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Tactics, Tips & Tournaments



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Sometimes looking in less obvious places for crappie can lead to a good adventure.



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Lake Cumberland provided the crappie, but a tough bite provided a challenge. The winning team used a simple, old-fashion technique to claim the win.



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by Tim Huffman

Fishing experience must come from spending time on the water. However applying good, proven techniques and presentations, like those used by tournament winners, forms a solid foundation for learning.



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Opening Cast

I admire the competitive old-timers in crappie fishing. They fish year after year chasing top ten finishes and a shot of the championship. There are some great fishermen who have never won a championship or are looking for another one. However, not winning the big one is not a requirement to be put in the respected group of seasoned, tournament fishermen.



Then the unexpected comes along. Two young fishermen, Mathew Rogers and Baylor Mead, 21 years old, topped the field of 150 of the best tournament fishermen in the country at the Crappie Masters championship. The Truman Lake event was a battle of the jig pole fishermen because fish were pulled tight to cover.

So what's unique about the young team winning? First, they don't have multiple decades of experience. Many things can go wrong and often do. The more experiences, good and bad, the better a fisherman becomes.

Rogers and Mead kicked a pole in the water and struggled to land some fish. They felt the pressure but didn't let the small stuff bother them, often laughing at themselves in the boat. Fortunately, no problem hurt their chance to win.

What the younger team possesses is a fierce drive to do well. They also used very advanced electronics to help them position correctly on submerged wood they couldn't see. (Younger fishermen are usually much better with sophisticated electronics.) The team had worked hard during the year to learn Truman Lake. They had also fished local tournaments and a national event there.

They were fun to watch on the water and they were gentlemen off the water. I respect the old-timers who have not won and deserve a victory, but it was refreshing and exciting seeing the young men take the lead on day one and hold on to take the title and about \$34,000 in cash. "All we were hoping for was a plaque of some kind," says Mead. "We had never won any until today." Well their dream came true in the form of plaques for big fish and two huge championship trophy cups. I give them big congratulations for a great tournament.

Good fishin' & God Bless,
Tim Huffman, editor/ senior writer

Cover Photo:
Justin Neuman and Daniel
Pemberton pull a crappie from
Missouri's Truman Lake.
Tim Huffman photo.

Crappie in Non-Traditional Places

by Greg McCain

Crappie fishermen generally have preconceived notions about where fish live. One generally accepted thought is crappie spend most of the year in deep water. A second is that they always acclimate to some

wood structure in lake-like conditions.

Those characteristics apply to some elements of the crappie population, but not all live the deep-water, wood-oriented, still-water lifestyle. Others flourish in large numbers in non-traditional locations. To



type of wood cover. Another is that crappie shy away from current.

Day in and day out, those ideas help experienced crappie fishermen locate fish. On the average day on the average fishery, the crappie will be 10-15 feet deep around

South Carolina crappie pro Matt Outlaw targets fish in non-traditional places and at non-traditional times, especially fishing shallow grass.

risk the obvious, crappie are where you find them.

Grass, Cypress and Current

South Carolina pro Matt Outlaw follows that idea on the Santee Cooper lakes near his home. Admittedly, he spends plenty of time trolling for crappie around deeper wood structure while fun fishing near home or while tournament fishing on various venues around the Southeast.

But Outlaw also seeks out fish in what others might view as unusual locations.

"I guess the main one would be around grass," Outlaw said. "It's not really a secret anymore around home although plenty of fishermen still zip right on past the grass looking for crappie in other locations."

Outlaw suggested there's something of a mental block to pursuing fish in a non-traditional way.

"I really don't know why," he said. "They just don't seem to associate crappie with grass. With the exception of a few places, like the Florida lakes, that always seems to be the case."

The result for Outlaw – and the few other fishermen who regularly target crappie around grass – is unpressured fish that can be caught in huge numbers and with little difficulty.

"It has become my favorite approach to catching big numbers of fish around home," Outlaw said. "They find just about everything they need under that grass, food, shade, safety. You can count on them being there year-round, in hot weather and even in the winter."

Outlaw looks for floating masses of grass, mainly hyacinth, duck weed, or gator grass on the Santee lakes. He said the grasses may vary in other locations, but the crappie-holding qualities of aquatic vegetation, are consistent from lake to lake.

He said any grass mat with at least three feet of water will hold crappie. He occasionally finds mats floating in deeper, open-water areas but generally focuses on mats in four to seven feet.

While Outlaw can count on the grass

year-round on the Santee lakes, he doesn't always encounter vegetation on lakes where tournaments are held. It's a welcome bonus, however, when he finds grass on tournament waters, and he always checks the possibilities while pre-fishing.

