



BASS ANGLER'S Notebook



TIPS, TRICKS AND ADVICE...

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ORGANIZING YOUR TACKLE BY CHRISTIE THOMAS

If any of you are like me you would most probably have hundreds of different kinds of lures, tons of assorted packets of plastic baits, terminal tackle and a large variety of other bits and pieces related to bass fishing. I soon realised the necessity of getting all this stuff organised after countless episodes of trying to sift through the mountain of loose tackle in several different compartments in the boat in search of one particular bait or coloured plastic lure. One evening, after a particularly frustrating day on the water, I sat down to take stock of the day and re-think my strategy for the next day. I came to realise that I had wasted **at least** an hour of my precious fishing time on the water whilst trying to find several different lures or baits I had particularly wanted to fish with at the time. It was time to get organised!

It has taken me several years but a lot of time spent on the water looking for baits has given me enough insight; experience has taught me to pack my tackle to suit my needs and save precious time searching for stuff in the boat.

Different Strokes for Different Folks

Every angler has different ways to approach their sport and as each of us differs in our style of fishing so we might all differ in our style of getting organised. I am going to share with you how I like to organise my tackle; I find it efficient and timesaving. However, there may be a myriad of different ways to get the job done but the basic fact stays the same.....organised tackle will save you a great deal of time and frustration on the water and you will find it easier to focus on the job at hand – finding fish and catching them!

Put it in a Box

The majority of pros I know, local and international, like to use plastic utility boxes to organise their tackle. These boxes are inexpensive, readily available from most tackle dealers and allow you a variety of different



Many modern bass boats are built with storage compartments specially designed to accommodate the most popular sizes of plastic utility boxes to store your fishing tackle.

See...Organizing your Tackle. Photo: P Hattingh

options to arrange your baits. Most of the boxes are constructed of clear plastic so you are able to see what is in the box without having to open it. Many of the newer bass boats are even built with storage compartments specially designed to accommodate the most popular sizes of these utility boxes, such as the Plano 3700 and popular Bass Pro Shop version.

Other Options

Additional choices available for tackle storage would include soft-sided tackle bags, tackle binders, double-side tackle boxes, and tray tackle boxes.

On the few occasions I fished as a non-boater in America I would have a **soft-sided tackle bag** available in which I could pack several utility boxes, a selection of soft plastics, my terminal tackle, sunglasses, fish attractant, culling system and a variety of other items such as long-nose pliers and line cutters. This type of tackle bag is great to carry when you do not have your own boat and often find yourself fishing on someone else's boat during tournaments.

Before I started using plastic utility boxes I used to organise my baits in **tackle binders** with clear PVC





Clear plastic utility boxes are inexpensive, readily available from most tackle dealers and allow you a variety of different options to arrange your baits. See...Organizing your Tackle.

Photo: C Thomas



here are several different ways that you can organize your tackle in each container; I like to keep my lure types together such as superflukes, in all their varying colour options, in one box, senkos in another, finesse baits together, etc.

See...Organizing your Tackle. Photo: C Thomas

pockets. These binders are great for organising your spinnerbaits, jigs, terminal tackle and soft plastic lures but I found that it still took quite a bit of time to 'page' through each binder to find the specific item you are looking for. I would keep similar-styled plastic baits (superflukes, senkos, double ringers, sluggos, fish doctor, French fries) in a bag and mark each bag so that I would know which bag to pick up when looking for certain baits. Spinnerbaits and jigs can easily be stored in these

binders too and can be arranged according to choice; some anglers prefer to organize by weight whilst others like to organise by colour. I used to place baits of similar colour in each pocket.

Double-sided tackle boxes are great for packing in a selection of different types of lures and can easily be packed into a soft tackle bag. These boxes hold a surprisingly large number of baits for its size and are great to use when you are limited for space or have to pack to fish on someone else's boat. Just make sure to latch both sides properly before picking up the box to prevent your baits in the bottom compartment from spilling all over the floor.

Tray tackle boxes are the huge plastic containers with fixed trays that we used to lug around with us before we got clever and started organising our tackle directly into the boat's storage compartments. These types of tackle boxes have been around for ages and offer a variety of different tackle storage options but they are large, heavy, and difficult to place in the boat so that they are not in the way. If you fish off a boat that does not have any built-in storage compartments then this option may be your best bet.

Organisation

There are several different ways that you can organise your tackle in each container; I like to keep my lure types together. In other words, I keep all my stickbaits/jerkbaits in one box, my topwater lures in another, and my crankbaits in the next. With my crankbaits I have gone one step further and arranged them according to depth, keeping shallow, medium, and deep diving crankbaits separated. I also keep my soft plastic baits organised in this fashion. I keep all my superflukes, in all their varying colour options, in one box, senkos in another, finesse together, etc., etc. **Label each box clearly and neatly so that it is easy to locate the contents when you need them.**

Important Tips

Winter is a great time to get your tackle organised. As the weather turns colder and colder the number of fishing trips decline - use some of this off time to sit down and take stock of your tackle situation. Set aside any lures that need maintenance, hooks and/or skirts replaced, etc. and use your extra time off to do this.

