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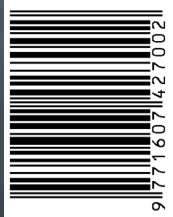
Issue 304



Colour
Selection



RSA: R49.50 (incl. VAT)
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Spinnerbait Basics

Flip Like a Pro | Why Urchin Baits | Colour Selection | How Bass Hunt Down Baitfish | Chatter Bait Tactics
Spinnerbait Basics | Targeting Bigger Bass | Tight Wobble for Bassin' | Winter-Time Bass Fishing | About Denny Brauer
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They are defined by the decisions they make.



Every article in this magazine has one purpose – to help you understand bass better, think more clearly on the water, and ultimately catch more and bigger bass.



Because catching more bass doesn't begin with a lure. It begins with the way you think.



Our readers keep every issue for reference.



It begins with the way you think.

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SA BASS Magazine:	is published monthly (12 issues per annum) by BB Publications (Pty) Ltd (2023/818376/07)
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About SA BASS magazine:

SA BASS, which is editorially and financially independent, is a monthly magazine catering exclusively for the bass angling community in Southern Africa. SA BASS is distributed country-wide to outlets, not only in South Africa, but also in Namibia, Swaziland and Botswana.

SA BASS is designed as a specialist bass fishing publication and has catered for a well-defined niche market since April 2001. It enjoys the support and endorsement of non-government organisations, but is not affiliated in any way to these bodies or to any other publishing, environmental or political interest group.

Our mission is to promote bass angling as a socially acceptable and popular outdoor recreational activity, and in addition, to encourage acceptable angling ethics. As such, SA BASS provides pertinent information on a wide range of subjects. These include providing a platform for informed debate on issues affecting the sport of bass angling, providing information on bass angling strategies and techniques, bass angling waters and opportunities, and also creating awareness of new products.

Within this editorial mix, due consideration is given to developing the sport among all the country's people (including the youth), and to the practical conservation of the country's natural resources.

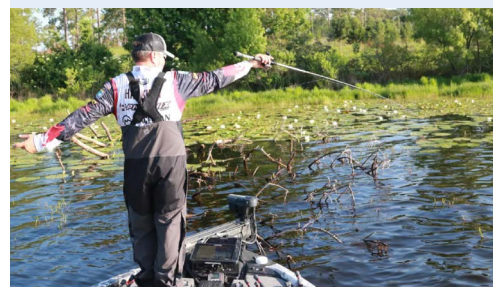
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REGULARS & FORUMS

06 "Flip Like a Pro – Part 2"

The objective isn't to demonstrate how well you can perform a particular technique; it's to put a lure in front of a bass in the most effective way possible.



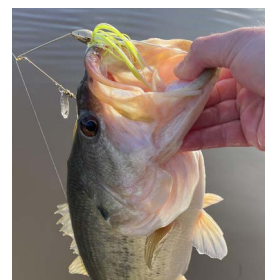
10 "Understanding how bass hunt down baitfish"

By understanding how bass hunt baitfish efficiently we can put ourselves in a better position to capitalise on their behavioural patterns too – Jay Röhm-Williamse



12 "Spring Spinnerbait Basics"

Spinnerbait fishing becomes much simpler when you stop choosing from the tackle box first and start reading the water first.



How to use QR-codes

1. Open the QR-code reader/scanner app on your smartphone. Most smartphones models often have an app pre-installed. If not, visit your phone's app store and download the app.
2. Keep a steady hand while the QR-code is centred on the screen.
3. As soon as it is done scanning, whatever information should present itself for your viewing pleasure.



16 “Waar die See-Egel regtig sy staal wys”

Sy krag lê nie daarin dat hy alles vervang wat reeds in jou kunsaskas is nie, maar dat hy 'n probleem oplos waarvoor min ander kunsas 'n antwoord het.

– Philip Kemp



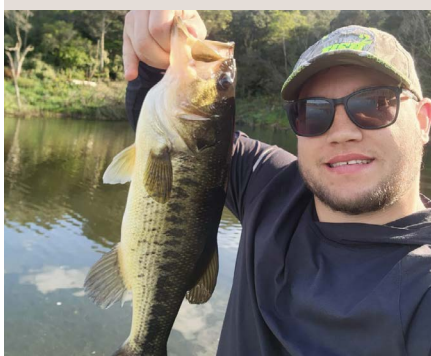
18 “Targeting Bigger Bass”

Don't judge the area only by whether you catch a bass. Pay attention to which bass you catch.



22 “Chatter bait tactics for winter bass”

If you need a reliable lure when the bite is tough and the waters cold try switching to a good old chatter bait and see what happens – Jay Röhm-Williams



24 “Colour Selection”

Do you need another colour, or do you need to become better at fishing the colours you already trust?



28 “Winter-Time Bass Fishing”

The goal isn't to fish harder. It is to become better at recognising where a winter bass can afford to spend its time.



30 “Tight Wobble for Winter Bassin”

Rather spend time understanding how a particular blade behaves than simply buying the cheapest lure you can find.



34 “Allison Advantage and Dranckrazy Differences (Part 1)”

After reviewing more than 130 performance bulletins, Allison has consistently demonstrated itself to be among the most fuel-efficient bass boats in the world – Fishingboy & David Swendseid



36 “Die Hedgesaal - Denny Brauer”

Hy is meer as net 'n kampioen; hy is die Jig-Meester, 'n hengelaar wie se naam vir altyd verbind sal wees aan een van die doeltreffendste kunsas in die moderne baarshengelaar se arsenaal. – Philip Kemp



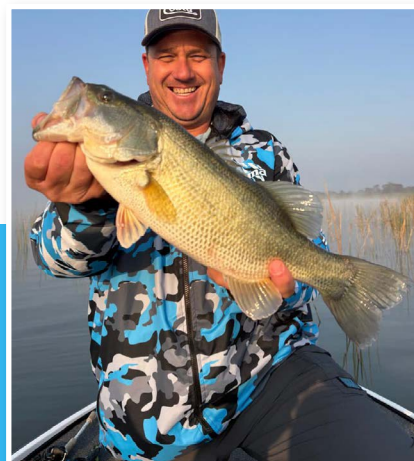
40 “South Africa Dam Levels”

A list of the latest water levels of some of South Africa's biggest water reservoirs.



COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

- 04 My Cast
- 15 Basics for beginners
- 27 Op my houtbordjie
- 38 Gear Up



ON THE COVER

“2.30kg, Riaan vd Berg, Rhenosterkop Dam, MP”
Image: Maurice Kemp



My Cast

There is something I really enjoy about this time of year on the bass-fishing calendar. Winter has a way of stripping fishing back to the basics. The bass are still there, but they are less willing to waste energy, and that means we have to become better at understanding what they are doing rather than simply fishing harder.

That thought runs through much of this issue of SA BASS. In “Flip Like a Pro – Part 2”, the emphasis is not on showing how well you can perform a technique. The real objective is much simpler: putting a lure in front of a bass as effectively as possible. That is a lesson worth remembering, regardless of the technique in your hands.

The same principle applies when choosing lures. Do we really need another colour, or would we catch more bass by becoming better at fishing the colours we already trust? And when it comes to spinnerbaits, the answer may not be found by standing in front of the tackle box deciding which one looks best. Start by reading the water, and let the conditions help make the decision.

Our understanding of bass behaviour becomes even more important when baitfish are involved. Knowing how bass efficiently hunt their prey can help us recognise opportunities and position our lures where the fish are most likely to intercept them. Sometimes the biggest advantage isn't a new lure at all - it is understanding why a bass is in a particular place.

There are plenty of practical winter lessons in this issue too. From using a ChatterBait when the water is cold and the bite is tough, to understanding the tight wobble of a blade, the message is consistent: learn how your lure behaves and why it works. And when targeting bigger bass, don't judge a spot simply by whether you catch a fish. Look at which bass you catch. That small change in observation can tell you far more than a number on the scorecard.

In “Waar die See-Egel regtig sy staal wys”, we continue exploring a lure whose strength lies not in replacing everything else in your tackle box, but in solving a problem that few other lures can.

Finally, we remember Denny Brauer in our Hall of Fame. He was more than a champion. He became synonymous with jig fishing and helped establish the jig as one of the most effective tools in the modern bass angler's arsenal.

So, as you head out this winter, don't simply fish harder. Watch more closely, think more carefully, and let the bass teach you where they want to be.

May your lines sing with joy!

Hannes Lindeque, *Publisher*

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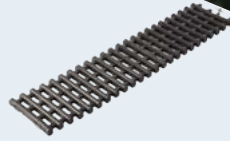
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HOW TO...

FLIP LIKE A PRO - PART 2/2

Precision, confidence and the mindset behind every perfect flip

If part one showed us why flipping consistently catches quality bass, the next question is the one every angler eventually asks: *How do I become genuinely good at it?*

The answer has surprisingly little to do with having the most expensive rod or reel in the boat. Good equipment certainly helps, especially when you're dealing with thick cover and powerful fish, but the real secret lies in developing repeatable movements, quiet confidence and the ability to recognise an opportunity that another angler might simply pass by.

Watch an experienced angler flip and you'll notice something immediately: there is very little wasted movement. With a fixed length of line hanging from the rod tip, the lure is swung towards the target using the rod rather than being cast with the reel. The free hand controls the line for that brief moment before releasing it at exactly the right time. When everything comes together, the lure slips into the opening almost silently, falls vertically and remains under control from the moment it touches the water.

That is the essence of flipping. The technique is deliberately limited to close range, but that limitation is actually its greatest strength. Where pitching gives you additional distance, flipping gives you an extraordinary

level of precision. You can place a lure into a small pocket beneath a branch, beside a reed clump or deep inside flooded vegetation without making the repeated movements associated with a conventional cast.

And that quietness matters. A bass sitting beneath heavy cover has already chosen that location because it provides security and an ambush opportunity. The last thing you want to do is announce your arrival. A soft, controlled entry gives the fish a chance to react to the lure naturally rather than being startled by a splash or an erratic presentation.

This is also where your equipment begins to make sense. A 7'6" to 8' heavy-power baitcasting rod gives you the reach and leverage to control both the lure and the fish. A high-speed reel, preferably around 7:1 or faster, isn't there simply because professional anglers use one; it allows you to recover line quickly after each presentation and, more importantly, helps you take control immediately after a hookset. Around reeds, flooded trees and dense vegetation, 50 to 65lb braid is a popular choice because its minimal stretch helps transfer the hookset and its strength gives you a better chance of turning a fish before it disappears into the cover.

Your lure should complement that approach rather than work against it. Compact flipping jigs and streamlined



A compact flipping jig is particularly effective



*A high-speed, low profile
baitcasting reel*

Texas-rigged plastics are particularly effective because they penetrate cover without constantly catching on every branch or stem. In vegetation, a pegged tungsten bullet weight can help the bait punch through the cover and reach the fish holding underneath it. The important thing is that every piece of equipment serves one purpose: keeping you in control.

That control becomes even more important once the lure disappears from sight.

Many developing anglers expect a flipping bite to feel like a savage strike. Sometimes it does, but some of the best bass you'll catch will announce themselves with almost nothing at all. The lure may stop sinking a fraction earlier than expected. The line may twitch, move sideways or simply feel different. Sometimes you'll look at the line and realise it is travelling in a direction that it shouldn't.

That's why watching the line is so important. In heavy cover, a bass doesn't necessarily need to chase a lure. It can simply open its mouth, engulf it and move back towards the security of the structure. If you're watching only the lure, you may never know you've had a bite.

This is one area where confidence makes a measurable difference. If something doesn't look or feel right, don't spend five seconds trying to convince yourself that it was probably nothing. Check it. A slightly premature hookset costs very little; allowing a good bass to swim ten centimetres deeper into a tree can cost you the fish altogether.

And once that fish is hooked, the presentation isn't over. In fact, the first few seconds are often the most important part of the entire process.

A bass in heavy cover doesn't need much time to turn your success into frustration. Give it the opportunity to bury its head in a branch, wrap the line around a stem or wedge itself beneath a root, and suddenly all that careful preparation can count for nothing. Your response needs to be immediate but controlled. A firm upward sweep of the rod, combined with rapid line recovery and steady pressure, helps redirect the fish before it reaches the structure.

The mistake is thinking that you simply have to overpower the bass. You don't. You have to control its direction. There is a difference. Rather than hauling blindly against the fish, use the rod angle and pressure to turn its head and guide it into open water. Once the fish is clear of the cover, the fight becomes much more manageable.

The same principle applies to the way you work through the cover itself. One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is treating every opening as equally important. They aren't. A professional angler doesn't look at a reed bed and simply see a hundred places to throw a lure. He sees a collection of opportunities with different probabilities.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

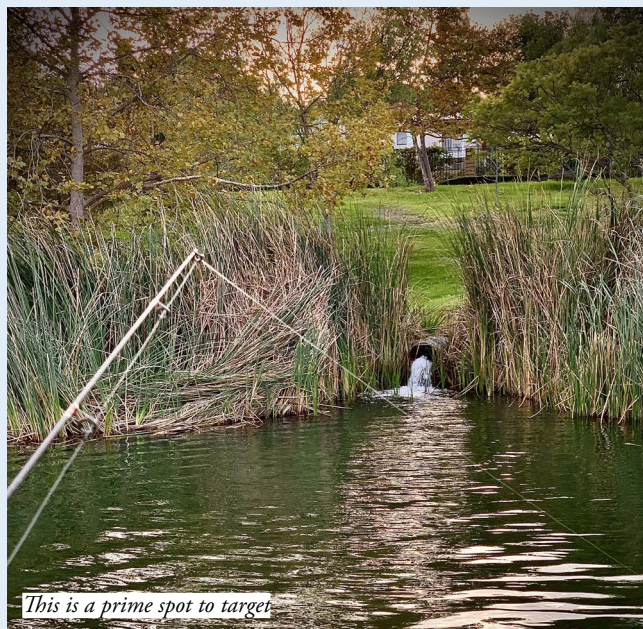
- 7'6" - 8' heavy-power baitcasting rod
- High-speed baitcasting reel (7:1 or faster)
- 50 to 65lb braided line for heavy cover (or heavy fluorocarbon where appropriate)
- Compact flipping jigs or Texas-rigged soft plastics
- Pegged tungsten bullet weights for penetrating vegetation
- Strong, heavy-wire hooks matched to the bait

THE FLIPPING MOTION STEP-BY-STEP

1. Let out a fixed length of line slightly longer than the rod.
2. Hold the line lightly with your free hand.
3. Swing the lure toward the target using the rod tip.
4. Release the line as the lure travels forward.
5. Allow the bait to enter quietly and fall vertically.
6. Watch the line continuously.
7. Lift smoothly, reposition, and repeat with the same rhythm.



The Texas rig



This is a prime spot to target



Braid is a popular choice because its minimal stretch

Why is one opening better than the next? Perhaps it has deeper water beneath it. Maybe a branch creates shade. There could be a hard bottom, a small indentation, a current seam or a point where two different types of cover meet. These subtle details give a bass a reason to be there.