"Mainly, I'm looking for some grass on the Florida lakes, and we find some grass on Ross Barnett (in Mississippi)," he said. "While you can't always depend on the grass just because it's there, it's always a possibility because most people are not going to fish it. That may not be the case in Florida, but in other places, people tend to ignore the grass when crappie fishing."

Outlaw and his father, veteran pro Whitey Outlaw, finished second in the American Crappie Trail event on Ross Barnett this year.

"There was no brush or wood around. They were relating to the barge."

"We'll probably always focus on trolling to catch most of our fish in tournaments," Matthew Outlaw said. "The grass sometimes comes into play and provides us the possibility of at least a few fish."

Perhaps the average fisherman ignores some of these non-traditional locations because they are thought to be difficult to fish. Outlaw admits that's the case with the grass. While the approach has become second nature to him, he hears all kinds of excuses about why grass fishing can be more difficult than simply hovering over a brushpile.

"People tell me all the time, 'You're going to scare the fish'," Outlaw said. "That's just not the case if you don't go in there and shred up the grass."

When fishing for fun, Outlaw typically uses a flat-bottom boat that he runs up on top of large mats. He positions the boat beside smaller areas.

"Some of the best ones may be no bigger





than the size of a boat,” Outlaw said. “Others may be up to an acre.”

A key, Outlaw noted, is being prepared for the possibilities.

“I always have a rake with me,” he said. While some fishermen deploy a regular garden rake mounted on a long handle, that combination can be unwieldy and tiresome to use. Others use a three- or four-pronged potato rake to create holes, but Outlaw has adapted his own tool to open up fishable openings in the grass. He now uses an 11-foot length of metal conduit with a 90-degree bend at the very end that serves as his “rake.”

“You can make a hole plenty big enough to drop a jig through,” Outlaw said. “It doesn’t have to be very big. You might scare some fish off if you tried to make the hole too big. The metal conduit with the 90-degree bend works well for me.”

On larger mats, Outlaw makes a series of holes around the perimeter of his boat. A

Matt Outlaw pulls a good crappie from the base of a cypress tree. Outlaw suggests fishing around cypress trees year-round rather than just during the spawn.

single hole is all that is needed at times on smaller mats.

“It’s just like any type of structure; the fish are not everywhere under a mat,” he said. “Most of the time they are concentrated in one area. I will fish each hole fairly quickly. If they are there, they will usually bite pretty quick.”

“The same is true about small mats. There might be 50 fish wadded up on one end of a mat the size of a boat.”

Outlaw generally uses a 1/16th-oz. Rockport Rattler or ProBilt jig head paired with Crappie Magnet or Midsouth plastics. His color choice is almost always chartreuse.

He drops the jig through the openings with a 10- or 11-foot B'n'M jig pole.

"The key, though, is using bigger line," he said. "The grass is not a place to use four-pound line. You want to pull them out of there to avoid spooking the rest of the fish."

Outlaw also targets cypress trees year-round. While the areas under and around cypress are obvious spawning areas, Outlaw said the fish will remain shallow given the right conditions. He targets the fish with the same one-pole approach that he uses in the grass.

"People in general don't think about shallow-water crappie," he said. "They will hold shallow just about all year long, and the grass and around cypress trees are places people should always look."

Another unusual approach is targeting crappie in current. Some crappie, like those that live on the main portions of the Alabama River, become conditioned to the moving water. They do try to minimize the effects of the current by holding behind wood and rock current breaks.

"We don't get that much current on the Santee lakes, but the crappie will orient to moving water on the upper end of the lakes, especially when the water is low in the winter," Outlaw said. "In this case, you're talking about dropping jigs down around laydowns and stumps but usually not all that deep, maybe up to about 10 feet but usually shallower."

Finding fish shallow is a common denominator that links Outlaw with other fishermen on various bodies of water.

Grass is not always in the equation, but crappie can be found in skinny water at times other than the spawn, even in the hottest weather.

Shallow Open Water

Of course, shallow is relative to the fishery. Northwest Alabama guide Brad Whitehead normally focuses on water at least 15 deep when he fishes Pickwick Lake and finds fish out to about 30 feet deep. He finds crappie grouped at those depths at just about any time and in any season. That's why he was

amazed late this summer when he graphed a school of fish in about eight feet of water.

"Anyone that fishes Pickwick doesn't think about crappie being in eight feet of water," Whitehead said. "I saw them on my side imagining and thought, 'there's no way those are crappie'."