Do not try to take all your tackle with you on each fishing trip. Do your homework before the trip and decide beforehand what you may need. If you are going to be fishing a dam with ultra-clear water and deep structure there is no use for you to be carting all your shallow running, square-billed crankbaits. Too many lure choices lead to confusion. Take a critical look at the tackle you



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Questions:
What is the best
way to approach
and fish a drop-off
without spooking
the fish?

The most important aspect to remember regarding **drop offs** is the water depth. If it is over 15ft deep it is relatively safe to slowly idle across the drop of with your boat and mark it with a marker buoy. This will ensure you know where the key area is and it will also give you the opportunity to see if there are any bass and baitfish on the drop. When starting to fish - start around 50m either side of the buoy reducing the chance you are targeting fish that has not been perturbed by your presence. When the water is shallow or very clear - cut the main motor about 100m from the drop and fish towards it with a crankbait or Carolina rig using your trolling motor as propulsion until you identify the strike zones on your electronics and mark it accordingly.

I will place my boat in the deep water and start fishing with a 1/2-oz or heavier sinker so that I can make long cast and keep my bait on the bottom. Keeping your boat away from the structure and casting far will ensure that you do not spook the fish. If this does not work for me I will move the boat into the shallows and then cast with a light mojo rig. This enables me to fish lighter and not lose bottom contact with my bait.

Firstly ascertain whether the fish that you are targeting are likely to be moving up and down on the **drop-off**. If you intend to start shallow and work down the drop-off, work your way on the trolling motor to the spot that you want to start at. Start with reaction baits such as cranks and spinnerbaits for the aggressive strike and then move to mojo rigged flukes for a slower reaction. As you go deeper, switch to a drop-shot rig with heavier weights the deeper you wish to fish. If you know that there are fish, you may need to stay on the point to pick the fish up as they move up and down the drop-off. Once you have finished the spot, move off on the trolling motor in order not to disturb the fish if you want to return.

Can a lipless crankbait be fished in grass?

Lipless Crankbaits are excellent lures in submerged grass from 3 - 9ft. You can control running depth by adjusting your line size. Generally 12lb test is a good all round diameter. The trick is too "feel" your way around the grass with the crankbait until you sense it starts to get caught in the grass - then tweak it free with a twitch of your rod. You must snap it hard enough so that all weed is cleared off the hooks. The best Lipless rattlers fall back in a natural way and this is when you will get the strike. This is an awesome technique to draw reaction strikes from lethargic fish that often ignore slower plastic offerings. It also works very well in early spring around the few remaining clumps of live vegetation. Colour choice is simple with chrome and blue being the best all round colour and black and gold also worth looking at under dark gloomy sky conditions. Burnt Orange/Red baits can also work very well early season, even in clean water.

A **lipless crank** is one of the most effective ways to fish the grass. You can fish a range of depths by using a floating, suspending or a sinking lipless crankbait. The different lipless crankbaits also allows you to fish them at different speeds; floating and suspending baits can be fished slowly over the grass where as the sinking bait will need to be ripped through the grass.

No doubt! I would not consider fishing a **lipless crankbait** where the grass is matted and rises right to the surface, but where there is grass with 2 - 3 foot of water above it, a floating lipless crankbait can prove deadly. The trick is to get the treble hooks to catch the grass and then rip the bait loose. The strike normally comes as the crankbait breaks free and shoots into the open water.

Would you move and go to look for new water during a tournament if a hot area gets too crowded?

It depends what your objective is for the tournament. If you are on the bubble of making a national or divisional team and the area could provide you with critical fish to ensure your position it makes sense to stick around and secure a safe limit. There is a simple rule that makes a lot of sense "during tough times stay with the bass". Mentally you have to be very strong and able to withstand the psychological pressure of watching other anglers catch fish that you also need. Personally I very seldom fish in a crowd as I prefer targeting smaller concentrations of scattered fish by using my electronics and fishing a pattern. These fish tend to be more aggressive due to being unmolested by other anglers. It is a bit of a gamble at times, but like anything in life high risk can bring high reward.

Go or stay - If one of my hot areas gets too crowded I will decided how much time I am willing to sacrifice in that area and once my time limit has been reached I will then decide to stay or leave. I am always very aware of the amount of time I have spent in an area compared to how many fish I have caught. Your time management in a tournament is very important because when you look again your day has come to an end.

Sometimes. Not every time. Sometimes fishing is turned on by the activity in the area. Once the fishing has died down the question is whether the bass are schooling, have moved out of the area and are likely to move back again. I remember fishing a National tournament at Albert Falls where the fish were definitely schooling. I love fishing quickly and tried a number of reaction lures - nothing. I joined a couple of guys fishing the entrance to shallower water and fished a Carolina rig - for the next three days! I Watched anglers come and go but those who stayed caught the fish as the school moved in and out of the shallower water. Work out the strategy always by starting with the macro and moving down to the micro influences - firstly the season, the past and current weather, time of day and whether you are targeting schooling or static bass. Too many people in a shallow area with cold weather and jittery fish - I would move.



plan to take with and add or subtract specific boxes as the season or specific dam dictates.