Once you begin thinking this way, flipping changes completely. You are no longer simply repeating a cast. You are making a series of decisions: *Why would a bass choose this particular piece of cover? Where would it sit? What is the safest way to put my lure in front of it?*

That mindset is one of the biggest differences between simply knowing how to flip and actually becoming good at it.

The good news is that you don't need a bass boat to develop the mechanics. Flipping is one of those techniques that can be practised almost anywhere. A few buckets, flowerpots or coffee tins in the garden can become targets. Start with open targets and concentrate on making the same smooth movement repeatedly. Don't chase speed. Accuracy and consistency should come first.

As you improve, make the targets more difficult. Try placing the lure underneath a chair or between obstacles. Practise controlling the lure so that it lands quietly rather than crashing into the target. Eventually the movement becomes almost automatic. That's exactly what you want. When you're on the water, you don't want to be thinking about where your hand should go or when to release the line. Your hands should already know.

That leaves your brain available for the important part: finding the fish.

It also helps to understand when not to flip. Flipping and pitching are not competing techniques. They are two tools that solve different problems. When you're close to heavy cover and want to methodically pick apart the highest-percentage targets, flipping is difficult to beat. But if the fish are farther away or the boat cannot approach without spooking them, pitching gives you the additional range you need.

The best anglers don't force one technique simply because it is their favourite. They let the conditions dictate the presentation. If the boat is positioned perfectly and the target is close, flip. If you need another few metres to reach the fish without disturbing it, pitch. The objective isn't to demonstrate how well you can perform a particular technique; it's to put a lure in front of a bass in the most effective way possible.

Our local waters offer plenty of opportunities to put this thinking into practice. After seasonal rains, flooded

thorn trees can become superb ambush habitat. Reed beds along irrigation dams can hold quality fish, particularly when bright conditions push bass deeper into the available shade. On farm dams, an isolated willow or submerged tree can be far more important than an entire stretch of otherwise identical bank.

Floating vegetation and hyacinth mats can also create ideal summer cover, while jetties and docks on larger impoundments provide shade and structure that deserve to be worked carefully rather than simply skipped over.

The type of cover may differ from the famous American reservoirs where flipping became a household technique, but the bass haven't read the rulebook. Their basic needs remain the same. They want food, security, favourable conditions and an efficient place from which to ambush prey.

That gives you a useful starting point whenever you approach heavy cover. Don't ask only, *"Where can I put my lure?"* Ask, *"Why would a big bass want to be here?"*

Once you start asking that question, you'll notice things you previously ignored.

A small pocket tucked behind a branch. A dark shadow beneath a willow. A gap in the reeds that is slightly deeper than everything around it. A piece of timber lying at an unusual angle. These may look insignificant from a distance, but to a bass they can represent exactly the kind of security it needs.

And that is ultimately what makes flipping such a powerful technique. It isn't simply about making an accurate presentation. It is about becoming deliberate.

Every flip should have a reason. Every piece of cover should tell you something. Every lure should enter the water with a purpose.

Take it to the water

On your next trip, choose one section of heavy cover and slow yourself down. Rather than trying to cover the entire area as quickly as possible, pick apart the best targets with deliberate, quiet presentations. Watch the line throughout the fall. Pay attention to where the bites occur and, just as importantly, where they don't.

You may discover that the biggest bass aren't holding on the obvious outside edge. They may be occupying the smallest, darkest and least accessible pieces of cover.

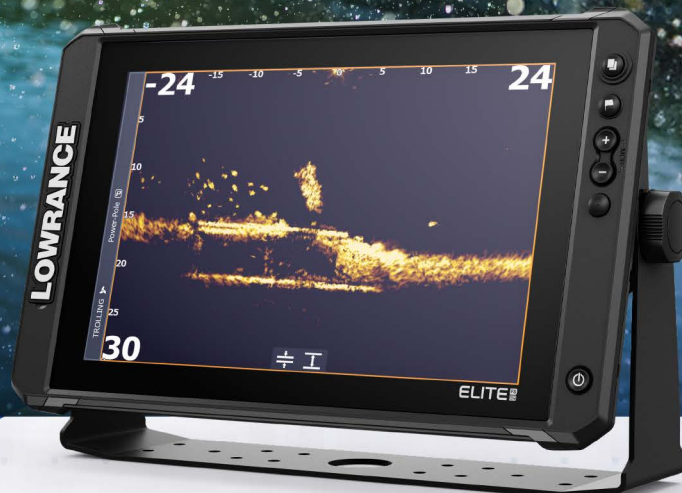
And once you learn to recognise those places, flipping stops being just another casting technique.

It becomes a way of finding and catching the bass that other anglers never reach.

RgB - Show off your best catch! Send us your bass fishing photos together with a short write up, and you could be featured in our **SA BASS Readers-go-Bassing** section! Email your pictures to editor@sabass.com and share your story with fellow anglers! 🐟

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Here Fishy Fishy

Understanding how bass hunt down baitfish

>> Jay Röhm-Williams*



If there is one prey species bass love to devour I would say it must be other fish. They tasty, packed with protein, fats and vitamin rich oily nutrients making for not only a power up, charged meal but an excellent choice when it comes to energy expense. They come in a vast array of sizes and usually travel in small to large schools which makes for plenty of snacks all closely packed together in one place. It honestly doesn't get better than that in the mind of a bass surely?

Well it must be a pretty good assumption to make because the track record of baitfish replica lures out on the market over the decades is a testament in itself. But how do we fish these lures efficiently enough to ensure top quality catches that these style lures have been famously known to produce? The answer is simple, study how our prey hunts their prey by learning how bass hunt baitfish first.

Bass move and feed in schools themselves though larger specimens tend to stray off in pairs or swim solo. Where ever there is food you can rest assured that there will be bass nearby waiting closely. When it comes to hunting baitfish however bass have to follow to where the conditions will be most favourable to these smaller fish species. Generally speaking in South Africa we have most commonly bluegill species of prey fish in habiting our freshwater systems. There are other fish species of course but for the best bet bluegill are going to be the likely candidates which bass will be hunting down. They are fast, breed easily and hardy fish which means they can survive under most water conditions with little to no fuss. These fish move in shoals through open water all the way up to the shallows hugging loosely together in formation while they forage around. This means that bass have quite a wide variety of scenarios from which they can hunt these fish species from. Seasons and daily conditions play a major role to in bait fish movements so bass align themselves with these natural responses as well when feeding on them.

During low light conditions baitfish prefer to suspend themselves up in shallow water. Then during the middle of the day they go down deep pushing further off shore returning shallow again come dusk. This type of typical pattern plays out daily and so the bass have learnt to follow their behaviour. Barometric pressure also plays a major part in how baitfish behave and depict whether they will be more scattered around or bound up tightly in the water column. Bass will be affected as well by this pressure change and position themselves accordingly if they are on the hunt.

Baitfish immitation lures always work well



Classic smash and grab captured in the shallows



Typical bluegill baitfish

They will either attack from below the baitfish or approach from the sides using light, wind and current direction to their advantage.

Hunting baitfish in open water is obviously more challenging for bass because of the wide, vast space of water their prey can flee too. This leads them to preferably pushing the baitfish up towards the surface making it easier to attack them. When it comes to shallow water zones bass will approach from deeper water where they can use shade and shadows to their advantage. Here they have been known to burst up on shoals with quick, powerful surges of energy targeting an individual closest to their position. Bass always prefer moving in from edges or off ledges to attack moving fast before disappearing back again.

The whole idea in the strategy of hunting baitfish for bass would seem having the element of both speed and surprise. So if they can hide under or behind cover where baitfish frequent they can ambush them without giving away their position. Docks and jetties are ideal spot for bass to attack from where they will usually face out from the shore waiting for the arrival of baitfish to swim passed. Bass

have also been generally recorded to lock onto an individual baitfish rather than try smash straight into a school hoping for the best. Remember bass have incredible speed and even more impressive eyesight so they know who their target is when they strike.

Taking note of things like aquatic vegetation, shade, wind, water temps and clarity can all point us in the right direction to where we can find baitfish. Bass will use any advantage they can to create easier opportunities for themselves to score a meal so we need to be observant too. By understanding how bass hunt baitfish efficiently we can put ourselves in a better position to capitalise on their behavioural patterns too. Bass and baitfish tend to have routines so once we tap into this knowledge it can become second nature to us as bass anglers too.

Rods out and safe fishing everyone! 🎣

**Jay Röhm-Williams is a seasoned bass angler with a wealth of knowledge, and since 2018 he has been sharing his expertise with fellow bass enthusiasts, hoping they'll discover the same passion and enjoyment he finds in this unique sport.*



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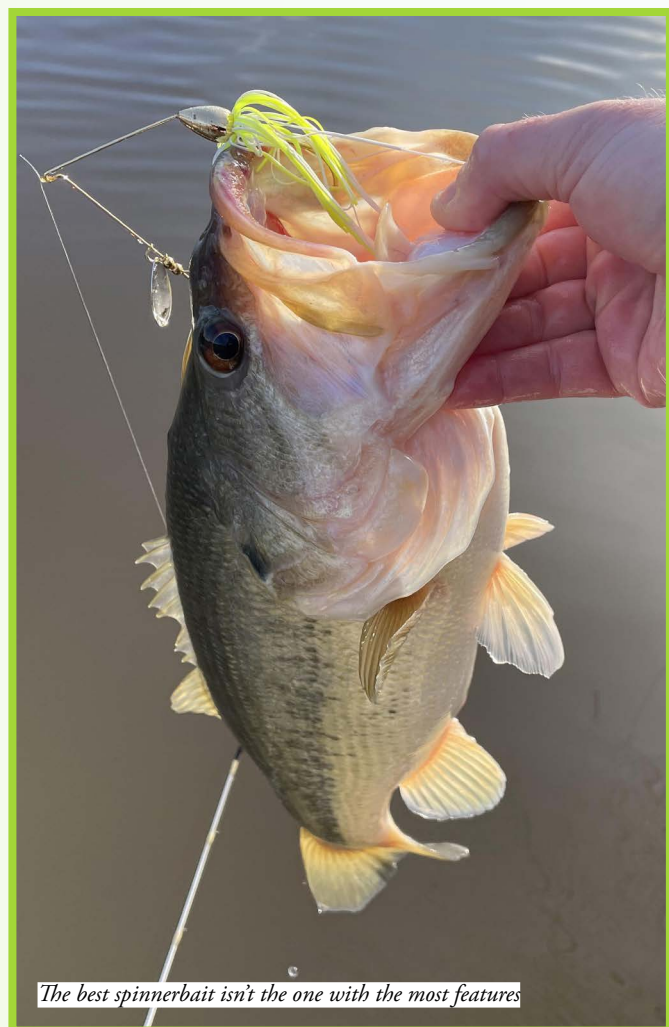
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SPINNERBAIT BASICS

THE BEST SPINNERBAIT IS NOT THE ONE WITH THE MOST FEATURES—IT IS THE ONE THAT LETS YOU KEEP THE BAIT DOING THE RIGHT THING IN THE CONDITIONS YOU ARE FISHING.



The best spinnerbait isn't the one with the most features

There is something about springtime bass fishing that stays with you. Perhaps it is the first real sign that winter is loosening its grip, or the sight of a shallow bank coming alive as bass move towards the edges again. For me, some of my happiest fishing memories are of watching a bass react to a spinnerbait in spring. There is that sudden flash, the vibration travelling through the rod

and then, sometimes, the unmistakable explosion as a bass comes out of the grass to eat it.

I remember one particular spring day on Rust De Winter Dam when an icy breeze had been blowing across the dam almost continuously. The surface was rippled and the conditions were hardly what you would describe as comfortable, but those conditions were actually giving us a valuable clue. Spring bass were moving towards the shallows, and the wind was creating exactly the sort of environment in which a spinnerbait can come into its own.

Much of the time, soft plastics are the obvious choice for a grassy dam such as Rust De Winter, and there is certainly no reason to abandon them. But choosing a lure should always begin with understanding where the bass are likely to be and what the conditions are telling you. Bass often spend the warmer summer and autumn months using shallow-water hideouts, while winter can push them away from the banks towards deeper, more stable water. Spring changes that equation again. As the fish move into the shallows, following those powerful seasonal instincts, the vegetation becomes an important part of the picture.

That is where the spinnerbait makes so much sense. Its ability to work through grass and other shallow cover without constantly becoming snagged allows you to put a moving bait into places where many other lures become frustrating to fish. On that breezy Rust De Winter day, the flashing blades and vibration moving through the shallows were particularly effective, while the rippled surface and wind were helping to oxygenate the shallow water.

That last point is worth remembering because wind and spinnerbaits belong together. Anglers sometimes see wind simply as something that makes casting unpleasant, but an experienced angler looks at what the wind is doing to the fishing. A breeze breaks up the surface, reduces light penetration and can make bass more willing to chase a moving bait. It also pushes your line around and makes



accurate casting more difficult, which is where spinnerbait weight becomes important.

The good news is that choosing the right spinnerbait does not have to become complicated. Walk into a tackle shop and you can quickly become overwhelmed by the choices: different weights, sizes, blade configurations, colours and skirts.

But instead of trying to remember every possible combination, I prefer to narrow the decision down by asking a few simple questions about the conditions in front of me.

The first is the wind. As the wind increases, I generally want more weight. Spinnerbaits are available in weights ranging from around 1/16 oz to 1 oz, giving you plenty of room to match the lure to the conditions. The heavier lure is easier to cast accurately into the wind, while its additional weight also helps prevent the line from bowing excessively and disrupting the bait's swimming action.

This does not mean that heavier is automatically better. If the wind is light and you are fishing shallow cover, a lighter spinnerbait can be much more effective. The lure stays up naturally and can be worked slowly around the places where bass are hiding. That is particularly useful beneath overhanging trees and boat docks, around lily pads and through water grass. The important thing is to choose enough weight to control the bait without adding unnecessary weight that makes it harder to keep the lure where the fish are.

Water clarity is another major part of the decision. In clear water, I tend to tone down the skirt colours, using natural combinations such as dull white or white mixed with green pumpkin. As the water becomes more stained, brighter combinations become increasingly useful, with white and white/chartreuse being options worth considering.

The blades deserve the same thought. Silver blades are a straightforward choice in clear water, while bronze can become more useful as visibility decreases. Blade shape also influences how quickly you can fish the spinnerbait and how much vibration it produces. In clear water, sleek willow-leaf blades can be particularly effective because they allow

the lure to move quickly. The bass gets less opportunity to inspect it closely, and the bait can cover water efficiently.

When the water becomes more stained, slowing down can make more sense. A willow-leaf and Colorado combination gives the spinnerbait a different presence in the water, allowing you to reduce the retrieve speed while still giving the bass something they can detect. This is an important distinction: the spinnerbait is not simply selected because of its colour. You are choosing a combination of weight, blades and skirt that allows you to present the lure properly in the conditions.

Depth brings another piece to the puzzle. Most of my spinnerbait fishing takes place from the surface down to around 7 feet, where light penetration allows the lure's visual appeal and flash to work particularly well. If the bass are holding deeper, a heavier spinnerbait helps keep the lure down. If they are tight to shallow cover, the opposite is often true.