Afraid of spooking the fish with his trolling motor, Whitehead (Brad Whitehead Fishing, 256-483-0834) positioned his boat to drift over the one isolated stump that held the

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fish. Aided by a slight wind, he drifted several times, dropping B'n'M Double Minnow Rigs (www.bnmpoles.com) with shiners and catching 28 crappie.

"I have never experienced anything like that in shallow water, especially on Pickwick," Whitehead said.

Hot, Shallow Crappie

The fish live even shallower on other fisheries. Crappie Masters (www.crappiemasters.net) president and owner Mike Vallentine regularly targets shallow fish close to his Missouri home and also on the road when he travels to tournaments.

"On my home waters, Truman Lake in Missouri, even in the heat of summer with 85 or 90 degree water temperatures, we look for shallow stumps in one to four feet of water," he said. "Those crappie will be there. That's very common and it's very common all over the country."

On the road, Vallentine only fishes the Alabama River about once a year. However, he has learned that plenty of crappie hold shallow on the stumps and standing timber on the river just about year-round.

"There are plenty of crappie to be caught out on the main river and in some of the deeper creeks," Vallentine said. "But there is a portion of the crappie population on the Alabama River that seems to live shallow just about year-round. Through experience, that's something that I have come to expect. You can catch fish in two or three feet of water when the water temperature is approaching 90 degrees in a hot Alabama summer."

Vallentine eases through the wood structure and dissects areas with a one-pole approach.

"I'm not here that often," he said, "but I've never failed to find at least some fish up shallow. They seem to find everything they need to live – food, shade, plenty of oxygen – in the hotter shallow water."

"For crappie fishing, people generally think deep first, but shallow fish on the Alabama River and other places are always a possibility if wood structure is present. Most people just don't know it and tend to

ignore the possibilities."

Barge

Ignoring obvious structure, even if it is an unusual, can be a mistake as well.

Alabama pro Gerald Overstreet, who catches the majority of his crappie in heavy current on the main portions of the Alabama River, was fishing the Tombigbee River in calmer conditions several years. Enjoying a day of casting and retrieving a jig under a cork to laydowns and stumps along the bank, Overstreet (Overstreet Guide Service, 251-589-3225) was catching the occasional fish along the way.

Forced to maneuver around an old partially sunk barge tied up to the bank, Overstreet flipped a cast near the structure and immediately watched his float disappear. He soon discovered the mother lode of crappie was positioned not around the wood where they were supposed to be but rather under the old barge.

"There was no brush or wood around," Overstreet said. "They were relating to the barge."

"The fish were just under the edge of the barge but would come out and take the jig."

Final Notes

These fishing experiences illustrate that crappie are where you find them. While that statement may be overstating the obvious, even seasoned fishermen stubbornly adhere to pre-conceived ideas about where the fish should be. Crappie are creatures of habit and are generally found in the same places. The fish, however, will hold in non-traditional areas that stray from the ordinary.

That day arrives when crappie are difficult to locate. It may be time to try an unusual approach, shallow vs. deep, grass vs. wood, or current vs. still water. The results may prove surprisingly but more importantly rewarding as well.

 - Greg McCain

Crappie Basics #174

Grenada Lake

“I like Grenada Lake, Mississippi in November. Power trolling works great. I use the BnM Power Trollers with 3-ounce weights. It’s important to cover a lot of ground. The lake is being drawn down so I like fishing the ledges and the channel. As they keep drawing down, the fish gets stacked up. It’s not unusual to catch 14 or 15 pounds in a couple of hours.”

Paul Turner, along with Elizabeth, his wife and fishing partner, had two wins and three second place finishes in the 2018 Crappie Masters season. They also won Top Male-Female Angler Team of the Year.

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Crappie USA

by Ron Presley

Garland & Turpin Claim Victory at CUSA Classic

Mother Nature delivered tough fishing conditions to crappie anglers competing in the 2018 Cabela's Crappie USA Tournament Trail (CUSA) on Lake Cumberland. Recent rains had swollen the lake to high levels and the water was falling rapidly going into the two-day tournament. Anglers were challenged by the falling water level and higher than normal water temps.

Prefishing crappie anglers mostly reported a tough bite. "This is the toughest bite I have fished in my 33 years of tournament fishing," said Steve Coleman, eight-time national classic champ.

"...fish have not moved into the creeks yet..."

The weather was mild in the mornings and steamy hot in the afternoons. A heavy fog did not lift until about 8:30 each day. The higher than normal water temperatures caused tournament director, Darrell Van Vactor, to advise anglers to use all precautions in caring for the fish. He recommended having a needle ready to "fizz" the fish if necessary.

