting hung up. The Carolina being a rig more suited to open, generally deeper water with cover such as submerged rocks.</p>	<p>The difference between the Mojo and the Carolina is simply that the Mojo weight is attached directly to the main line with the aid of a rubber band that is pulled through the weight by means of a special tool. The Carolina rig is completely different, you can use different types of weights, and this depends on the type of cover one is fishing. The Carolina rig is simply described as a "running sinker trace", the weight is left to run on the main line and is rigged with a small glass bead that is placed between the weight and the swivel, the bead is there for two reasons, 1st is to protect the knot and 2nd is to create some noise when the weight and the bead knock up against each other.</p>
<p>I read that I am supposed to keep a diary of every dam... how do I do that?</p>	<p>Every person has got a great intellectual ability. I am going to throw a curve ball into the diary keeping. I battled to keep a diary when I started fishing, I never had the time to do it or was either too lazy to pin every outing to paper. I knew to be successful in bass fishing you had to have reference of some sort of past experiences to fall back onto. I studied bass every moment I had, and started to remember what I needed to. All the patterns in different seasons on different bodies of water, different conditions playing in effect, every small detail which was of interest I tried to burn into my brain. In short the most consistent anglers are the ones reading and summing up the water the quickest, find a method that works for you, mine is just remembering everything.</p>	<p>Keeping a Diary of each dam is a must as this database can be particularly useful when one returns to a body of water at a later stage. Make notes of variables such as the season (Month of the year), water clarity and temp, taking careful note of the most productive patterns for that particular day or tournament. Talking to the winners after the tournament can be really useful for fishing outings when the conditions are the same. I save my info onto the PC after the days fishing organizing info by Venue then month of the year.</p>	<p>This is one of the most important tools you can use for easy reference, once you are able to understand the dynamics of the bass, you will value the effort you have made. The easy way to do this is to create a file on your PC and add questions you would like to ask a avid angler, use the same type of questions in all your files, one per lake, this will ensure that you are asking the same questions on all lakes. Remember, bass don't change, only the fodder. The most important is the lure you use and your presentation. When the lake is low, add some photos to your file, this will assist you even further when on the lake. If you can afford a GPS, this will ensure that you are on the precise spot, this adds confidence and will give you more fishing time.</p>
<p>Where's the best place to look for bass?</p>	<p>To be a consistent bass angler through each season requires an intimate knowledge how to adjust to the changing conditions above and below the water. The single most important thing to remember is that the fish change with each season as do the techniques used to catch them. Once you know how fish react through the seasons and change with weather conditions you will be able to predict where the best places will be to look for them.</p>	<p>Start by looking at the water clarity; generally bass will be easier to catch in stained water which you will always find somewhere in the lake. The next important factor would be water temperature, if the water is above 19°C I would start my day searching in water 10-foot and less, where as when the water is below 19°C you would have to fish a slow, more methodical winter pattern, generally in water deeper than 10-ft. As a general rule, when I fish shallow I'll look for flooded vegetation, when fishing deeper I'll look for rocky ridges or any irregularities along the bottom. These water temperatures apply for regions in KZN.</p>	<p>If this was a given, bass fishing would be a boring sport. Bass are so temperamental that one has to keep focus when on the lake. There so many variables to take into account like seasonal trends, fodder and their habits, weather patterns, water temperature, etc. My best advice is, start doing your own research by firstly taking out some books or DVD's on bass and their habits. This will give you a good idea of what to expect at various time of the year, seasonal trends, etc. I would then start to research the lake, looking for the type of areas that would hold bass depending on the main fodder for that lake, once you have done all this, purchase some lures that resemble the main fodder and go fishing, I am sure you will be more successful.</p>



A PRO'S TIP BY PIET HATTINGH

Piet Hattingh – 2007 National Champion (South African Bass Angling Association) is a North West Province resident but travels the country extensively in his quest of the 'green' fish. He has agreed to share some of his experience and tips regarding the venues he fishes and/or the techniques he finds the most successful.

RIGGING A SUPERFLUKE

The most important rule to fishing with a Zoom Super Fluke is to rig it right. Make sure the fluke swims straight under any speed of retrieve, meaning - if it swirls, take it off and put it on straight. This applies, whether it is rigged Texas, Carolina, mojo, split shot or weightless. The more natural the presentation or action of the Fluke the luckier you will get.

HEALTH MATTERS BY CHRISTIE THOMAS

Why Do Fishermen Always Wear Sunglasses?