This is where an understanding of the bass becomes more important than simply reaching for another lure. If spring has brought the fish into shallow water, there is little point choosing a spinnerbait that wants to run several feet deeper than the fish are holding. Conversely, if the bass have moved slightly deeper because of changing conditions, you need a lure that can reach them and remain in the strike zone long enough to be effective.

Cloud cover can further change the equation. Thick cloud reduces light penetration and can create excellent spinnerbait conditions. Rather than automatically moving deeper, I would keep the bait within the first few feet of the surface and consider brighter skirts such as white or white/chartreuse. Painted blades can also be effective under these low-light conditions because they provide a different visual presence than the more traditional metallic finishes.

Then there is perhaps the most overlooked part of spinnerbait selection: speed.

It is tempting to think of spinnerbait fishing as simply choosing a lure and winding it back to the boat. But the weight you select can have a direct influence on how slowly you can fish.

In stained water or dense structure, a lighter spinnerbait can be extremely useful because it allows you to slow the bait down while also reducing the tendency to hang up in the cover.

And that is really where the whole selection process starts to make sense. Instead of standing in front of a tackle box wondering which of dozens of spinnerbaits might be the magic one, look at the conditions and work backwards. How much wind is there? How clear is the water? How deep are the fish likely to be? How much light is reaching the water? How quickly do you need the lure to move?

Those questions quickly eliminate most of the unnecessary choices.



Blade shape influences how much vibration it produces

The lesson from that cold, windy spring day at Rust De Winter was not that one particular spinnerbait was better than another. It was that the conditions had already told us much of what we needed to know. Spring had pointed us towards the shallow banks. The grass suggested a lure that could travel through cover without constantly getting stuck. The wind favoured a moving bait and called for enough weight to maintain control. From there, water clarity, depth, light and retrieve speed helped narrow the choice even further.

Once you begin looking at spinnerbait selection that way, the lure stops being just another piece of tackle. It becomes a tool for responding to what the dam is telling you.

The big lesson

Spinnerbait fishing becomes much simpler when you stop choosing from the tackle box first and start reading the water first. Wind, clarity, depth, light and desired retrieve speed naturally narrow your options. You don't need every spinnerbait available - you need the right combination for what the bass and the conditions are telling you.

Think like a pro

Before your next cast, ask yourself:

- Is the wind helping me by creating better spinnerbait

conditions, or is it simply making me want to fish a heavier lure?

- Where are the bass likely to be in this light, water clarity and depth - and can my spinnerbait stay in that strike zone?
- Do I need a different colour, or do I actually need to change the lure's weight, blade combination or retrieve speed?

Take it to the water

Next time you fish a spinnerbait in spring, resist the temptation to choose your lure simply because it looks good in the tackle box. Before making your selection, stop and read the conditions. Note the wind, water clarity, depth and available light, then choose the weight, skirt and blades that allow you to keep the bait behaving naturally in that environment. Once you've made your choice, concentrate on keeping the spinnerbait in the most likely strike zone rather than constantly wondering whether another colour or configuration might be better.

You may find that the fishing conditions have already made most of the decision for you. 🎣



Thick clouds create excellent spinnerbait conditions



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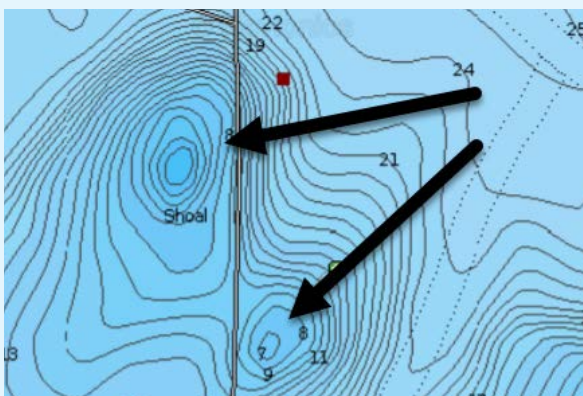
BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

>> Hannes Lindeque



Secret

Understanding where fish are likely to be can save far more time than endlessly changing lures.



Holding areas

Winter holding areas include submerged ledges, deep points, creek channels, and underwater humps.



Go-to

One of my go-to lures in winter is the jerkbait.



Retrieve

Slow your retrieve; winter bass don't want to chase their meal.



Where

Bass typically relate to the bottom in winter.



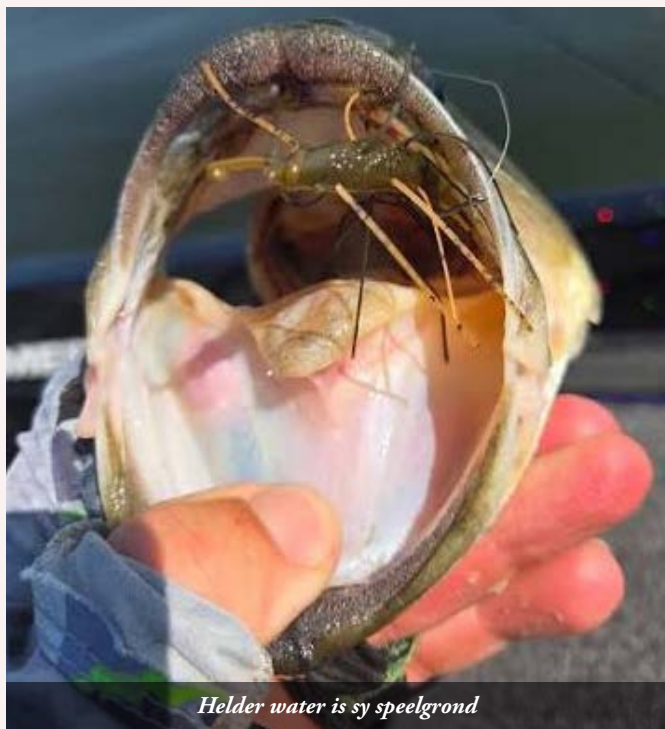
Big bass

Understand that big bass prefer feeding upward and often use the surface as a weapon.

Casting

- Accurate casting is one of the most valuable skills you can develop.





Helder water is sy speelgrond

See-Egels

Waar die See-Egel regtig sy staal wys
Deel 2/3

>> Philip Kemp*

Teen hierdie tyd wonder baie lesers waarskynlik dieselfde ding: “Goed, die aas lyk interessant, maar wanneer bind ek hom aan?”

Dis waarskynlik die belangrikste vraag van almal. Geen kunsas is immers ‘n wondermiddel nie. Selfs die gewildste swemaas, chatterbait of Texas-rig het situasies waar dit eenvoudig beter presteer as enigiets anders. Die See-Egel is nie anders nie. Sy krag lê nie daarin dat hy alles vervang wat reeds in jou kunsaskas is nie, maar dat hy ‘n probleem oplos waarvoor min ander kunsas ‘n antwoord het.

Daardie probleem is gewoonlik slim, versigtige baars.

Ek onthou ‘n winteroggend op ‘n dam waar die water amper glashelder was. Die son het skaars oor die rant gekom en op LiveScope kon ons vis ná vis sien hang – nie op die bodem nie, maar twee tot drie meter onder die oppervlak. Hulle was daar. Hulle was aktief genoeg om rond te beweeg. Tog het elke tradisionele aanbieding dieselfde reaksie gekry: die vis sou nader swem, ‘n draai maak en eenvoudig wegdryf.

Na omtrent ‘n uur sonder ‘n enkele byt besluit ons om iets heeltemal anders te probeer.

Die eerste See-Egel het stadig begin afsak. Nie met groot rukke of aggressiewe bewegings nie, maar net ‘n rustige, natuurlike val. Op die sonar kon ons sien hoe ‘n groter vis stadig sy koers verander. Hy het die aas gevolg, ‘n oomblik onder hom gehang, en toe het die lyn eenvoudig styf getrek.

Daardie oomblik het my besef laat verander.

Die See-Egel is nie noodwendig ‘n soek-aas waarmee jy vinnig water dek nie. Dis ‘n oorredings-aas. Sy werk begin eers wanneer die baars hom sien.

Helder water is sy speelgrond

As daar een omgewing is waar hierdie kunsas uitblink, is dit skoon water.

Wanneer die sigbaarheid ‘n meter of meer is, kry die baars kans om die hele profiel van die aas te sien. Elke tentakel beweeg onafhanklik en skep ‘n sagte, lewende silhoeët wat moeilik is om te ignoreer. Dis amper soos ‘n stadige toneelstuk wat voor die vis afspeel.

In modderwater is die storie natuurlik anders.

Daar vertrou baars baie meer op vibrasie en waterverplasing as op sig. Dis hoekom ‘n spinnerbait, bladed jig of groot Colorado-lem dikwels steeds die beter keuse bly wanneer die water bruin is ná swaar reën.

Dit beteken egter nie jy moet die See-Egel heeltemal wegpak sodra die water effens verkleur nie. As daar nog redelike sigbaarheid is, veral rondom klipbanke of steil oewers waar die water skoner bly, kan hy steeds verras. Die geheim is eenvoudig om realistiese verwagtinge te hê en die kunsas in sy ideale omstandighede te gebruik.

Wanneer hengeldruk jou grootste vyand word

Suid-Afrikaanse damme is nie meer dieselfde as twintig jaar gelede nie.

Baie gewilde kompetisedamme kry week ná week besoek van honderde hengelaars. Teen Saterdagmiddag het die meeste groot baars al tientalle kunsas verby sien kom.

Dis juis wanneer mens begin hoor: “Die vis is daar, maar hulle wil net nie byt nie.”

Hier maak die See-Egel dikwels die verskil.

Ek glo nie noodwendig die vis dink dit is kos nie. Ek dink eerder die aas wek nuuskierigheid. ‘n Groot baars is van nature territoriaal én ondersoekend. Wanneer iets vreemds stadig sy leefgebied binnekom, wil hy weet wat dit is. Soms volg hy dit vir ‘n paar meter. Ander kere stoot hy dit net liggies. En baie keer eindig daardie ondersoek met ‘n byt.

Dit is waarom geduld so belangrik is.

Die fout wat baie hengelaars maak, is dat hulle die aas wegtrek sodra hulle sien die vis volg. Gee hom tyd. Laat die aas nog ‘n paar sekondes hang. Baie van die grootste visse vat eers wanneer dit lyk asof niks gaan gebeur nie.

Die sonar-revolusie het die spel verander

Daar is waarskynlik geen kunsas wat so vinnig gewild geraak het danksy moderne LiveScope-, Active Target- en Mega Live-sonarstelsels soos die See-Egel nie.

Skielik kon hengelaars nie net sien waar die vis is nie, maar ook presies hoe hy op die kunsas reageer.

Interessant genoeg het hierdie tegnologie ook ‘n paar ou mites uit die weg geruim.



Die aas begin eers werk wanneer die baars hom sien

Ons het altyd gedink 'n kunsas moet voortdurend beweeg om 'n byt uit te lok. Live sonar wys egter dikwels presies die teenoorgestelde. Baars reageer gereeld beter wanneer die aas byna stilstaan. Die tentakels doen reeds genoeg werk; jou hande hoef nie voortdurend iets by te voeg nie.

Dit vra natuurlik selfvertroue.

Dis moeilik om niks te doen wanneer jy voel jy behoort iets te doen. Maar juis daarin lê die kuns van hierdie aanbieding.

Broeityd – wanneer irritasie belangriker raak as honger

Elke hengelaar weet dat broeityd sy eie reëls het.

Baars byt dan nie noodwendig omdat hulle honger is nie. Hulle byt omdat hulle hul nes beskerm.

Dis waarom 'n groot swemaas soms heeltemal geïgnoreer word, terwyl 'n klein finesse-aas skielik aggressiewe reaksies uitlok.

Die See-Egel val stadig deur die waterkolom en bly langer in die vis se persoonlike ruimte. Elke klein beweging van die tentakels lyk soos iets wat eenvoudig nie wil weggaan nie. Vir 'n broeiende baars raak dit later ondraaglik.

Hy byt nie omdat hy wil eet nie.

Hy byt omdat hy genoeg gehad het.

Dis 'n belangrike verskil.

Wanneer jy tydens die broeiseisoen hengel, probeer nie die aas vinnig deur die nes werk nie. Laat dit stadig afsak, gee klein bewegingties met die stokpunt en laat die kunsas eenvoudig daar bly. Dikwels is dit daardie ekstra paar sekondes wat die verskil maak.

Minder is meer

Namate die See-Egel wêreldwyd gewilder geword het, het iets opvallends gebeur.

Hengelaars het begin eksperimenteer met allerhande ingewikkelde aanbiedings. Groter gewigte. Meer aksie. Verskillende bykomstighede.

En toe het baie van die top-pro's weer terugbeweeg na eenvoud.

Hulle het besef die magie lê juis in die natuurlike val.

'n Ligter gewig laat die aas langer in die byt-sone bly. Elke ekstra sekonde gee die baars nog 'n kans om sy besluit te neem. Daarom sal jy sien dat ervare hengelaars altyd die ligste gewig gebruik wat die omstandighede toelaat. Nie omdat dit mooier lyk nie, maar omdat dit eenvoudig meer tyd in die vis se gesigsveld deurbring.

Dis ook waarom lynkeuse belangrik raak. Dikker lyn rem die valtempo af en verander die natuurlike aksie. 'n Dun fluorokoolstof-voorslag laat die aas veel vryer beweeg en gee boonop uitstekende sensitiviteit wanneer daardie skaars waarneembare byt uiteindelik kom.

Vier stroppe, een beginsel

- Hoewel die See-Egel op verskillende maniere aangebied kan word, is die onderliggende beginsel altyd dieselfde: maksimum natuurlike beweging met minimum inmenging van die hengelaar.
- Die “drop-shot” bly waarskynlik die veelsydigste opsie. Dis ideaal vir diep water, steil kranse en suspendeerde vis. Omdat die gewig op die bodem rus, bly die aas perfek in die vis se gesigsveld waar die tentakels met die geringste beweging begin lewe kry.
- Die Neko-rig het vinnig 'n gunsteling onder sonar-hengelaars geword. Met 'n klein gewig in die kern van die aas sak die See-Egel effens neus-eerste af, maar die tentakels bly voortdurend beweeg. Dit is besonder effektief wanneer jy individuele vis op elektronika teiken.
- Vir vlak water, dokke en oorhangende bome is die Wacky-rig moeilik om te klop. Hier gaan dit nie oor aggressiewe aksie nie, maar oor die stadigste, mees natuurlike val denkbaar. Dis verbasend hoeveel visse die aas gryp nog voordat dit die bodem bereik.

Groter modelle leen hulle weer uitstekend tot 'n drie-angelhoek-opstelling, veral waar groot vis tussen houtstrukture of digte dekking gevang word. Die verbeterde haakvermoë kan 'n groot verskil maak wanneer daardie enkele toernooi-byt uiteindelik kom.

Wat al vier hierdie aanbiedings gemeen het, is dat hulle die aas toelaat om sy eie werk te doen.

En dalk is dit die grootste geheim van die See-Egel.

Hy probeer nie harder wees as al die ander kunsas in jou boks nie.

Hy probeer net anders wees.