A majority of anglers expected to find the crappie deep due to the water temperatures. Those that fished deep used single pole, vertical jigging techniques in water ranging in depth from 20 to 35 feet. Although the technique was successful for many anglers, it presented a true challenge

to keep the fish alive when landed from the deep water, confirming Van Vactor's expectations.

First Place

The winning team of Ben Garland and Barry Turpen, local anglers from Nancy, KY, fished the way they always do, cast and retrieve. Many tournament anglers have turned to more sophisticated multiple rod techniques to cover more water and hopefully catch more fish but those methods did not prevail at the Classic.

Also, where most competitors were fishing deep water, Garland and Turpen were targeting early fish in shallow water. Their strategy proved to be effective and they caught 30 to 40 fish during the weekend event.

"We found our fish in the main lake," reported Garland. "The fish have not moved into the creeks yet, except for small ones. We were targeting small cuts or indentations along the shoreline. It might be 20 to 30 feet where the boat was setting, but we were casting to water that was only five or six feet deep and pulling back over the drop."

"We were just casting jigs," continued Garland. "We would cast and retrieve with most fish coming early before the sun got too high. When the sun came up so it was on your face, the fish went deeper."

"Fishing was good," added Turpen. "We just tried to stay in the shade. We had a limit on the first day by 7:30 and on day two by 8:30. We had a little lull in the bite between 10:00 o'clock and 1:00 o'clock each day but managed to upgrade a few



fish during the rest of the day.”

“We just use two baits,” advised Turpen. “Green and white plastic tails from Teezur Jigs. Ben uses green and I use white. The crappie had two choices all the time. They can either take Ben’s green or my white.”

“We are just local boys that enjoy fishing,” offered Garland. “It feels great to win, but that is just a bonus.”

A little deeper investigation uncovered the reason for Garland’s statement. He had a winning story of his own. In the first place, his grandson, Nolan, had fished with them on day two. In his mind that was better than the win. Secondly, his current state of health is a victory over leukemia.

“From August 2016 until April 2017 I was in the hospital with Leukemia,” revealed

Garland and Turpen moved up from second place on day one to take the lead on day two. They earned top honors in the CUSA Classic and took home the \$50,000 Ranger Boat package.

Garland. “I had to have a bone marrow transplant. Three days after getting out of the hospital we fished the CUSA tournament here and finished fifth. I was so sore and weak I could hardly move. The next time I was a little stronger and we came back and placed again. Now, to come out and win this is just a bonus.”

“It feels great to win,” conclude Garland. “However, being out on the lake, being healthy enough to fish, feeling good,





Light spinning tackle was all that was needed for the winning team's cast and retrieve method.

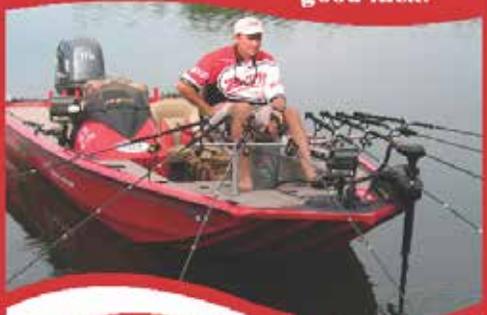
taking your grandson with you, that makes this win a bonus."

Second Place

The second-place team of Chris Creech and Rodney Stevens also relied on shallow water fishing for their success. They moved around targeting fish in different locations. They found fish in Fishing Creek, Pittman Creek and on the main lake.

"Day one started off slow," reported Creech. "We were afraid we would lose the fish we had found when the sun got higher, but the bite picked up. We actually found some of our better fish around noon. It was surprising with the sun coming up

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Chris Creech and Rodney Stevens were tied for Big Fish after day one with this 1.81-pound crappie.

that bright but it worked out well.”

Creech and Stevens were one of the few teams who found fish shallow and they were quality fish. They held the Big Fish lead after day one with a 1.87 pounder.

They used Bobby Garland jigs in Monkey Milk color under a slip bobber to catch fish over structure on the bank in two to five feet of water. Then, after catching the shallow fish, they would let the jig sink to 10 to 15 feet of water and target deeper fish in the same structure. The technique landed them about 30 fish over the weekend.

Fifth & AOY

Kris and Terry Mann, Mt. Sterling, KY, finished fifth in the Classic and won the Angler Team of the Year for 2018. They caught their fish deep on jigs.

