

FIND THE SWEET SPOT

‘Little subtle changes can produce big results’ for bass

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

An old adage states: “90 percent of fish live in 10 percent of the water.” For big bass, that ratio probably comes closer to 99 percent of lunkers in one percent of the water. Finding big bass typically comes down to interpreting various factors, reading signs and discovering “sweet spots.”

“A sweet spot is just something different,” explained Bill Dance, a legendary angler and television personality. “It could be a change in the bottom composition. It could be one object with algae growing on it that attracts minnows. Little subtle changes could produce big results. Any type of transition could be a key spot.”

For starters, consider seasonal factors. In the spring, largemouths typically go shallow to spawn. In the summer and winter, many bass seek deeper water to escape temperature extremes. In the fall, bass often return to the shallows to hunt baitfish and other morsels. However, to complicate matters, some bass stay deep all year long and some stay extremely shallow.

Also, consider daily factors that determine where bass want to stay at that particular time. Bass need four things to survive — food, oxygen, cover and acceptable water temperatures. Take away one of those factors and anglers might as well fish in a bathtub.

Winds can also concentrate bass. Winds create waves that aerate water by trapping and dissolving oxygen. In addition, winds may regulate water temperatures and blow plankton toward the shoreline. Shad and other baitfish feed upon plankton. Bass follow the baitfish. With plentiful food, enriching oxygen, cover and comfortable temperatures, bass along a windward shoreline find everything they need.

“Bass often feed best when the wind blows,” advised Mark Davis, a former Bassmaster Classic champion. “When I fish points or other structure, I always fish the windy side first. Wind creates current. Fish usually position themselves facing



Photo by John N. Felsher

Todd Kersey shows off a largemouth bass he caught on a soft-plastic fluke-type bait. Such a soft-plastic bait makes a very subtle presentation.

into the current to look for bait coming toward them.”

Winds not only make water flow on the surface, but also create submerged currents that could position bass. Water crashing against a shoreline “mushrooms” like a bullet as it bounces off hard objects and might even flow away from the shoreline below the surface. Even on a windy day, bass could face toward shoreline.

“One of my favorite techniques on a windy day is to run a 1/2- or 3/4-ounce chartreuse spinnerbait

with double gold, willow-leaf blades as fast as possible along a steep riprap bank,” recommended Alton Jones, a former Bassmaster Classic champion. “The harder wind blows, the better bass bite spinnerbaits. I reel fast and steady. When bass hit, they practically knock the rod out of my hands.”

After finding the right combination of cover, oxygen, temperatures and food, any angler could put more bass in the boat, but not necessarily the biggest fish. To narrow

down where the biggest bass lurk, many anglers throw fast-moving search baits, such as spinnerbaits, buzzbaits or crankbaits. After finding a bass concentration, probe the area thoroughly with subtle, deeper baits such as Texas-rigged worms, jigs or Carolina rigs to find that magic one percent.

After finding the hot one percent of water where big bass lurk, next try to determine what they want

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