In Deel 3 kyk ons na die ideale toerusting, kleurkeuses, hoe om die kunsas vir Suid-Afrikaanse damme aan te pas, die mees algemene foute wat hengelaars maak en waarom die See-Egel waarskynlik veel langer gaan bly as net nóg 'n verbygaande modegier. 🐟

**Philip Kemp is 'n gesoute swartbaarthengelaar en assistent-redakteur van SA BASS.*

PRE-SPAWN TACTICS

TARGETING BIGGER BASS

There is something about August bass fishing that makes me look at deeper water a little differently. For most of the year, I am quite happy working shallower areas, but when the bass start moving towards the spawn, I find myself looking beyond the obvious shallow-water targets and paying much more attention to what is happening a little deeper.

Part of the attraction is simple: this is one of the best times of the year to target a really big bass. Female bass are often at their heaviest as they carry developing eggs, and that extra weight can turn an already good fish into a potential personal best. But there is another reason I enjoy this period so much. The bigger fish are often not where the average angler expects them to be.

As the water moves from winter towards the spawning period, bass don't simply wake up one morning and move from deep water onto a spawning flat. There is a transition, and somewhere along that journey the bigger females often

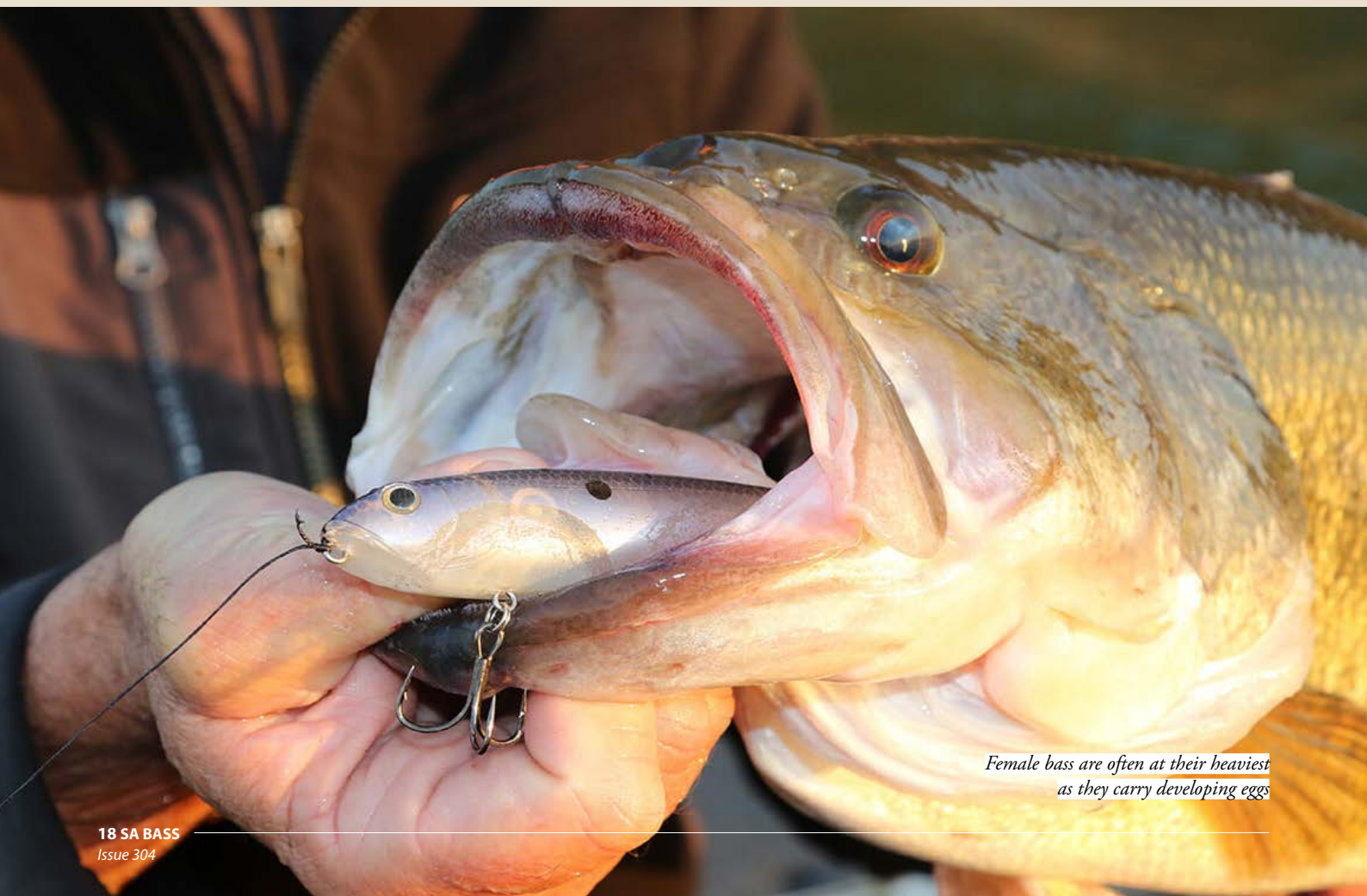
spend time around structure that gives them easy access to both deeper water and the shallows. That is where staging comes into the picture.

Points, ledges, river-channel edges and rock piles adjacent to spawning flats are all places I like to investigate. These areas can become gathering points as bass prepare for the move into shallower water. The important word here, however, is adjacent. I am not looking for deep water simply because it is deep. I am looking for the right kind of structure, in the right relationship to the spawning area.

That distinction is important because one of the easiest traps to fall into during pre-spawn is believing there must be a magic depth. You hear it on the water all the time: "The fish are in 20 feet." The problem is that a statement like that doesn't tell you much about the actual fishery in front of you. On a large dam, bass may stage at very different depths depending on the area they are using.



Ike's Head Banger jig



Female bass are often at their heaviest as they carry developing eggs



Deep diving crankbaits are great baits to trigger reaction strikes

One rocky point may have the important cover sitting in 15 feet, while another may have similar fish relating to timber in 25 feet. The number itself is not the answer. The relationship between the structure, the cover and the nearby spawning area is what matters.

This is where good electronics can make a tremendous difference. Rather than blind-casting an entire point and hoping the lure eventually finds something worthwhile, I would rather spend time identifying exactly what is down there. If the point has submerged timber, for example, that can turn an otherwise ordinary-looking piece of structure into a much more attractive target. Once you find that combination of hard bottom and cover, you have a reason to fish it thoroughly.

Of course, electronics are only useful if you know how to interpret what they are showing you. But even without sophisticated electronics, there are ways to investigate. A deep-diving crankbait or a heavy Carolina rig can help locate submerged timber, and marker buoys can then give you a much better idea of where that productive area actually lies. The point is not to sit on the bank and guess. Find something worth fishing, and then fish it.

For me, that means that a general rule during this period is to favour hard-bottom areas where timber is present. It is not a magic formula, and bass don't read rules, but it gives me a logical starting point. From there, the fish themselves tell me whether I am in the right place.

Once I have located the right type of area, I am also more inclined to use bigger baits. Pre-spawn is probably the time of year when I am most comfortable upsizing, particularly with presentations that have plenty of action or sound. There is a reason for that. These are quality fish carrying a lot of energy into the spawning period, and I want my presentation to be something they can easily find and react to.

My number-one choice for covering these areas with a soft plastic is the Carolina rig. It allows me to work a relatively large area efficiently while still keeping the bait in contact with the bottom. My standard setup is a half-ounce tungsten barrel weight, a plastic bead to protect the knot, and a 4/0 EWG offset worm hook. The plastic bead is particularly important with tungsten because tungsten weights can shatter glass beads.

My favourite plastics include the Zoom 8-inch lizard, Strike King Rage Recon worm, Missile Baits Tomahawk

and, following last year's pre-spawn fishing, the Missile Baits Destroyer. What I particularly like about the Destroyer is the combination of profile, action and the soft, natural feel created by its ribs. Those subtle details become important when a bass follows the bait rather than simply reacting to it.

The Carolina rig is not always the answer, though. If I am constantly getting hung up in a rocky area, I would rather change the presentation than spend the day fighting the bottom. That is when a football jig becomes a better option for me. I generally fish football jigs from 3/8 to 3/4 ounce, with Ike's Head Banger being a current favourite. Its head design sits somewhere between a conventional football jig and a more triangular, narrower profile, which allows it to work through rocky areas while getting stuck less often than some standard football jigs.

With jig trailers, I tend to keep the colour matched to the jig and then change the profile when I want to show the bass something slightly different. Missile Baits D-Bombs and Twin Turbo grubs give me those options, while Zoom Super Speed Craws, Twin Tail Grubs and Gary Yamamoto creature baits are also useful choices.

Then there are those moments when you want to make the bass react rather than simply eat.

Deep-diving crankbaits can be particularly effective around the rock and timber associated with these staging areas. I want the crankbait reaching the bottom and contacting the structure. In fact, I might use a 16-foot diver



Target structure such as points, ledges, river channel edges and rock piles that are adjacent to spawning flats



Missile Baits Destroyer

in 12 to 14 feet of water specifically so that it can get down and interact with what is there.

The important part is what happens when the crankbait hits something. Rather than simply winding it through the area at one constant speed, vary the retrieve and pay attention to how the fish respond. I like to pause the bait for a second or two after it bumps into rock or timber. Quite often, the strike comes in that brief moment between the lure deflecting off the object and beginning to move again.

I also like to alternate between rattling and silent crankbaits. There are days when the fish seem to want to hear the lure coming, while on other days a silent bait suddenly appearing in front of them seems to trigger the reaction. The Rapala DT range and Norman DD series are widely available options that have proven themselves in this type of fishing.

But there is another clue during this transition that I think is particularly valuable - and it has saved me from wasting a lot of time in shallow water.

Sometimes you can catch fish shallow all day and still be fishing in the wrong place.

One of the tell-tale signs of a pre-spawn situation can be catching keeper-sized bass shallow while the better-quality fish seem to have disappeared. Those smaller fish are often males moving in ahead of the females, scouting and preparing potential spawning areas. They are willing, aggressive and great fun to catch, which makes it incredibly easy to convince yourself that you have found the pattern.

But if you keep catching the same size fish without seeing better-quality bass, that information matters.

The temptation is to say, "The bass are shallow." A more experienced approach is to ask, "Which bass are shallow?"

That small change in thinking can make a big difference. The presence of smaller males doesn't necessarily mean the big females have moved into the same water. In fact, if the better fish aren't showing up, it may be a sign that the fish you really want are still staging somewhere between their deeper holding areas and the spawning flats.

That is the part of pre-spawn fishing I find most fascinating. The shallow fish can be telling you exactly what is happening without necessarily being the fish you should spend the rest of the day targeting.

I also like to plan a pre-spawn trip around the weather when I can. Those calm, warm days ahead of a cold front can really wake the fish up. If the conditions line up, that can be an excellent opportunity to intercept bass that are actively moving and feeding before the next change arrives.

Ultimately, though, I keep coming back to the same idea: don't become obsessed with a number on the depth finder. A bass doesn't decide to stage at 20 feet because somebody said that is where pre-spawn fish should be. It chooses a location because that location gives it something it needs.

Find the hard bottom. Find the cover. Look for timber on structure that connects naturally with spawning areas. Then pay attention to which size fish are using it.

The biggest mistake you can make during pre-spawn is assuming that catching bass means you've solved the puzzle. Sometimes the fish you are catching are simply telling you where the next group of fish is going - not where the biggest fish are right now.

The big lesson

During pre-spawn, don't chase a magic depth. Look for the relationship between hard bottom, cover and access to spawning areas, then let the size and behaviour of the fish you catch tell you whether you have found the right group. The best anglers aren't simply finding bass; they are constantly asking whether they have found the right bass.

Think like a pro

Before your next cast, ask yourself:

- Am I fishing this depth because the structure and cover make sense, or simply because someone told me that's where pre-spawn bass should be?
- Are the fish I'm catching evidence that the big females are present, or are they telling me that I should look for the next staging area?
- If this area doesn't produce the quality of fish I'm looking for, what nearby structure gives those bigger bass the best combination of cover, hard bottom and access to the spawning flats?

Take it to the water

On your next pre-spawn outing, choose a spawning area and work backwards from it. Instead of immediately fishing the obvious shallow water, identify the points, ledges, channel edges or rock piles that connect that spawning area to deeper water. Then look closely for hard bottom and submerged timber.

Most importantly, don't judge the area only by whether you catch a bass. Pay attention to which bass you catch. If you keep catching the same smaller fish while the better-quality bass are noticeably absent, resist the temptation to call it a pattern. Use that information as a clue and start looking for where the bigger females may be staging next. 🐟

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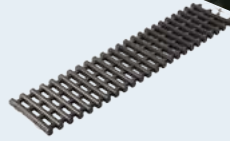
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Winter Chatter

Chatter bait tactics for winter bass

>> Jay Röhm-Williams*



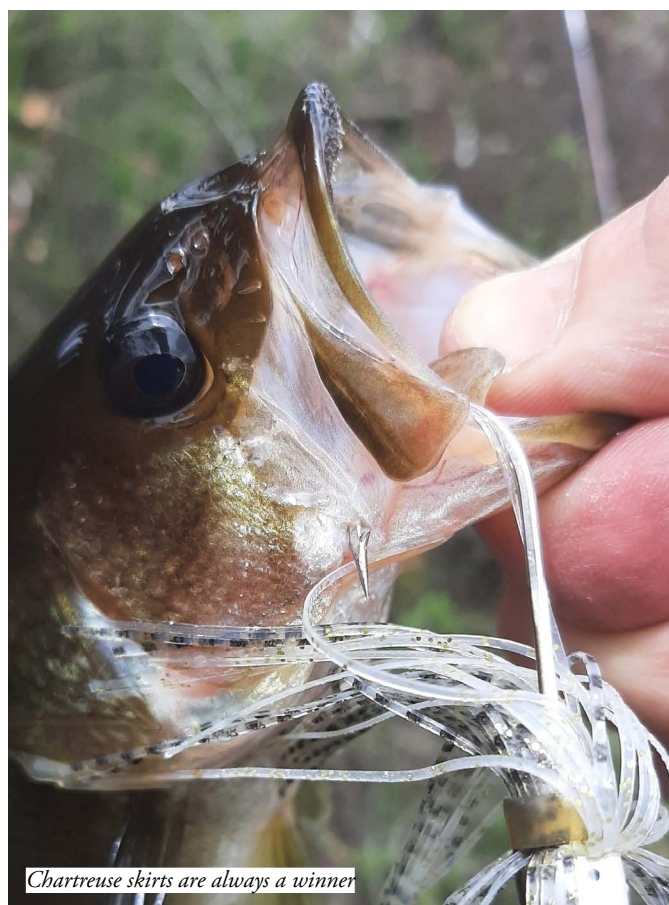
Brad with an awesome chatter bait catch

Yes, brrr.... here but got to be to still catch out there, of course there are but we all the daily grind to get a bite come goes. It's hard and tough going during the chilly season although if you play your lures right there's still victories to

its cold out there has some bass right? Well know how winter time

be had under the water. Winter bassing can be taxing on an angler's soul with hopes and dreams left as blank as when you arrived once our time on the waters up. Trust me, I know but if you love bass angling as much as I do then this won't stop you from fishing.