“Fishing was super tough due to fluctuating water levels over the last two weeks and unseasonably warm water temps,” confirmed Kris. “We caught all of our fish on 1/8-ounce Crappie Magnet jigs in the Fast Lane and Mermaid colors. We mainly one pole jigged wood cover in the

Crappie USA National Championship Top 10 Pro Division

- 15.13 Ben Garland and Barry Turpen
- 14.57 Chris Creech and Rodney Stevens
- 13.83 Steve Hess and Dan Lutcha
- 13.50 Steve Ferguson and Frank Finley
- 13.44 Kris and Terry Mann
- 12.96 Kevin McCarley and Kevin Hagood
- 12.77 Glen Ward and Donnie Miller
- 12.67 Bret Cunningham and David Wright
- 12.59 Keith Lytle and Jessie Sutherland
- 11.34 Jeremy Mattingly and Dustin Parks

Crappie USA National Championship Top 10 Amateur Division

- 13.21 Rodney Goforth and Darrell Hyde
- 13.11 Luke McCoy and Aaron Gully
- 12.70 James and Jamie Heflin
- 12.46 Terry Weber and Don Beasley
- 11.92 Antwan Roberson and Stacy Morphis
- 10.64 Thomas E. Nimrick and Teresa Abell
- 10.60 James and Missy Trunnel
- 10.37 Roger D. Claywell and Dean Rogers
- 10.18 Roger Slavey and Harris Dix
- 09.50 Richard Hamilton and Larry Reynolds

20- to 30-foot range using B'n'M Poles.”

Kris and Terry were among those anglers that lost fish that could have made a difference in their finish. The warm water temperatures were taking a toll.

“We stayed on the move fishing many different creeks in an effort to target larger black crappie,” continued Kris. “Our problem came as we struggled to keep those fish alive that were coming from deep water. We were only able to catch 15 keepers over two tournament days of fishing. Unfortunately, three of those expired before the weigh-in, leaving us with just 12 weigh-in fish.”





Kris had some advice for anglers fishing in similar warm water conditions. Sometimes it requires extra effort to keep the fish alive, especially if they are caught in deep water.

“Stay away from that deep water,” joked Kris. “In all seriousness, keeping the livewell temps cool by adding ice helps and using a quality livewell treatment product is essential. Placing weighted clips on the fins of fish to keep them upright in the livewell can help them recover and “fizzing” them is often necessary. Last but not least, keep your livewell recirculating all day if you can. Unfortunately, sometimes there is nothing that can be done to save them and that’s what we experienced with a few fish.”

The father-son team of Kris and Terry Mann sealed the deal on the Angler Team of the Year award with their fifth-place finish at the CUSA Classic

 - Ron Presley



Crappie Basics #175

Look for the Birds

Crappie Masters tournament angler, Chris Dudgeon, says the fall fishing can be great and it's not too difficult to find action.

"The key to fall fishing is finding the shad. It sounds cliché' that you'll catch fish if you find shad, but it works. One of the first things I look for is birds, pelicans, sea gulls, and any other bird you can see. They will be feeding on the shad. Next, use your electronics to find the baitsfish and crappie.

"I use a little bigger bait in the fall because the fish are a little more aggressive fattening up for winter. Bigger baits are more fun to fish, too."



2019
Crappie USA

Tournament Trail Schedule

Crappie USA

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Barkley/Kentucky Lakes, Kuttawa, KY....	11/02/18 - 11/03/18
Lake Wylie, Belmont, NC.....	03/01/19 - 03/02/19
Lakes Marion & Moultrie, Santee, SC.....	03/15/19 - 03/16/19
KY & Barkley Lakes, Paris, TN.....	03/22/19 - 03/23/19
Lake Cumberland, Somerset, KY.....	04/05/19 - 04/06/19
Lake Barkley, Cadiz, KY.....	04/12/19 - 04/13/19
Green River Lake, Columbia, KY.....	04/19/19 - 04/20/19
Grand Lake/St. Marys, St. Marys, OH.....	04/26/19 - 04/27/19

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Crappie NOW How To Dry Storage

Tips for Boat Winter Storage

Boat US says recreational boat owner need to take special precautions with storage of E-10 (ethanol) gas. Ethanol fuel can cause problems over the winter.

Prepare for ethanol: Unless you use ethanol-free fuels, your boats' gas contains a mixture of up to 10 percent ethanol. This fuel could "phase separate" over long winter storage periods and harm boat engines and fuel systems. If you have a portable gas tank on your boat, try to use as much gas as possible before you put the boat away at the end of the season. Any remaining that's left in the portable tank (unmixed) may be put in your vehicle.

