



SPECIAL REPORT #1



Fishing Information...

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

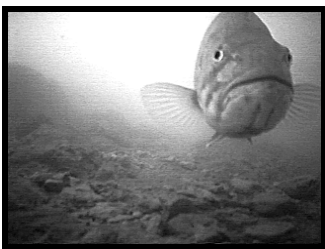
As you can imagine, I evaluate all types of fishing information when it presents itself, or I go looking for it. The process for me can range from pouring over a map, to crunching some numbers from previous years to extract some outstanding tidbit. I realize though, many anglers do not have the access to Combat Fishing that many of you have. These souls only have access to the scraps of information that fall through the competitive cracks. Even my subscribers are challenged every week when they gather at the various launches and make fateful decisions that can hinge on a last minute report. They have the advantage however, of being able to better confirm that report with the background provided by the weekly newsletter. So what is good information?

The Good

I'm a real big fan of reality so the first place I would look for quality info is to any current, hard data that is available. Water temp, air temp, the date, water quality, pre-fishing info and such information that has been gathered first hand (or via a source that you have learned to trust for accuracy). This builds a solid foundation for everything else that follows. The date can tell you a lot about what the seasonal patterns will be. The water temp can be matched up with hard data from previous years. Has the air temp been rising over several days or is it falling? Our quarry has no control over that trend and a substantial pattern of falling or rising temperatures will have a predictable effect. Before we move on, let me add in one more category to the good: confidence.

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guarantee anything.*

Nothing replaces: time on the water. Information gathered during any recent pre-fishing that you have done is invaluable. Even bad information is good! Anyone who has been involved in competition for any length of time knows that a good pre-fish doesn't guarantee anything. *So bombing out on pre-fishing can be a huge advantage.* Baits have been tested out, dead water has been eliminated and if anything changes the day you are on the water competing, you'll know about it right away. That's the kind of information you can follow all the way to the bank.



Let's say you have a good feel for a spot and you know it should be coming on. You go four days in a row and find nothing. On tournament day, you go one last time, why? Not because you caught fish there but because you have confidence in the spot. If you go and find no fish again, you quickly move on. This efficiency comes from the knowledge that you have gained that has been tested out over time. The spot could have made you, but it didn't break you.

Some hard info about the water quality and fish location can go a long way. I've had subscribers tell me that they took the newsletter out-of-state and used the same depth and presentation patterns to have success elsewhere. A solid report about poor water quality can eliminate an entire shoreline for consideration. Up-to-date water quality information may also need to be seasonally adjusted. A report about dirty water in a popular fishing spot may actually be an INDICATOR when seasonally adjusted. One scenario comes to mind: there are largemouth spots that fish strong in the fall, when the water is dirty. I wouldn't have the same confidence in that area if the dirty water report came during the summer months.

The Bad

I don't know if you noticed but, there wasn't anything in the paragraph above about coordinates or specific spots. Here's where the rubber meets the road... There is nothing wrong with pure information that is well documented and timely. The problem with most situations is that an angler will get a coordinate to fish on tournament day, from a spur of the moment source. This puts the angler outside THEIR experience. The only thing that will make this work, is a perfect situation where the fish cooperate quickly. Without instant success, soon doubts will creep in about if this is really the right spot or that perhaps, the fish have moved on. There is no point of reference for the angler to bridge to that, which will answer any of these questions.

Now the angler is left with the first plan they came up with. The "free" spot may have taken them out of position or pushed them into a different part of the day. Now, other areas are out of reach due to time and the proven spots that had early fish on them, well...it's not early anymore. It will be hard to shake the feeling that the rest of the day will be spent playing catch-up.

Old information can really beat you as well. On average, most anglers don't put long hours in on the water because they work full time. What's left for information is what the angler has experienced over the years and what has worked for them. Here, there is no current point of reference so there may be a high confidence level that the fish were there at one time, but it will soon evaporate. Fishing last years' fish, or even last weeks' fish can burn precious minutes off of the clock. This angler would be further ahead, taking small amounts of current, hard information and going pre-fishing during a tournament. At least all decisions made throughout the course of the day will get them closer to a pattern that will hold up.



Why am I here? Is it because I caught fish here once a long time ago, or is it something else. I know if the water temp hits 67 degrees this place turns on, and the temperature is right. Let's go fishing!

The Ugly

Chasing success through observing, listening or copying other anglers has got to be the #1 reason for frustration at the scales. It is highly unlikely that any competitive angler will pass along anything of real value. Even if an angler can find out what another angler is doing and copy it, that success will be short lived. Every move to copy another angler takes them further away from personal success. With so many variables involved with fishing, the only way to sort through them each week is to process them through the person's unique style and abilities. It really is just you and the fish out there. Figure yourself out, figure them out then, enjoy strong performances every week with minimum effort.

I've had the experience of being on the same boat with someone, throwing the same bait in the same spot and they were killing 'em, and I couldn't get bit. I've also pulled up on spots that have been fished for hours by more than one boat, pulled up on the spot and started catching four pounders. So much of our success depends on our personal style and presentation that I'm convinced, that if I'm convinced I'll catch fish the way I know to, I'll catch fish.

What would convince you? For me, it comes from years of experience. Watching seasonally adjusted environmental changes that take place and putting that info to good use in a subsequent year: That's power! We do this on a smaller scale all the time. "I remember when we fished in the rain and caught them everywhere on jerkbaits," would trigger a response of handling things the same the next time it rains. The problem here is that the spot, date and conditions may be different, and the results may also be different.

Be convinced that the last time the technique worked under those conditions, *you* made it work. Begin to match variables from the previous conditions when applying the technique to a new area. How deep was I, what was the water temp, the date and wind conditions. Most spots don't dial in that specific, but some do. Once you have a handle on all of the variables that were part of making that big bite happen the last time, you can then throw one more in: seasonal considerations. What you may end up with is a pattern that works during a two week period only. This can be a real asset for mentally clearing the decks before a tournament and being able to focus on what will be the most successful in the here and now!

All of this constitutes an approach to planning your day that has a lot less maybe's, and more of an objective outlook that works off of confirmed information. The results will show up at weigh-ins. You may find yourself disqualifying spots based on info and even planning to spend the entire tournament on one spot to bring back a winning weight, and liking it!

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