It's a slow contest of determination, patience and the will to keep mixing it up that prevails even when the odds are not in our favour. This is always easier read than done



Chartreuse skirts are always a winner

but arming ourselves with the right tactics can believe it or not put more fish in the boat. Something as simple as starting off with the right lure choice when the temps are low and bass metabolisms are even lower is a cast in the right direction. There are many types of lures that one could go through in search of a winter bite and one of these in particular is the faithful, old chatter bait.

Jig fishing for bass in the winter can be very productive. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours all weighted and custom made to be fished just about anywhere. Whether they need to be retrieved fast or slow they can cover both deep and shallow areas around any kind of cover you could think of. Chatter baits fall into the category of bladed jigs or vibrating jigs which bring their own personal little touch of flair and magic. You see the one difference that chatter baits have going for them is their unique, tiny square like metal plate that vibrates upon retrieval. This additional attribute which accompanies your traditional, weighted head and colourful skirt makes a very attractive lure indeed when fished correctly. It doesn't matter if the waters muddy, stained or clear or what season it is; the chatter bait is indeed a super, efficient all round lure.

You see it's this vibration, sensation that it emits under water that really grabs the attention of lethargic fish because even when bounced around or drag along slowly it creates both sound and movement. It does not necessarily have to be power fished through open water but rather used to probe both gaps and holes. It can be bounced, hopped, skipped and even fluttered above or through underwater

vegetation lines and closely past solid cover whether deep or shallow. Chatter baits can also be fished very carefully along the bottom or in between rocky obstacles with ease making it extremely effective in winter time.

Any setup can be used when it comes to rigging up chatter baits because it all boils down to personal preference. A medium-heavy rod setup with either light braid or fluorocarbon line is both super functional producing great results without over complicating things. When it comes to colour and size selections of chatter baits it really depends again on what water conditions you are fishing. Generally speaking though anything with a shade of chartreuse in it works exceptionally well in most situations. During winter targeting areas close up to hard cover lying just deeper off shallow ledges are ideal. A slow to steady retrieval works well with pauses and stops in between usually triggering a response from idle bass watching close by. Repeat casts in certain; high potential zones might be needed because we must remember winter bass don't always react immediately. They tend to linger, watch and line themselves up on passing prey with sometimes the lure having to cruise right passed them before they engage.

It's also important to remember that although a chatter bait tends to come through heavy or matted cover unscathed if you fail to keep a solid connection on your line you will snag up. Watch and hold control of your retrieval in order to create the best response from your chatter baits but don't let yourself be intimidated. Once you have a good feel for what speed and motion the fish are responding too you can catch a lot of quality fish. In open, deep water the chatter bait can be used to closely mimic injured or fleeing baitfish when retrieved slowly gaining the attention of those winter lunkers towards them. There has been often some giant bass brought to the scales thanks to the humble chatter bait in the colder months when other lures failed to produce results.

If you need a reliable lure when the bite is tough and the waters cold try switching to a good old chatter bait and see what happens. You can only catch fish if you fishing so don't give up because winters giving you a hard time.

Rods out and safe fishing everyone! 🐟

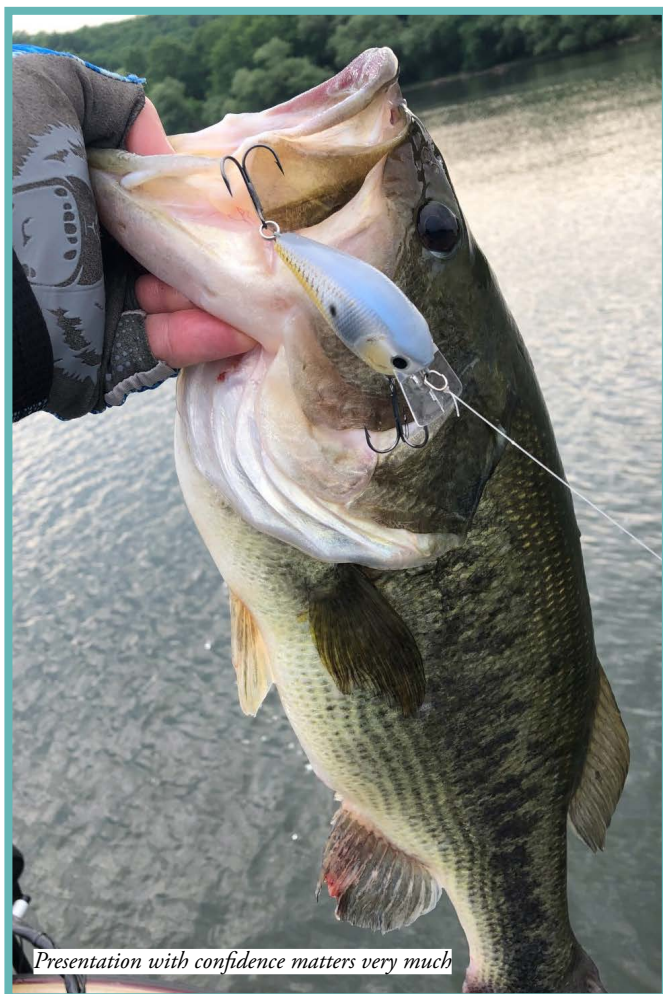
**Jay Röhm-Williams is a seasoned bass angler with a wealth of knowledge, and since 2018 he has been sharing his expertise with fellow bass enthusiasts, hoping they'll discover the same passion and enjoyment he finds in this unique sport.*



The old faithful chatter bait

Colour Selection

I sometimes wonder whether we as men have any right to complain about how many pairs of shoes our wives own. We may shake our heads when another pair arrives, but the truth is that we bass anglers have our own version of the same problem - and ours comes with hooks.



Presentation with confidence matters very much

When was the last time you really took stock of what is hiding in your man cave? I was reminded of my own problem recently when I built myself a new rod stand. It seemed like a good idea at the time, until I discovered that it was too small. I had rods left over. What was I supposed to do with them? The obvious answer, of course, was to build a bigger rod stand and keep the old one as well. You never know when you might need it.

That pretty much sums up the bass angler's relationship with tackle. We are always looking for something that might give us an edge, whether we fish purely for fun or compete at tournament level. The industry knows this very well. There is always a new lure, a new colour or some variation of something we already own waiting for us at the tackle shop.

And colour is particularly good at getting us.

You walk into a tackle shop with your favourite green pumpkin soft plastic firmly in mind, and then you see *green pumpkin gold*. It looks different enough to be interesting but familiar enough to make you believe it must be better. Then someone tells you they caught a big bass on it. Suddenly that colour has gone from something you didn't know existed to something you absolutely need.

And once you catch a few fish on it, the trap is complete.

I have seen anglers accumulate enough tackle to make their garages look like tackle shops, while their cars are left outside. We laugh about it, but there is a lesson hidden in all that tackle: sometimes we spend more time trying to find the next magic bait than we do learning how to use the baits we already have.

That is especially true when it comes to colour.

The bass-fishing industry is enormous, and new products have to be sold. There is nothing wrong with that, but we need to remember that *new* does not automatically mean *necessary*. A colour that catches our attention in a packet may have much less significance to a bass beneath the surface.

A good example is KVD and the famous Sexy Shad colour. A few years ago, Kevin VanDam was fishing a shad-patterned lipless crankbait and catching fish on it while repeatedly talking about "bringing sexy back". The Sexy Shad colour became hugely popular, and when I was a tackle dealer I could hardly keep it on the shelves. Anglers saw a successful professional catching fish on that colour and naturally wanted the same thing.

There is nothing wrong with the colour. I have caught bass on Sexy Shad myself. But it isn't one of my personal



*The famous KVD
Sexy Shad colour*

favourites, and I rarely reach for it because I have developed confidence in other colours.

And that is where colour selection becomes much more interesting.

The best colour is not necessarily the one that somebody else caught a big bass on. It is the colour that makes sense for the conditions in front of you and that you have enough confidence in to fish properly.

Think about what happens when you fish deeper water. As depth increases, the amount of available light changes and the colours we see above the surface don't necessarily look the same below it. By around 20 feet, colour distinctions become increasingly difficult to rely on, and by roughly 25 feet the available information may be reduced largely to darker and lighter shades.

That raises an interesting question. If you're fishing that deep, how much practical difference is there really going to be between green pumpkin blue and green pumpkin red?

Probably far less than we imagine.

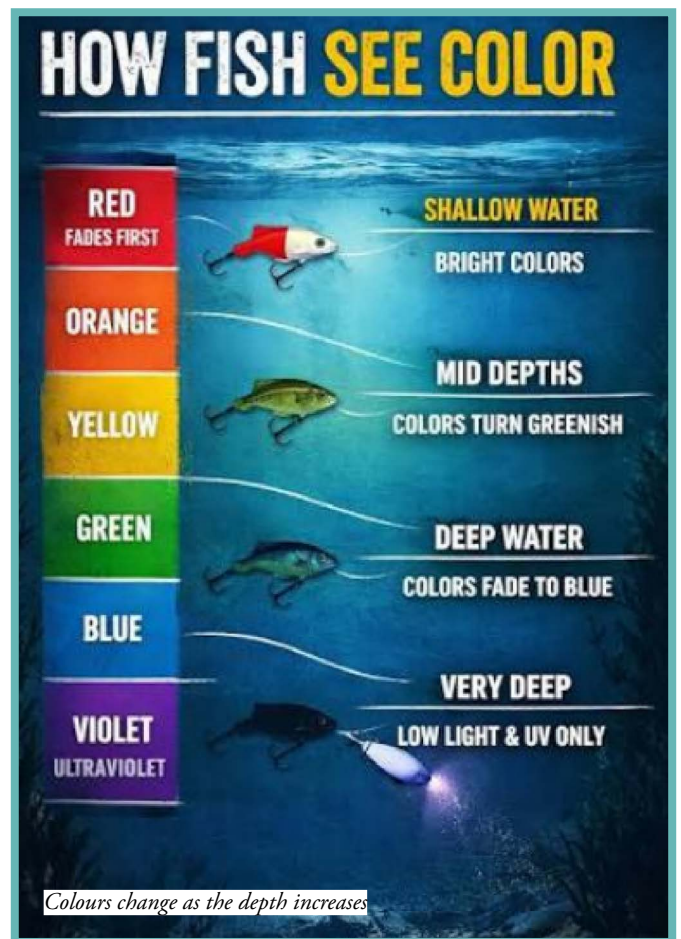
And this is where I think many anglers have it backwards. We spend enormous amounts of time worrying about tiny differences in colour while overlooking the things that may have a much greater influence on whether a bass eats the lure: where the lure is, how deep it is, how fast it moves and how naturally it is presented.

In other words, presentation can become more important than colour.

That doesn't mean colour doesn't matter. It means we should give it the amount of importance it deserves rather than allowing it to become an obsession.



Colour is a tool, not a substitute for understanding bass



For most of our local dams, I believe an angler can cover an enormous range of situations with roughly a dozen dependable colours. Start with the basics namely Junebug, watermelon, green pumpkin, black, and white. From there, build around the depths you expect to fish and the water clarity you're likely to encounter.

But there is another ingredient that is difficult to measure and impossible to buy in a packet: confidence.

If you have caught fish repeatedly on a particular colour, you are naturally more inclined to fish it properly. You make the cast with confidence. You work the lure without constantly wondering whether something else would be better. You keep it in the strike zone because you're concentrating on fishing rather than second-guessing yourself.

That confidence matters because an angler who changes colour every few casts may never give any presentation enough time to reveal whether it is actually working.

This is one of those areas where experienced anglers can look as though they have an enormous amount of knowledge when, in reality, they have simply learned to eliminate unnecessary decisions. They don't need to carry every colour because they understand what their trusted colours do, where they use them and under which conditions they have confidence in them.

There is also a very practical reason to simplify your colour selection. Every unnecessary colour you buy costs money, takes up space and gives you another decision to make on the water. Multiply that by dozens of lure styles and colours and it becomes surprisingly easy to spend more money accumulating possibilities than developing skills.

Before your next trip, take a good look at your tackle. Don't ask yourself which colours are available. Ask which colours you actually use.

Then consider the water you are going to fish. How deep will you probably be fishing? What kind of water clarity can you expect? Which colours have consistently produced fish for you? Which ones do you reach for because they work and which ones are still sitting in their original packets because somebody told you they were the next big thing?

That last question can be uncomfortable.

For tournament anglers, the answer is even more important. A competition is rarely the right time to experiment with an unfamiliar colour or lure simply because you bought it the day before. Tournament fishing is about making high-percentage decisions under pressure. If you haven't developed confidence in something during practice or ordinary fishing, introducing it when the results matter most is usually adding uncertainty rather than removing it.

The next time a new colour catches your eye, by all means admire it. Maybe even buy it if you genuinely think it fills a gap in your tackle selection.

But before you do, ask yourself a more important question: Do I need another colour, or do I need to become better at fishing the colours I already trust?

That question could save you a surprising amount of money. More importantly, it might put your attention back where it belongs: on the bass rather than the tackle shop.

The big lesson

Colour is a tool, not a substitute for understanding bass. When you know where the fish are, what depth they are using and how you want your lure to behave, a small selection of trusted colours can take you much further than a tackle box full of every new colour the industry produces.

Think like a pro

Before your next colour change, ask yourself:

- Is the problem really the colour, or is my lure simply not in the right place or being presented correctly?
- What does the depth and water visibility actually tell me about how important colour is right now?
- Am I changing colour because the bass are telling me to, or because I have lost confidence in my presentation?

Take it to the water

Next time, deliberately leave some of your experimental colours at home. Choose a small selection of colours you already trust and fish them properly through different depths and situations.

Pay particular attention to what happens when you change presentation rather than colour. If a trusted bait starts producing when you alter its depth, retrieve or location, you may discover that the colour was never the problem in the first place.

And when you walk into the tackle shop afterwards and see that irresistible new colour hanging on the wall, you'll at least have a better question to ask before reaching for your wallet. 🐟



Op my houtbordjie

DROP-SHOT MET 'N ANDERSHEID

>> *Philip Kemp**

In hierdie reeks deel ons graag 'n paar truuks, of beter bekend as “hacks”, met ons lesers

Soveel van ons gebruik die “drop-shot”-tegniek met groot sukses, maar daar is soveel ander variasies van die tegniek wat nie by almal bekend is nie. Die roterende “drop-shot” is maar net een van hulle.



Vir die tegniek moet die hengelaar 'n ligter lyn (4 pond) vir jou voorslag, klein vat-swaaiertjie, sirkel- of klein EWG hoek, rubber stoppertjies, 'n klein kraletjie en 'n “drop-shot”-sinkertjie hê.



Die rubber stoppertjie word eerste op die hooflyn geryg. Ek verkies vir die tegniek 10 pond flouorocarbon as my hooflyn.