The answer to this is simple....smart people wear glasses. Many of us know that polarised sunglasses help cut down the glare on the water whilst fishing and the diminished glare improves visibility below the water surface. Fewer people would classify sunglasses as an important piece of safety equipment whilst competing in various outdoor activities.

Think about this.....two anglers on the front of the boat, all of a sudden a school of bass start feeding on the surface, the anglers quickly grab rods rigged with treble-hooked topwater plugs and start casting furiously toward the feeding bass. All attention is focussed on the action taking place ahead, plugs whiz through the air as the anglers attempt to cast amidst the swirls and splashes. Unexpectedly there is a howl of pain and the one angler glances across toward his partner; he notices a set of treble-hooks lodged in his partner's cheek a mere couple of centimetres away from his eye. The topwater plug had glanced off his sunglasses and attached itself to his cheek. During the frenzy the fishermen lost sight of important safety issues and had they not been wearing glasses one of the anglers could very possibly have lost his eye.

Glass vs. Plastic

The importance of wearing glasses with polycarbonate lenses comes to mind when you think about any potential mishaps whilst out on the water. We all have our bad moments when we accidentally cast our lures into shoreline vegetation or get snagged up shallow. Imagine what would happen should you start yanking hard in an attempt to free the lure, it snaps free and shoots straight back toward your face. A glass lens stands no chance on impact against a ounce tungsten bullet weight, a cigar-shaped Zara Spook or a half ounce jig. You risk a chance of the lens shattering, forcing glass fragments into your eye and an embedded treble-hook too.

Sun in My Eyes

Another really serious threat to the eyes is ultraviolet radiation from the sun; or very simply put....sunburnt eyeballs!!! Solar

energy can wreak havoc on your eyes; it severs DNA and yellows the internal lens which could trigger cataracts in later life. Water is very reflective and spending a lot of time on it bombards the eyes with harmful UVA and UVB rays. In earlier years before the harmful effects of the sun on the eyes was truly understood fishermen used to wear photo-grey lenses without UV filtering. This allowed the anglers to open up their pupils against the bright glare and they literally had the inside of their eyes cooked. Fortunately most modern lenses today have some form of ultraviolet protection.

UV Protection, Polarization and Tinting

It is imperative for anglers to purchase glasses with polarized lenses and 100-percent UV protection. Most fishing glasses vary in colour from grey, brown to amber and orange; each colour has its own advantage in different lighting conditions. Grey and darker brown lenses work well during bright, noon-sun conditions whilst the yellower or amber lenses allow better visibility during foggy or low visibility conditions.

Buying Sunglasses

Material – Most lenses are made from glass, polycarbonate, CR-39 plastic or acetate. Glass is the least likely to be scratched but stands the most chance to shatter if hit.

Acetate is a flimsy plastic and should be avoided.

Polycarbonate and CR-39 are stronger plastic and better suited to the outdoorsman. Polycarbonate was invented and used during World War II to build bullet-proof windshields.

Size and Shape – Ideally the lens of your glasses should cover the entire eye-socket so that any projectile will hit the bone of your cheek or brow. It helps to have a wraparound design that allows peripheral vision whilst protecting against side sun-glare and wind during high-speed boat rides.

Unfortunately quality sunglasses for sportsmen are not cheap but do not be fooled by high prices; high price-tags do not guarantee quality!! Designer frames may look very stylish but sometimes they cut corners on critical features.



Not only do polarised sunglasses help cut down the glare on the water whilst fishing but also act as an important piece of safety equipment which helps to protect the eyes from sun damage and accidents. Photo: Kathy Barker (ProBass Networks)

HANDY HINTS

Recycle your Worms – Don't throw away your old worms; use them to create interesting new baits or to fill your tube baits so that they don't sink too fast. Insert sections of your torn-up worms into the tube cavity (a drop of fish attractant works well to lubricate the plastic). Experiment with matching or contrasting colours to make your bait more interesting. Once rigged the hook will keep the insert in place.

Rust Prevention – Put some pieces of blackboard chalk in the drawers of your tackle box where you keep your lures. The chalk absorbs moisture and will help prevent your hooks from rusting.

Burn-Free Lighting – Most of us use drop-lights when working on/in our boats after dark or before pre-dawn take-off. Replace the standard bulb with a fluorescent bulb; this is just as bright and durable but will not burn you or melt your boat carpet.

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