If your boat has a built-in gas tank that cannot be emptied, add a fule stabilizer and fill the tank, leaving just a little room for expansion. This will greatly reduce the amount of moisture-laden air that can enter through the tank's vent during seasonal temperature changes and could



condense inside tank walls, potentially leading to phase separation.

For boaters in the north, protecting yourself with ice and freeze coverage may be a smart option. It's usually not expensive. BoatUS Marine Insurance offers it for as little as \$25.

(Article notes from: BoatUS www.boatus.com)



Crappie Masters Championship

.....HOW THEY FISHED

by Tim Huffman





Baylor Mead and Mathew Rogers with their first day's catch at the Crappie Masters

Twenty one years of age doesn't add up decades of fishing experience. However, many hours on the water this year, working to learn patterns and being in the right place at the right time gave two young fishermen what they needed to win.

Mathew Rogers and Baylor Mead stepped into the spotlight as they accepted the Crappie Masters Championship trophies September 29th. The team had a two-day total of 14 fish weighing 21.19 pounds, edging second place by 0.29 pounds.

Unlike many tournaments, all the top teams fished similar structure with a similar style. They were scattered around in different places but the majority of fish were caught from four to ten feet deep with baits near bottom. The following are some specifics of their setup and catches.

First Place, at 20.19 pounds, was Rogers and Mead who didn't stray too far

from the launch ramp although they fished five different spots. "I never understood the fish very well, but after coming back from an illness about a year ago, I started guiding part time," says Rogers. "That made a huge difference my learning. So we both put time in at Truman, fished some local tournaments and also fished to qualify for this championship. I've learned more about the fish and I can read a map to know where I should find them under different conditions, but I still have a lot to learn. We make a lot of mistakes but sometimes make good decisions, too."

Mead says the biggest difference for them was finding a few spots with big fish. "We went where we knew the big fish had been and worked on those spots. We ran





around less than normal, although when things weren't going well on the morning of day two, we did get to hopping around some before settling down on our top spot."

The team used Outlaw Rods, 8- and 10-pound Power Pro line, 2-inch jigs made at home by Rogers and a 1/16-ounce head. "There are many similar jigs like the one I'm pouring myself but I can get unique colors that I believe can help because it's something they don't see every day."

The team single-pole fished but used a pole in each hand. It was more work in the thick cover, but they liked the benefits. First, having four baits in the water compared to two meant more fish. And two, it allowed them to fish a thick brushpile or bed much quicker so they could fish more cover.

The team was fishing a flat that had no deep water nearby, but the team believed the fish were travelling across the flat. Fish would slowly replenish allowing them to hit good cover several times.

An important part of their fishing was to stick with places with big fish. The big ones would only bite periodically in a spot.

Second place team of Aaron & Mark Engelhart said timing of the big-fish bite in each area was critical.

For example, their top spot was terrible the second morning, but after trying other places, they came back to it the last hour of the day and won the tournament there.

The team fished exposed wood but also spent a lot of time fishing submerged cover. Mead says, "We were fishing a lot of underwater cover other fishermen wasn't touching. That's uncommon at Truman where so many places are fished by several boats during the day. We fished a variety of trees and didn't stick to just one thing."

"As far as winning," says Rogers, "timing is everything. At the last minute on the water the opening morning we turned a different way than where we had headed. That was a critical move because the spot we held off fishing produced the biggest fish of the tournament later when we went there. If we had gone there first, it's likely



we wouldn't have been there when the big ones were biting. Right place at the right time. You have to know they are there but luck is involved in having a bait in front of a fish at the right time. There was another spot we knew had big fish, went to it four times on day two but the big ones never hit. Timing is everything."

Specific cover? They said 80 percent of their fish came from brush and debris, a lot of stuff people have put into the lake but some of it's natural. "I run Garmin Panoptics. Everyone who uses it knows about how good it is. It gives me the opportunity to position my boat correctly on a tree I can't visibly see. I can run my jig right beside the tree."

Big flats in the Grand arm, visible and submerged trees, with a lot of their fish coming from nine feet of water with the bait just off bottom...it's Advanced Seasonal Structure...and it's a winner.

Second Place, at 20.90 pounds, was Mark and Aaron Engelhart. The team had spent a lot of time this year working to learn big fish spots and patterns. The work and extra time paid off giving them the runner-up spot.

The team fished the Grand arm in seven to eight feet of water. Their structure was mainly stumps because the beds they had placed produced only small crappie.

Shannon & Kyler Beckman tied for third place by vertical jigging submerged, and barely visible, wood along a drop.