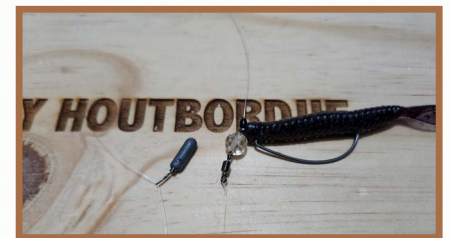
Die hoek word nou op die lyn geryg. Let dat die hoek na bo moet wys. Ek verkies 'n #2 EWG hoek omrede ek my plastiese aas op die Texas manier wil opsit sodat die hoek se punt toe is. Sodoende hak die hengelaar nie so baie vas soos wat dit die geval is met 'n oop sirkelhoek nie.



Die kraletjie word nou geryg. Die doel van die kraletjie is juis om die knoop wat nou gaan volg te beskerm.



Die vat-swaaiier of beter bekend as 'n “power swivel” word nou aan die hooflyn geknoop met 'n Polomarknoop, of enige ander knoop waarin die hengelaar vertrou het.



Die dunner voorslag lyn word nou aan die ander punt van die vat-swaaiier geknoop. Aan die punt van die voorslag word 'n “drop-shot”-sinker geheg. Ek verkies met opset swak knope wat maklik sal breek as die sinker sou vashak. Die hoek op die hooflyn sal egter nie breek en die hengelaar sodoende sy vis verloor nie.

Nog 'n bietjie raad

Hierdie tegniek word veral gebruik as die baars net bokant die bodem suspendeer. Die lengte van jou voorslaglyn word egter bepaal volgens die hoogte wat die baars bokant die bodem is. Die voordeel van die tegniek is egter dat die hoek los aan die lyn is en dus om die lyn kan roteer. Hierdie andersheid is soms juis wat die baars gaan soek. 🐟

**Philip Kemp is 'n gesoute swartbaars-hengelaar en assistent-redakteur van SA BASS.*

Stuur gerus jou fotos en storie vir ons na philip@sabass.com indien jy sukses met hierdie truuk gehad het.

Winter-Time Bass Fishing

There is something about winter bass fishing that can make an angler question everything he thought he knew. The same dam that produced fish throughout summer suddenly seems empty.

The banks look deserted, the bites become fewer and the temptation is to keep moving, changing lures and searching for some magical area where the bass have supposedly gone.

But they haven't gone anywhere. They have simply changed the way they live.

As the water cools, a bass's metabolism slows dramatically. It doesn't need to burn through as much energy, which means it doesn't need to feed as frequently. That one change explains much of what happens during the cold months. A bass is unlikely to waste precious energy chasing something all over the dam when an easier meal can be found nearby. This is why smaller baits and extremely slow-moving presentations become so effective. The aim is not necessarily to make the bass aggressive. It is to put something within reach that requires very little effort to eat.

The other important change is where bass spend their time. In really cold conditions they tend to group together and can remain remarkably inactive for long periods. They favour areas where food is available and deep water is close by, and they may remain in those areas until conditions begin improving towards spring. In KwaZulu-Natal, where winter water temperatures do not fall as severely, there can still be pockets of bass roaming the shallows around the warmer part of the day. That is why winter fishing should never become a rigid rule that says every bass must be deep.

Instead, think about where the fish can live comfortably while keeping food close at hand.

This is perhaps the biggest adjustment an angler can make. During winter, bass use a smaller percentage of the available territory than at almost any other time of the year. You don't necessarily need to fish more water - you need to identify the small percentage of water that makes sense. Look for concentrations of bait, cover and bass, particularly where deeper water is nearby.



Cold water is exactly where a grub can shine

And here is the good news: winter bass still have to eat.

They may not be feeding as often, but when they do decide to feed, an easy opportunity can be difficult to ignore. Bass often remain in groups, too, which means that one inactive fish doesn't necessarily mean the whole area is dead. There may be another bass nearby that is ready to eat.

One particularly important winter food source is kurper. As water temperatures drop into the 40s Fahrenheit, kurper can struggle to survive the cold. Injured or dying fish therefore become an opportunity for bass that are already holding nearby. This is where lure selection becomes interesting. A slowly sinking suspending jerkbait, for example, can be altered with a little lead golfer's tape or a few extra split rings so that it sinks slowly after a rip or pull. Instead of racing away like a fleeing baitfish, it hangs or sinks in a way that suggests a kurper struggling to stay afloat.

That is the important distinction: you're not trying to force a winter bass to chase. You're giving it an opportunity that looks as though it is already coming to it.

The same thinking applies when fishing suspended bass or deep flats with a small swimbait on an underspin. If the fish are holding just above the bottom, the lure can be cast and wound slowly through the area. The retrieve can be almost painfully deliberate, with an occasional pumping or stop-and-go movement. A bass may follow a lure for some distance in cold water without committing, but a sudden change in movement can sometimes give it the final reason to strike.

And if you're using a swimbait on an underspin, a little super glue can make a surprisingly big difference. Glue the swimbait firmly to the head and you can fish it for considerably longer before it tears or slips out of position.

Then there is the grub - one of those old-fashioned

lures that has been around for so long that many anglers have simply stopped thinking about it. That is unfortunate, because cold water is exactly where a grub can shine. A small grub on a quarter-ounce jig head can be worked slowly and methodically, and the bite may be nothing more than a subtle increase in pressure as you wind.

That pressure is another reason tackle matters in winter. A small-diameter line helps keep the lure down, whereas heavier line can create more lift and make it harder to maintain the depth you want. When the fish are reluctant to move, a presentation that quietly stays in their zone is often more valuable than one that covers water quickly.

The same principle explains why the drop shot is so useful when bass are tight to the bottom. Rather than giving the bait a lot of movement, keep the leader fairly short and allow the presentation to sit for extended periods. Work it around a rock, stump or other isolated object with almost exaggerated patience. Sometimes the only movement required is a barely perceptible flick of the tail.

For this kind of fishing, I prefer a bait that creates some natural undulation or vibration without requiring much movement from the angler. A slightly thicker body with a tapered tail can provide that subtle action that continues to work even when the lure itself is hardly moving.

And that, really, is the lesson of winter fishing.

It is easy to interpret a lack of bites as evidence that the bass have disappeared. Experienced anglers tend to ask a different question: *where can the bass spend the least amount of energy while remaining close to food?* Once you start looking at winter fishing that way, the dam becomes a very different place. You're no longer simply searching for bass. You're looking for the limited areas that provide the fish with what they need namely food, suitable depth and nearby cover... then presenting something that doesn't ask them to work too hard for a meal.

There is another practical advantage to doing that thinking before you launch. Study the dam map beforehand. Know where the deep water, major points, flats, channels and other likely areas are located. Winter is not the season to spend half your day driving around searching blindly for somewhere that looks promising. The better you understand the layout before you arrive, the more time you can spend actually fishing the areas that have a reason to hold bass.

And don't forget the other essential piece of winter equipment: warm clothing. There is nothing clever about enduring cold conditions in inadequate clothing. If you're uncomfortable, you're going to shorten the day, lose concentration and rush decisions. Dress properly, dress in layers, plan your water before launching, and approach winter with the understanding that bass are still there - they're simply making you work harder to find the small part of the dam that matters.



The big lesson

Winter bass haven't stopped feeding; they've become more economical with their energy. Find the places where food, suitable depth and cover come together, then make the easiest possible meal available to a fish that doesn't want to chase.



Think like a pro

Before your next cast, ask yourself:

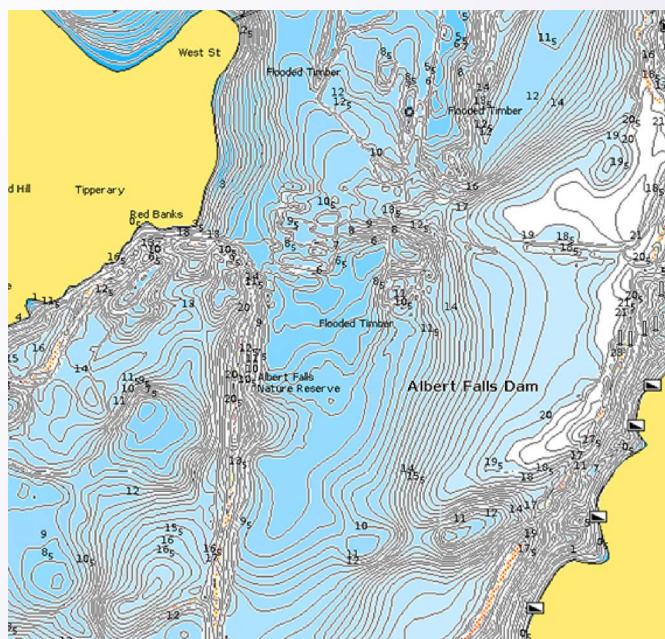
- If I were a bass trying to conserve energy, why would I choose this particular area?
- Where is the food most likely to be, and can the bass reach deeper water without travelling far?
- If the fish are here but aren't willing to chase, what can I present slowly enough that they don't have to?

Take it to the water

On your next outing, resist the urge to cover the entire dam simply because the fishing is slow. Before making your first cast, study the map and identify a handful of areas where deep water, food and cover come together. Spend enough time in those areas to determine whether the fish are telling you something before moving on.

The goal isn't to fish harder. It is to become better at recognising where a winter bass can afford to spend its time. 🐟

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Study the dam map beforehand

Tight Wobble for Winter Bassin'

It started with a question I couldn't quite answer.



Learn what the lure feels like when everything is right

I was fishing with my buddy when he showed me some lures he had imported from Japan. Among them were several strange-looking metal blades. They were thin, compact and, to my eyes at least, didn't look like anything particularly special. Naturally, I asked him why he had them.

His answer was simple: "It's popular in Japan and all the anglers use it."

That didn't really answer my question.

So I did what any curious bass angler would do. I took some of those blades home and eventually tied one on. I tried them around Gauteng, but during the warmer summer months they did very little for me. For a while, I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

Then winter arrived.

The first cold fronts moved through, the fishing became tougher and I started reading more about blade baits being used in cold-water conditions. That reminded me of the Japanese blades sitting in my tackle box. I dug out the Jackall Knockin' Jaw, tied it on and decided to work it close to the bottom, just ticking the tops of the grass.

It didn't take long to get an answer.

On my first cast, about halfway back to the boat, the rod simply started loading up. There was no spectacular strike. Just weight. When I leaned into it, I was rewarded with my first solid keeper on a blade.

Suddenly, Mike's explanation made a lot more sense.

The interesting thing was that the lure hadn't suddenly become better. I had simply put it into a situation where its particular characteristics made sense.

That, for me, is the real story behind blade baits. They are not some magic winter lure that catches bass simply because the water is cold. Their strength lies in the combination of vibration, compact profile and the way they can be worked close to the bottom while still covering water. Once you understand that, you start seeing far more places where they can be useful.

I actually remember similar lures from my early bass-fishing days. We called them "Sonars". They were available in tackle shops, but they were never particularly popular. For many years (and even today) they can be difficult to find. The modern blade bait is essentially a thin, metal, minnow-shaped lure with a lead belly weight, but that simple design gives it a very different personality from a conventional crankbait.

And perhaps that is why they have remained something of a specialist lure.

The mistake would be to think of a blade as something that must only be fished vertically in deep water because that's how you have seen anglers overseas use them. There is much more to it than that.

In winter, one of the things I particularly like about a blade is its tight wobble. When the bass are less active, a compact lure with a restrained action can be worked slowly and precisely without needing to create a huge disturbance. That makes it particularly useful around the kinds of places where winter bass may still be holding such as grass, brush, rocks, ledges, humps and other structure.

My preferred approach is to make long casts and cover water. I'm not necessarily looking for one isolated piece of cover. I'm looking for scattered grass, brush or other structure that gives the bass something to relate to.

When the blade contacts the structure, I don't simply wind it through. I rip it free and allow it to fall for a second or two before starting the retrieve again. That little change is important because many of the bites come as the lure falls.

The bite itself can be surprisingly subtle. Sometimes it feels like you've simply pulled the lure into a little more grass. That is why feeling the lure is so important. You want to know what the blade feels like when it is vibrating normally, because the moment that vibration disappears,

something has changed. It may have picked up grass... or a bass may have engulfed it.

That is also why watching your line matters. A bass can take a falling blade without producing the kind of obvious strike that immediately gets your attention. The line may simply stop for a few seconds. Then, as the bass spits the lure out, the line starts moving again.

If you're watching the line, you have a chance of catching that fish. If you're not, you may never know it was there.

The same principle applies when fishing a blade vertically. If your electronics show suspended fish over a drop-off or deep hump, you can work the lure with a simple yo-yo action. There is no need to make enormous lifts. A small rip is enough to make the blade vibrate before allowing it to fall again.

You can let it fall back to the bottom, dead-stick it for a moment, or work it through suspended fish or a nearby bait ball. The important thing is controlling where that blade spends its time. If the fish are suspended, allow the vibrating lure to fall through them. If they are relating to the bottom, let it reach the appropriate depth and work it back through the strike zone.

When I fish vertically, I use the rod tip to follow the line down. I don't want the blade falling on completely slack line because that makes it much harder to detect a bite. A semi-tight line gives you enough control to feel what the lure is doing while still allowing it to fall naturally.

And this is where electronics become particularly useful. If you can identify suspended bass or bait, you aren't simply dropping a lure into deep water and hoping something happens. You are putting the blade into a specific part of the water column because you have a reason to believe fish are there.

That same thinking applies when casting.

Don't become obsessed with fishing a blade deep simply because it is winter. These lures can be fished from deep water right into the shallows. Cast beyond the target (whether it is a laydown, grass edge, brush or rock) and bring the blade into the strike zone before allowing it to fall, ripping it free and continuing the retrieve.

The lure's ability to contact and deflect from structure is part of what makes it interesting. If you're fishing particularly heavy cover, braid is an option, especially when you're prepared to fish areas where losing a lure is a possibility.

And perhaps that is another lesson I've learned with these lures: sometimes the places you are most worried about losing a lure are exactly the places worth fishing.

A blade can be fished around bridge pillars, grass, humps and ledges. It can be used anywhere you are prepared to put it. There is always a temptation to make a cast into the easy water because you know you'll get your lure back. But easy water is often easy for everyone else too.

The more interesting question is what lies in the water that other anglers are reluctant to fish.

The lure's three attachment holes give you another way of controlling how it behaves. Changing the hole changes the relationship between action, retrieve speed and depth.

- Hole 1 produces the narrowest wiggle and is suited to a faster retrieve.



1. Damiki Vault Blade Tail Spinner
2. Ecogear
3. Evergreen Little Max
4. The Jackall Knockin' Jaw
5. Savage Gear VIB Blade

- Hole 2 provides a medium, all-purpose action, while
- Hole 3 produces a wider wobble and is better suited to slower retrieves.

Those same positions also influence running depth. Generally speaking;

- Hole 1 runs deepest,
- Hole 2 runs at a medium depth, and
- Hole 3 runs shallower during a normal retrieve.

But retrieve speed changes that equation. Retrieve Hole 3 very fast and the blade will lift; slow it down and it can work deeper.

The normal fall rate is approximately one metre per second, which gives you another useful form of depth control. Rather than thinking of the lure as something that simply sinks until you start winding, you can deliberately count it down to the depth you want and then begin your retrieve.