Do not store hard and soft plastic baits together. Many types of soft plastic baits contain ingredients that may discolour or even melt your more expensive hard baits.

Donate any unwanted (new or used) tackle to your closest youth fishing club. We all have an assortment of weird and obscure lures or soft plastic baits that we bought in a moment of insanity or as the trend dictated. As fashion comes and goes so does the tackle trend. The old favourites always linger but there will always be a packet or two that eventually falls out of favour. These baits will still catch bass; if you have no use for them pass them on to someone else. You can contact your local fishing club to get the details of all the various junior organisations.



Can a lipless crankbait be fished in grass? See...Ask a Pro.
Photo: (Cotton Cordell Super Spot) Lurenet

What is the best way to approach and fish a drop-off without spooking the fish?
Can a lipless crankbait be fished in grass?
Would you move and go to look for new water during a tournament if a hot area gets too crowded?

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: twcchristie@aol.com

The following three Questions were put to each Pro.....

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.



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Senko/Yum Dinger Tips - Fish this rig weightless, with only a hook tied to the end of your line. Weight with a Difference - buy some lead nails or better yet buck shot pellets; insert the nail with the front of a ballpoint pen or balance the pellet on the hole and push it into the tail end of your plastic bait. Use 2 to 3 pellets per bait. Weighing the tail down allows the Senco to 'swim' backwards after you have pitched it, let out some line or dropped you rod tip. This works very well whilst pitching jetties and grass edges when you need the bait to fall backwards under the cover. Trust me it works.

GARDEN ROUTE CLASSIC – A Junior's Perspective. BY KYLE HANSEN

My fishing partner (Andy de Jager) and I turned the trolling motor up to high as Day One of the 21st Garden Route Classic commenced. Neither of us had prior knowledge of the dam and we decided to try to cover some water with rattletaps in the hope of finding an early morning bite. We managed a small bag within an hour, casting towards the edges of reed beds amongst some scattered weed patches. Eventually we managed to pinpoint a high concentration of slightly better fish, in an off-shore region that included many weed patches, with rattletaps still getting the bites. Kickers were few and far between but we proceeded to meticulously cull through the duration of the day, catching possibly 40 keepers throughout and the highlight being a 1.4kg kicker, caught by myself.

DO FISH FEEL PAIN? BY *ROBERT MONTGOMERY

We see "anthropomorphism" occur innocently, when dog and cat owners dress their pets in human attire or turn the television on for them when they must leave them home alone.

We see it more sinisterly in the tactics of animal rights activists, who want you to believe that fish feel pain and fear when they are hooked.

The fact is, that's just not so, according to Dr. James Rose at the University of Wyoming. Concerned that fishing is being challenged on grounds of humaneness; Rose reviewed the literature, studied the biology, and produced 'The Neurobehavioral Nature of Fishes and the Question of Awareness and Pain.'

He concludes that fish are incapable of feeling pain and fear because their brains are so much different than those of humans. In fact, they operate from the brain stem, while we function from a much more developed forebrain.

"The fundamental neural requirements for pain and suffering are now known," he says. "Fishes lack the most important of these required neural structures, and they have no alternative neural systems for producing the pain experience. Therefore, the reactions of fishes to noxious stimuli...are without conscious awareness of pain. The evidence supporting this conclusion is extensive and diverse, thus permitting a high degree of confidence in its correctness."

*Robert Montgomery is the Senior Writer and Conservationist for Bassmaster Magazine.

Reference:
Bassmaster Magazine
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At the weigh-station spirits were high as many fish had been caught by all. Admittedly we were slightly disappointed with our bag weight of just under 5kg compared to the rest of the field but Andy's dad, Martin (who kindly drove us up to the venue and booked us into first class accommodation) encouraged us to remain positive, reminding us that we still had a second day to go.

Day Two had predicted gale force winds and rain, but we nevertheless headed back to the productive area we had located the previous day. It was on from the word go and we managed our 5 fish limit in less than an hour once again. Andy boated 2 fish in the 1kg region early on and we had a few nervous moments as the net became entangled anywhere possible, or so it seemed. Encouraged by this, we managed to put together a weight in the 4kg region for the second day, with Yamamoto stretch 40 grubs and rattletaps being the order of the day.

At the weigh station it seemed as if Day Two's fishing had been a lot tougher for most contestants, and we received a few thumbs up from fellow anglers, which confirmed a decent bag for the day.

At prize-giving the announcement of the final positions couldn't come soon enough and we were pleasantly surprised to hear that we had taken 10th spot. Overall, the tournament was definitely a worthwhile experience and we look forward to our next competition with added confidence.

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