"Big fish were relating to stumps," says Mark. "The one area where we had our best weight was only about 100 by 200 with about 15 stumps. That's where they were in practice and in the tournament."

The team says good crappie bit in flurries, with different spots being good at different times. Practice was all about learning the timing for the different spots. One factor that changed everything was clouds. On both days, sun was critical to get the big fish bites.

Their equipment included Jenko and BnM Poles, Gamma and P-Line, Pro Bilt jig heads with Bobby Garland 2-inch plastic in Junebug, and Strike King Thunder jig.

Presentations were much faster than other teams who would have to leave baits in for up to a minute or more to get a bite. When action was good, this team dropped down and if no bite occurred within five seconds, they moved the bait to another stump.

Aaron says, "We had to be in the right spot at the right time, but we had a game plan and stuck to it. We knew where we



needed to be when the big bite happened. The plan worked out for us. I wish we had won, but I would take second in this tournament any time and be happy.”

Third Place (tie), at 20.27 pounds, was the team of Shannon and Kyler Beckmann. The team’s structure was a dozen key stumps found during the week when practicing. The best bite was in nine to ten feet of water fishing right on bottom. They believed the critical factor was fishing right next to the channel. They fished through the stumps, then come back through them again and again.

“What we learned in practice and even more during the tournament,” says Shannon, “was to also down, very slow. Drop in until you can stand it any more. Maybe after a minute or more they would hit it. It was old-school type fishing. We tipped our jigs with minnows, went through 11 dozen minnows today, and that’s a lot for jig fishing. We caught over a 100 keepers today.”

Their equipment included Kevin Rogers signature Jenko 10-foot and HyperSense Jenko 10-foot, 15-pound braid and 1/16 Crappie Monster jigs. They soaked jig bodies in JB’s Sauce believing that made a big difference in the number of bites.

“Fishing the right cove was important,” says Kyler, “but the first day we moved slow but not slow enough. That probably made the difference but we’ve had a great tournament and it’s been great this year fishing with my dad.”

Final Notes

The top teams at the Crappie Masters Championship were jigging. Some used one pole while others used a pole in each hand. Jigging allowed baits to be put into and out of dense cover, limbs and beds.

All teams said electronics were key for seeing invisible wood, both natural and placed, and finding the crappie. Garmin Panoptics and Humminbird 360 units appeared to dominate.

Fish were on bottom. Most teams drop

the bait to the bottom and lifted it a few inches off bottom. That presentation worked whether in four feet of water or ten feet.

Big fish didn’t bite all day in a given area. Being in the right spot at the right time was critical.

Hedge trees, cedars, stumps and manmade covers are all important structures, along with depths and contours. At Truman, stumps were the best producers with both visible and submerged being important.

Fishermen differed on the best jig. A 1/16, 1/8 and 1/4 ounce were the standard, with 1/4-being very popular because it would get down quickly and give the best sensitivity to bites. However, first place, and several other teams, preferred a 1/16-ounce, saying they got more bites with fewer short strikes. It was easier for the fish to suck it in.

The most popular color was black-chartreuse, especially the Bobby Garland Lights Out.

All fishermen I spoke with used scent and most tipped with minnows. But results varied with each fisherman.

There are two popular theories on rods. One is a stiff rod like a Kevin Rogers signature Jenko or a Huckabee jigging pole, use braided line and swing the fish into the boat. About 95% of the bites are felt. The other theory is to use a light-action, sensitive tip rod, like a BnM BGJP, so more bites are seen at the tip, the fish doesn’t immediately feel the pole, and the limber pole provides a good drag and shock absorber. Big crappie must be netted. Pole choice is a matter of personal preference.

See our tournament results section for complete results. Visit Crappie Masters at www.crappiemasters.net.

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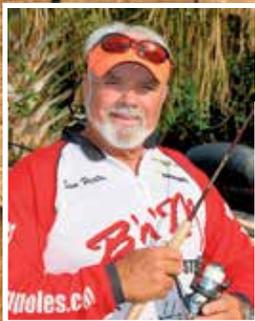
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by Jerry McCready

“In Arkansas, the shad move up into shallow water in November and December. The shad go into what I’m told is a second spawn. The crappie follow the shad. The November pattern, on a lake like Conway, is the crappie are going up shallow. Single-pole the grass in 1.5 to 2.0 feet of water on the edges of the grass. The grass comes out a few feet and the crappie hang out in it, probably as an ambush spot.