That is a much more useful way to think about a blade. You aren't simply choosing a lure. You are controlling its action, speed and position in the water column.

Colour, by comparison, is much less of a concern for me. Silver, gold and bright colours have all produced, and I generally believe the reaction created by the bait is more important than becoming overly concerned about colour. There are many shapes and sizes available, but I would rather spend time understanding how a particular blade behaves than simply buying the cheapest lure I can find.

The same applies to tackle. In clear, open water, a medium spinning outfit with 8- to 10-pound line works well. A baitcaster is another good option because the thin, front-heavy profile of these lures allows them to cast a long way and cover plenty of water.

For baitcasting, a 6'6" to 7-foot medium-heavy rod with a fast or moderate tip, 10- to 12-pound line and a fast-ratio reel makes a versatile combination. The faster reel becomes particularly useful when fishing a falling blade because you may need to pick up slack quickly when a bass eats the lure on the drop.

But whatever tackle you use, the most important thing is still the same: feel the lure.

You should know what the blade feels like when it is vibrating properly. You should feel when it touches grass. You should feel when it gets caught in cover. And you should feel (or see) the moment something changes.

That is what my first keeper taught me.

I initially thought the Japanese blades were popular simply because they were popular. After catching that first winter fish, I realised the better question was not why everyone else was using them. It was why this lure worked when the conditions changed.

That is a much more useful question to ask about any lure in your tackle box.

Winter bass don't necessarily require a completely

different approach. Sometimes they simply require you to use a lure whose behaviour makes sense for the conditions and then fish it with enough awareness to recognise what the bass are telling you.

There aren't many bladed baits readily available in South Africa, but options include the Damiki Vault, EcoGear, Jackall Knockin' Jaw, Savage Gear VIB Blade and Evergreen Vibration. If you've never spent time fishing one, winter may be the perfect opportunity to tie one on - not because it is a magic cold-water bait, but because its tight wobble, vibration and ability to be controlled around structure give you another way of presenting a lure when the fishing gets tough.

And once you learn to feel what that little piece of metal is doing beneath the surface, you may discover that some of those "nothing-looking" winter spots suddenly become much more interesting.

The big lesson

A blade bait is not simply a lure for deep, cold water. Its real advantage is the control it gives you over vibration, fall, speed and depth. Once you understand what the lure is doing and learn to recognise changes in that vibration, you stop fishing it blindly and start using it to deliberately put a presentation in front of bass.

Think like a pro

Before your next cast, ask yourself: Am I fishing the blade where the bass are most likely to be, or simply where I have seen other anglers fish it?

Can I feel the difference between the lure vibrating normally, touching cover and being picked up by a bass?

If the bass aren't responding, should I change the lure - or first change its speed, action or depth?

Take it to the water

The next time winter fishing gets tough, tie on a blade and spend some time learning the lure before judging it. Make long casts around grass, brush or rock and concentrate on feeling the vibration through the rod. Experiment with the three attachment holes, vary your retrieve speed and count the lure down before starting the retrieve.

Most importantly, don't immediately assume that a missed bite or lack of action means the lure isn't working. Learn what the lure feels like when everything is right. Once you can recognise that vibration (and recognise the moment it stops) you'll start detecting things that previously went unnoticed.

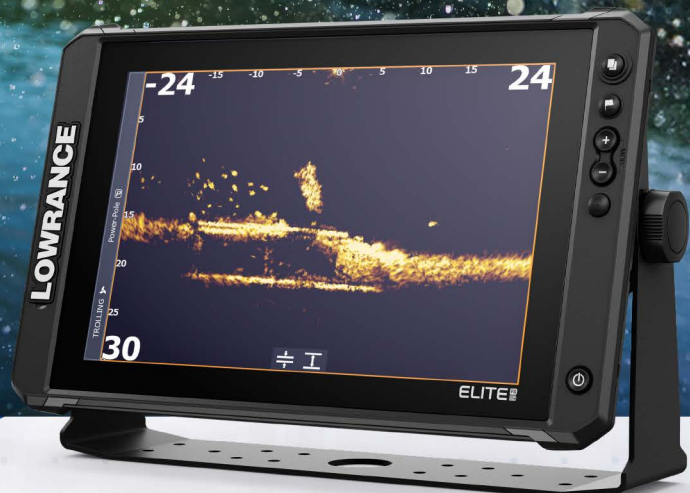
That is when a piece of metal stops being just another lure in the tackle box and becomes another way of understanding what is happening beneath the surface. 🐟

RgB - Show off your best catch! Send us your bass fishing photos together with a short write up, and **you could be featured in our SA BASS Readers-go-Bassing section!** Email your pictures to editor@sabass.com and share your story with fellow anglers!

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ALLISON ADVANTAGE AND DRANCKRAZY DIFFERENCES

(Part 1)

Speed, Precision, Innovation and the Pursuit of Big Bass

The first leg of our 2026 West Coast bass fishing road trip takes us from Bend to Arlington, Oregon, a journey of approximately 170 miles along U.S. Route 97.

>>
Madaras Marine & RV is a one-stop destination for bass boats and Dranckrazy products

>> *Fishingboy & David Swendseid*

But this is more than simply a drive to our next fishing destination. Along the way, we'll make a stop at Madras Marine & RV in Madras, home to a Yamaha outboard service centre and one of the state's earliest Dranckrazy dealers.

Both Yamaha and Dranckrazy have become important parts of our fishing operations throughout the Pacific Northwest, albeit in very different ways. This stop gives us an opportunity to take a closer look at the two brands, the people behind them, and why they have earned such an important place in our approach to bass fishing in the region.

A History of Allison Bass Boats

Readers familiar with my previous articles may have noticed images of the Allison XB21 appearing in many of the photographs taken from the boat's deck. However, I have provided very little background on what makes Allison such a special brand.

To many readers, the Allison may appear to be just another bass boat. Yet, as I have often mentioned, it is a critical piece of equipment for navigating the rough-water environments we regularly encounter on the way to our fishing destinations. Before discussing its capabilities, it is worth exploring the history and heritage behind the Allison name.

The Allison legacy spans more than a century. The company's foundations as a bass boat manufacturer were established by James Allison in the early 1950s, while his son, Darris Allison, built his first bass boat in 1962. This



was years before many of today's well-known bass boat manufacturers entered the market.

On the racing side of the business, Allison's achievements are nothing short of remarkable. If one were to total the victories and championship titles accumulated by Allison-powered and Allison-built racing boats, the figure would number in the thousands. Few names in the marine industry can claim such a successful competitive record.

The Allison Advantage

After reviewing more than 130 performance bulletins, Allison has consistently demonstrated itself to be among the most fuel-efficient bass boats in the world. In many cases, its fuel economy surpasses that of aluminium-hulled boats, even those tested without fishing gear, tackle, or trolling motors onboard.



Madras Marine & RV is a Yamaha-certified service centre and an authorized Dranckrazy dealer

The key is not simply weight reduction. Rather, it is the intelligent distribution of weight and the efficiency of the hull design.

Three-Second Hole Shot

In professional bass fishing tournaments, some anglers underestimate the importance of an efficient hole shot. In reality, hull efficiency affects far more than acceleration.

An efficient hull design contributes to fuel economy, improves performance across varying water conditions, enhances acceleration, and influences how a boat responds during banking, slalom manoeuvres, and high-speed cornering. The Allison's ability to achieve a hole shot in approximately three seconds is merely one visible result of a much broader engineering philosophy.

Engineered to the Right Proportions

Another misconception in bass boat design is that speed and efficiency require a narrow front deck. Allison has proven this theory wrong.

A defining feature of the XB21 is its elongated, tapered bow section. This elliptical protrusion is designed to split and redirect oncoming air around the hull, reducing aerodynamic resistance and improving overall performance.

The tapered nose creates the visual illusion of a narrower front deck. In reality, the XB21's deck width is comparable to that of other bass boats in its class, measuring approximately 111 inches (2820 mm) at its widest point. In fact, the XB21 offers more usable carpeted deck space than many competing 21-foot bass boats on the market.

Space Is Luxury

Storage capacity is one of the most sought-after commodities in any bass boat and remains a constant challenge for manufacturers.

Length for length, the Allison XB21 provides more storage space than virtually any competing model. The rear storage compartments are so spacious that they can accommodate a six-foot-tall adult with the compartment lids fully closed, an accomplishment rarely, if ever, matched within the bass boat industry.



A view of the driver's console, co-angler console, and spacious front deck of the Allison BasSport Elite XB21

Exceptional Quality and Craftsmanship

One of the most impressive aspects of an Allison bass boat is its build quality.

Every Allison is constructed with longevity as a primary objective. The manufacturing process is exceptionally labour-intensive, requiring approximately four times the man-hours needed to build many conventional bass boats.

The materials used are among the finest in the industry. For example, Allison produces its own proprietary resin formulations and stores them under tightly controlled conditions. Unlike many manufacturers, Allison maintains strict environmental controls throughout the production process, including temperature-regulated manufacturing areas. Access to the production floor is highly restricted during production runs, and the company's craftsmen are widely regarded as some of the most skilled professionals in the marine industry.

Unparalleled Innovation

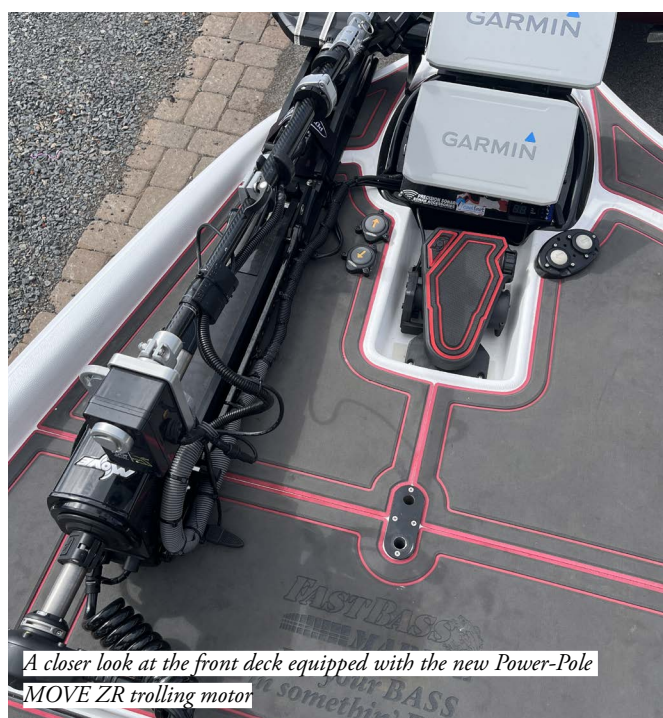
Allison boats utilise a unitized construction method rather than the layered construction techniques commonly employed elsewhere in the industry.

The transom is built using a composite alloy structure that was developed approximately four decades ago. Since its introduction, the design has reportedly experienced no documented structural failures. Few, if any, boat manufacturers can make a similar claim over such a lengthy period.

The Gold Standard of Bass Boats

One of the lesser-known stories within the industry is that even the legendary Ranger Boats brand once approached Allison seeking expertise in high-performance bass boat design.

The objective was to explore the possibility of acquiring Allison moulds and benefiting from the company's extensive knowledge of high-performance hull development. Whether viewed as a compliment or a testament to Allison's engineering leadership, the approach serves as further evidence of the company's long-standing reputation as one of the true innovators in the bass boat world. 🐟



A closer look at the front deck equipped with the new Power-Pole MOVE ZR trolling motor



Die Heldesaal

DENNY BRAUER (1949)

In die wêreld van professionele baarshengel is daar hengelaars wat groot baars vang, daar is kampioene wat trofee wen, en dan is daar diegene wat 'n hele tegniek help vorm en verfyn.

>> Philip Kemp*

Denny Brauer behoort ongetwyfeld tot die laasgenoemde groep. Met sy kenmerkende benadering tot die jig, sy ongelooflike konsekwentheid en sy vermoë om onder druk te presteer, het Brauer homself gevestig as een van die ware legendes van Amerikaanse baarshengel.

Vir baie Suid-Afrikaanse hengelaars is die jig (loodkop) 'n bekende en effektiewe kunsaas. Maar om die invloed van Denny Brauer te verstaan, moet 'n mens besef hoe groot sy rol was in die ontwikkeling en popularisering van jig-hengel op die hoogste vlak. Hy het die jig nie bloot as nog 'n kunsaas gebruik nie, hy het dit tot 'n kunsvorm verhef.

Van jong hengelaar tot professionele legende

Denny Brauer is op 3 Februarie 1949 in Missouri gebore en het van jongs af 'n passie vir hengel ontwikkel. Die mere en riviere in die Amerikaanse Midde-Weste het die ideale speelgrond gebied waar hy sy vaardighede kon slyp.

Brauer se professionele loopbaan het hom uiteindelik na die hoogste vlak van mededingende baarshengel geneem. Hy het deel geword van 'n generasie hengelaars wat professionele baarshengel in die VSA help verander het van 'n relatief klein sport na 'n groot professionele bedryf.

Sy grootste wapen was egter nie noodwendig spoed of krag hengel nie. Dit was sy vermoë om strukture te lees en 'n jig op plekke te plaas waar ander hengelaars dikwels nie bereid was om te hengel nie.



Brauer het in 1998 die Bassmaster Classic-titel verower

Die Jig-Meester

Wanneer Denny Brauer se naam genoem word, is dit moeilik om nie dadelik aan die jig te dink nie.

Die jig is op papier 'n eenvoudige kunsaas. 'n Hoek, loodkop en 'n rubberrok, gewoonlik gekombineer met 'n sagte plastiek-treiler. Tog kan dit een van die mees veelsydigste wapens in 'n hengelaar se arsenaal wees.

Brauer het gewys dat die jig besonder effektief kan wees wanneer groot baars tussen swaar dekking lê. Hy het 'n reputasie opgebou vir sy vermoë om 'n jig deur stompe, takke, bosse en ander strukture te werk, presies waar groot visse graag skuil.

Sy tegniek was nie net om die jig in die water te gooi nie. Dit was om die aas met doelgerigtheid te plaas, die struktuur te verstaan en die jig op 'n natuurlike manier deur die dekking te laat beweeg. Dit het hom die bynaam van die "Jig Master" besorg.

'n Kampioen onder druk

Een van die kenmerke van groot professionele hengelaars is die vermoë om op die belangrikste oomblikke te presteer. Brauer het hierdie eienskap oor baie jare bewys.

Hy het talle groot professionele oorwinnings behaal en was 'n konstante bedreiging in toernooie. Sy loopbaan sluit 'n Bassmaster Classic-titel in 1998 in, een van die grootste prestasies wat 'n professionele baarshengelaar kan behaal.

Die Classic is meer as net nog 'n toernooi. Dit is die verhoog waarop die beste hengelaars in die wêreld teen mekaar meeding, dikwels onder enorme druk. Om dit te wen, vereis nie net hengelvaardigheid nie, maar ook strategie, aanpasbaarheid en senuwees van staal. Brauer het dit reggekry.

