

REDFISH: Tactics of bass fishing can be used for reds

FROM PAGE 37

When entangling cover makes throwing conventional topwaters impractical, switch to buzzing frogs. Frogs combine the heart-throbbing excitement of topwater baits, the fish-finding attributes of buzzbaits and the weedless characteristics of Texas-rigged plastics. In places with significant vegetation like the bays along the Mobile Causeway, buzz frogs over the grass tops in a steady retrieve or use the "hop and stop" method. Let the frog sit a few moments and then pop it.

"Fishing for redfish is a lot like bass fishing," remarked Lonnie Stanley, a Bassmaster Classic veteran and legendary lure designer. "I've never seen anything that a redfish wouldn't hit if a bass will hit it. Redfish are not supposed to eat frogs because they seldom see them, but buzzing frogs make a lot of noise going across the water. Redfish react to that. Strikes can be so violent that it's really fun to catch reds on them."

Soft-plastic finesse baits can also produce explosive action when flicked

through the grass. Anglers may need to add casting weight, especially when stout breezes rip across the bays. When fishing extremely shallow waters, use the lightest weight possible. Pull life-like finesse plastics over the surface. Pause periodically. When passing an opening, let baits sink a foot or two.

"A white soft-plastic jerkshad is a really good bait for fishing weedy shallows," McDuffie recommended. "Electric chicken is another good color. I also love new penny colors or something with a little chartreuse in it. I put it on a weighted weedless hook when fishing very shallow water with abundant grass. The weight at the top of the hook has a little screw-in device that attaches it to the plastic body. Run the hook into the plastic to make it weedless. People can also fish these baits on jig-

heads in deeper places like Mobile Bay that don't have as much grass."

Spinnerbaits and buzzbaits make excellent search baits and can also provoke vicious reaction strikes from powerful redfish. Redfish sometimes explode on buzzbaits as they would topwater baits. Anglers can buzz versatile spinnerbaits over the surface, wake them just under the water or run at any depth. In deeper water, "slow roll" spinnerbaits just over oyster reefs or bottom contours barely turning the blades. Occasionally, hop them off the bottom and let them flutter down again.

For bottom fishing, try a weedless jig sweetened with a craw worm. A craw worm closely mimics a blue crab, and redfish like nothing better than a crab dinner. Use baits with some blue on the claws.



This redfish hit a Bomber Badonk-A-Donk topwater bait. When a redfish explodes on a surface bait, it's exciting.



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