Meer as net 'n hengelaar

Denny Brauer se invloed strek egter verder as sy toernooi oorwinnings. Hy was 'n uitstekende kommunikeerder en het 'n groot rol gespeel in die ontwikkeling van die moderne professionele hengelaar as 'n persoonlikheid wat sy kennis met die publiek deel. Sy televisie-optredes, hengelvideo's, demonstrasies en betrokkenheid by die ontwikkeling van toerusting het hom aan 'n hele nuwe generasie hengelaars bekendgestel. Hy het gewys dat professionele hengel nie net oor die vis op die weegskaal gaan nie, maar ook oor kennis, voorbereiding en die vermoë om daardie kennis aan ander oor te dra. Vir jong hengelaars was Brauer 'n uitstekende voorbeeld van hoe 'n mens 'n spesifieke tegniek kan bemeester en

dit deel van jou identiteit as hengelaar kan maak.

Lesse vir die Suid-Afrikaanse hengelaar

Hoewel Denny Brauer se grootste suksesse in die VSA plaasgevind het, is daar baie wat Suid-Afrikaanse baarshengelaars by hom kan leer.

Die eerste les is om struktuur te verstaan. Groot baars hou daarvan om energie te bespaar en terselfdertyd 'n geleentheid te hê om prooi te oorval. Struktuur soos bome, rotse, gras, stompe en onderwaterhindernisse kan dus uitstekende plekke wees om te begin.

Die tweede les is om geduldig te wees. 'n Jig hoef nie altyd vinnig deur die water getrek te word nie. Soms is 'n stadige val, 'n klein beweging of selfs 'n oomblik van stilte al wat nodig is om 'n groot vis te laat byt.

Die derde les is om vertrouwe in jou tegniek te hê. Brauer het sy reputasie opgebou deur die jig te gebruik wanneer ander hengelaars dalk na ander kunsas sou oorskakel. Hy het geweet dat groot visse dikwels op plekke gevang word waar die aas moeilik is om te hanteer.

'n Plek in die Haldesaal

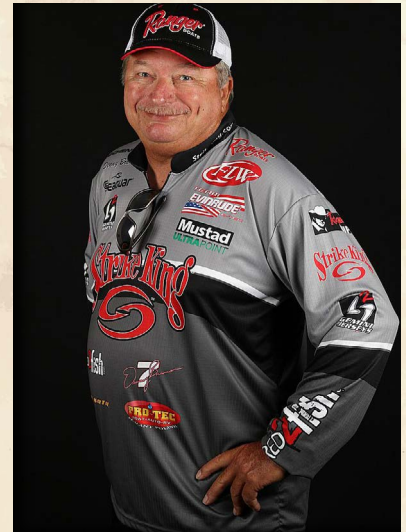
Denny Brauer se nalatenskap is nie bloot 'n lys van trofee en toernooioorwinnings nie. Sy grootste bydrae is dalk dat hy gewys het hoe 'n enkele tegniek tot 'n vlak van ongelooflike doeltreffendheid ontwikkel kan word. Hy het die jig 'n nuwe status gegee en duisende hengelaars geïnspireer om anders na swaar struktuur en bedekking te kyk. Vir sy prestasies, sy invloed op die sport en sy bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van jig-hengel is sy plek onder die groot name van baarshengel welverdiend.

Denny Brauer is meer as net 'n kampioen; hy is die Jig-Meester, 'n hengelaar wie se naam vir altyd verbind sal wees aan een van die doeltreffendste kunsas in die moderne baarshengelaar se arsenaal. 🐟

**Philip Kemp is 'n gesoute swartbaars-hengelaar en assistent-redakteur van SA BASS.*



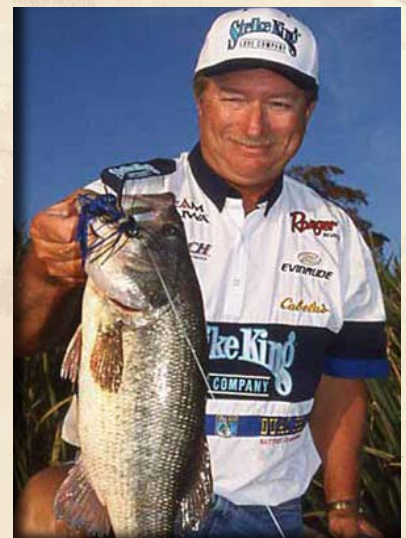
'n Ware legende



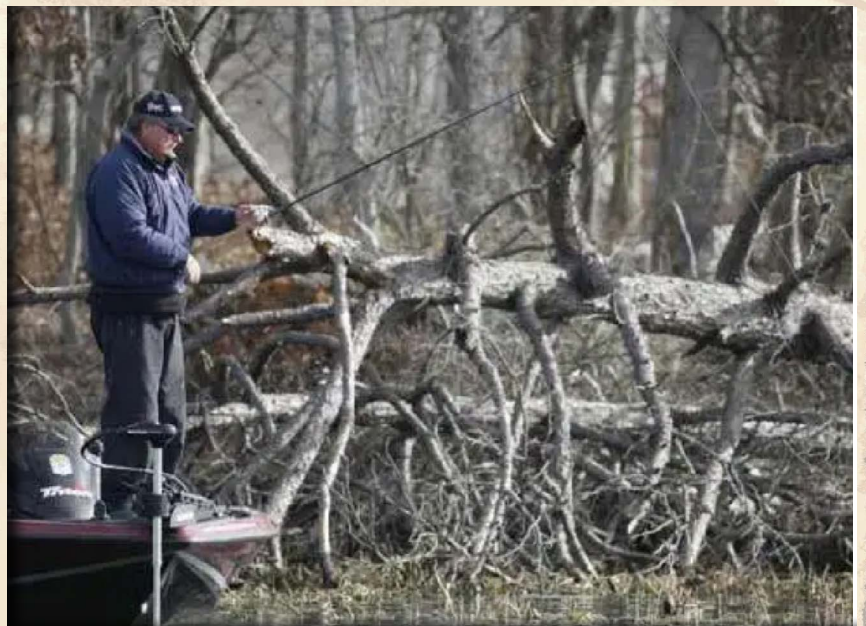
Denny Brauer



Nog 'n grote



Brauer het jig-hengel tot 'n kunsvorm verhef



Groot visse skuil waar hengelaars bang is om te hengel

GEAR UP

THE LATEST FISHING ADDITIONS

The latest fishing additions on the market.



The right lure can make all the difference when the bite is tough or the fish are fired up. In this edition of Gear Up, we take a look at a selection of proven soft plastics and reaction baits that deserve a place in every South African bass angler's tackle box. This line-up offers solutions for every situation on the water. Gear up, fish smart, and be ready when the bass switch on.

1. ZEBCO

RHINO 30 6'6" MEDIUM SPINNING COMBO

The Zebco Rhino 30 did more than win its category at the recent ICAST 2026, it was named the overall Best of Show. This 6'6", two-piece medium spinning combo is designed around durability and reliability. It features Asyx Drive gearing, five bearings, a large bail wire, HydroShield protection and a TriAx Core handle. The RhinoGrip EVA handle provides a comfortable, secure grip. For anglers looking for a tough, dependable spinning outfit, the Rhino 30 is certainly worth a closer look.

2. RAPALA

CRUSHCITY THE CEO

The CEO taps directly into one of the hottest emerging bass-fishing trends – the urchin presentation. Made from durable Super TPE material and featuring a weighted glass-powder core and multiple tapered legs, The CEO delivers a subtle, controlled action as it falls through the water column. It has been designed to make urchin-style fishing easier and more consistent, while the durable material allows anglers to catch multiple fish on a single bait.

3. SYNCH FISHING

ARTISAN WAKE & CRANK 130

The Artisan Wake & Crank 130 from Synch Fishing is an eye-catching three-section hard bait featuring two joints and a shallow diving lip. Designed to work just beneath the surface, it creates a distinctive waking action that can be particularly effective when bass are feeding in shallow water. The detailed

finish, realistic profile and multiple moving sections give this lure an impressive natural presentation.

4. G-RATT

BAITS URCHIN RIG

With urchin-style baits becoming increasingly popular, dedicated terminal tackle was bound to follow. The G-Ratt Baits Urchin Rig is designed to make rigging these unusual-looking baits easier and more consistent. With different hook and weight options, anglers can adapt the presentation to varying conditions and depths. It is a simple but clever piece of terminal tackle aimed squarely at one of the newest trends in bass fishing.

5. Z-MAN

CHATTERBAIT ELITE EVO HD

Z-Man has taken the popular ChatterBait concept and built an even tougher version

5



6



7



9



8



with the Elite EVO HD. Designed for heavy cover and powerful fish, the HD model is reportedly 40% stronger than the standard Elite EVO. It features a heavy-duty 5/0 hook, reinforced head-to-blade connection and a robust trailer keeper. This is a ChatterBait designed to be fished hard in the places where bass anglers need maximum confidence in their tackle.

6. SHIMANO CURADO DC 150

The Curado DC 150 brings Shimano's proven DC technology to an updated Curado platform. Its IDC4 digital braking system monitors spool speed up to 1,000 times per second, helping control spool rotation and reduce backlash while maintaining casting distance. The MGL Spool III contributes to a quick spool start-up, while the Hagane Body and Cross Carbon Drag provide strength and smooth performance. With four IDC4 settings, anglers can fine-tune the reel according to lure weight, line and conditions.

7. ST. CROIX TRIUMPH FRESHWATER

The completely redesigned St. Croix Triumph Freshwater range combines performance, durability and value. The extensive range includes 29 models, featuring SCII carbon-fibre blanks with FRS reinforcement, stainless-steel guides and redesigned natural cork handles. Backed by a five-year warranty, the Triumph range offers anglers a quality rod at an accessible price point. For the bass angler, it represents a very attractive balance between sensitivity, strength and value.

8. GARMIN LIVESCOPE 2 HD

Garmin continues to push the boundaries of live sonar with LiveScope 2 HD. The system delivers improved resolution and image stitching, providing anglers with an enhanced view of fish, structure and their lure in real time. One of the biggest advantages for modern bass anglers is the

ability to watch how fish react to a lure and make presentation adjustments immediately. The simplified installation, with no separate black box required, also makes the system more convenient to integrate into a boat.

9. BUZBE BASIC DEEP – URCHIN BAIT BOX

Every new fishing technique eventually creates a need for better tackle management, and BUZBE has answered the call with its Basic Deep Urchin Bait Box. Designed specifically with urchin-style baits in mind, the box keeps these unusual soft plastics organised, protected and readily accessible. Its specialised storage system, adjustable dividers and rugged, water-resistant construction make it a practical addition for anglers embracing the urchin revolution.

South Africa

Dam Levels



Here is a list of the latest water levels of some of South Africa's biggest water reservoirs.

Eastern Cape	86.5%	↑↓
Beervlei Dam	0.0%	0.0%
Bridle Drift Dam	97.8%	12.4%
Darlington Dam	46.8%	-1.6%
Impofu Dam	100.6%	0.5%
Wriggleswade Dam	100.9%	91.2%

Gauteng	100.6%	↑↓
Bronkhorstspuit	100.3%	0.3%
Roodeplaat Dam	100.9%	0.4%

Kwa-Zulu Natal	88.0%	↑↓
Albert Falls Dam	84.1%	-5.6%
Bivane Dam	97.3%	-2.3%
Goedertrouw Dam	91.1%	-2.7%
Inanda Dam	95.5%	-2.5%
Midmar Dam	87.1%	-2.9%
Ntshingwayo Dam	67.4%	-1.9%
Pongolapoort Dam	82.6%	-1.5%
Spioenkop Dam	88.6%	-2.1%
Spring Grove Dam	75.3%	-8.9%
Wagendrift Dam	90.5%	-2.9%
Woodstock Dam	98.0%	2.8%
Zaaihoek Dam	98.0%	12.8%

Limpopo	89.0%	↑↓
Albasini Dam	97.8%	2.9%
De Hoop Dam	100.0%	-0.1%
Ebenezer Dam	100.2%	-0.1%
Flag Boshielo / Arabie	100.6%	-0.9%
Doorndraai Dam	100.0%	-0.1%
Mokolo Dam	100.5%	-0.2%
Nandoni Dam	101.3%	-0.2%
Rust de Winter Dam	100.7%	0.0%
Tzaneen Dam	0.0%	0.0%

Mpumalanga	99.3%	↑↓
Da Gama Dam	100.3%	0.0%
Driekoppies Dam	100.2%	0.0%
Grootdraai Dam	97.5%	-1.1%
Heyshope Dam	100.5%	0.3%
Injaka Dam	100.4%	0.3%
Jericho Dam	92.1%	0.0%
Kwena Dam	100.4%	0.1%
Loskop Dam	100.5%	0.2%
Middelburg Dam	98.7%	2.6%
Morgenstond Dam	100.4%	1.2%
Nooitgedacht Dam	99.5%	1.0%
Rhenosterkop Dam	100.4%	-0.1%
Vygeboom Dam	100.4%	-0.1%
Witbank Dam	99.4%	0.2%

North West	104.6%	↑↓
Boskop Dam	102.8%	0.0%
Buffelspoort Dam	100.9%	0.4%
Hartebeespoort Dam	100.8%	1.8%
Klerkskraal Dam	111.8%	1.6%
Kosterrivier Dam	101.0%	0.2%
Molatedi Dam	109.2%	-0.2%
Roodekopjes Dam	105.5%	0.5%

O.F.S.	100.5%	↑↓
Allemanskraal Dam	97.2%	-2.0%
Bloemhof Dam	110.0%	3.2%
Gariep Dam	100.3%	1.0%
Kalkfontein Dam	100.1%	-1.5%
Knellpoort Dam	100.1%	0.1%
Koppies Dam	100.1%	-0.3%
Sterkfontein Dam	98.7%	-0.2%
Vaal Dam	100.0%	-1.9%
Vaalrivier Barrage	99.2%	1.9%
Vanderkloof Dam	99.7%	-0.5%

Western Cape	75.7%	↑↓
Berg River Dam	91.1%	2.1%
Brandvlei Dam	67.4%	6.2%
Clanwilliam Dam	95.1%	1.0%
Kwaggaskloof Dam	65.7%	6.1%
Theewaterskloof Dam	75.9%	-2.7%
Voëlsvlei Dam	59.2%	-2.9%

Levels on: 28-Aug 5-Aug
Average: 93.5% 91.9%

GARMIN®

SPY™ POLE + GT360UHD

AN ALL-AROUND BETTER VIEW

Mount the new GT360UHD transducer to Spy pole to get crisp, clear 360-degree imagery all around your boat.



SA BASS EXISTS FOR ONE REASON: TO HELP YOU BECOME THE BEST BASS ANGLER YOU CAN BE



Great anglers aren't defined by the boats they own or the tackle they buy. They're defined by the decisions they make before every cast.



They are defined by the decisions they make.



Every article in this magazine has one purpose – to help you understand bass better, think more clearly on the water, and ultimately catch more and bigger bass.



Because catching more bass doesn't begin with a lure. It begins with the way you think.



Our readers keep every issue for reference.



It begins with the way you think.

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