“I use a variety of jigs with MidSouth being my primary bait. I like a 1/8-ounce pink or orange head. I like white-chartreuse, glow chartreuse and junebug-glow (Crappiehollic color).”

“The technique is simple. Have two feet of line, a long pole and you don’t even need patience. If the crappie are there, they’ll knock the thunder out of it. A buddy and I went last fall and had a legal two-person limit of 60 crappie. They were all over 1.25 pounds and we had six over two pounds.

“This will last while the temperatures are in the 40’s and 50’s. A long period of below freezing will move the fish back out into deeper water.”

Jerry McCready is owner of Crappiehollic apparel and fishes several national tournaments each year. www.crappiehollic.com



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- Lake Guntersville, AL Feb 15-16, 2019
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- Kentucky Lake, TN June 21-22, 2019
- Truman, MO July 27-28, 2019
- Ouachita River, LA Sept 13-14, 2019
- 2019 National Championship TBA

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Crappie and Venison

CrappieNOW editor Tim Huffman and I have exchanged emails about deer season; he was bragging 'bout the bucks he's taken and I was complaining that I didn't have what it takes to haul one out the holler. We swapped a few laments of the gifts age gives you such as graying hair at the temples and beyond. I've been snow-white for years but I forgot to ask Tim what color he used on his hair ;>).

The serious part of our conversation was about venison recipes; so this month I'll forego my usual research of some ingredient and move straight to crappie recipes and then to venison. I expect many of you will have plenty of succulent red meat stashed for winter.

Oven Fried Crappie

- 1 pound crappie fillets
- 1 cup Italian Style bread crumbs
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup milk
- Vegetable, canola or peanut oil
- Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Pour oil into a medium sized casserole dish to a depth of approximately 1/8 inch. Preheat the oven (and the pan of oil). Combine milk and egg in a small bowl and beat until completely mixed. Dip fillets in milk/egg mixture and then roll in bread crumbs. Add salt and pepper per your preference. Place fillets into the pan of oil, allow oil to soak into first side and then turn fillets over to oil second side. Bake 8-10 minutes or until golden brown.

Cornmeal Crappies

- 2 pounds fresh fillets
- 1/8 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon homemade lemon pepper
- 2 or 3 shakes homemade hot sauce
- 3-4 cups Aunt Jemima self-rising white corn meal
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/2 cold water
- Canola oil, for frying

Rinse fillets. In large bowl, mix all ingredients except corn meal. Mix well with hands. Cover with plastic wrap or plate to stop dry out. Refrigerate overnight, mixing every few hours. Place oil in a heavy frying pan and heat to 375 degrees; be sure not to overheat oil.

Put corn meal in plastic bag. Shake 2 or 3 fillets at once. Place on plate. When all fillets are breaded, slowly place in hot oil. Fry on each side until fillet flakes and is deep golden brown in color.

Onion Roasted Venison

- 4 pound rump or shoulder roast
- Cooking fat
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 package dry onion soup mix
- 1/2 cup water

Brown roast in cooking fat on all sides on top of stove. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle package of onion soup mix on and around the roast. Add water. Cook in covered pan in 300-degree oven until tender.

Makes 6 to 12 servings.

Pot Roast of Venison

- Haunch or loin of venison
- Lard
- Salt pork
- 3 medium sliced onions
- 4 chopped carrots
- 2 small chopped turnips
- 4 stalks of chopped celery
- Finely chopped parsley
- Pinch rosemary
- Pinch thyme
- 2 strips lemon peel
- 8 peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves
- Dry red wine
- Water
- Salt
- 1/2 cup sour cream

Trim carefully and remove all surplus fibers, skin and fat from venison haunch or loin. In large skillet, brown venison in lard with salt pork. Place the sliced onions, carrots, small turnips, and celery, and finely chopped parsley, rosemary, thyme, lemon peel, peppercorns, and bay leaves in a Dutch oven with equal parts red wine and water, bring to a boil, and let simmer for 30 minutes. Add the larded venison and cover. Simmer for 2 hours. Remove meat, strain sauce, and place venison in a roasting pan. Pour the strained liquid over the roast, adding sour cream, and cook slowly until well done.

Deer Patties

- 2 pounds ground deer tenderloin
- 3 tablespoons very fine breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons grated onion
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 lightly beaten egg
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup clear bacon fat
- 1/3 cup water

Blend deer tenderloin, breadcrumbs, onion, salt, egg, turmeric, chili powder, garlic salt, and pepper thoroughly, leaving out garlic or onion if you prefer, and shape into patties. Place in bacon fat and brown. When browned, add water and cover. Simmer 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Venison Chili

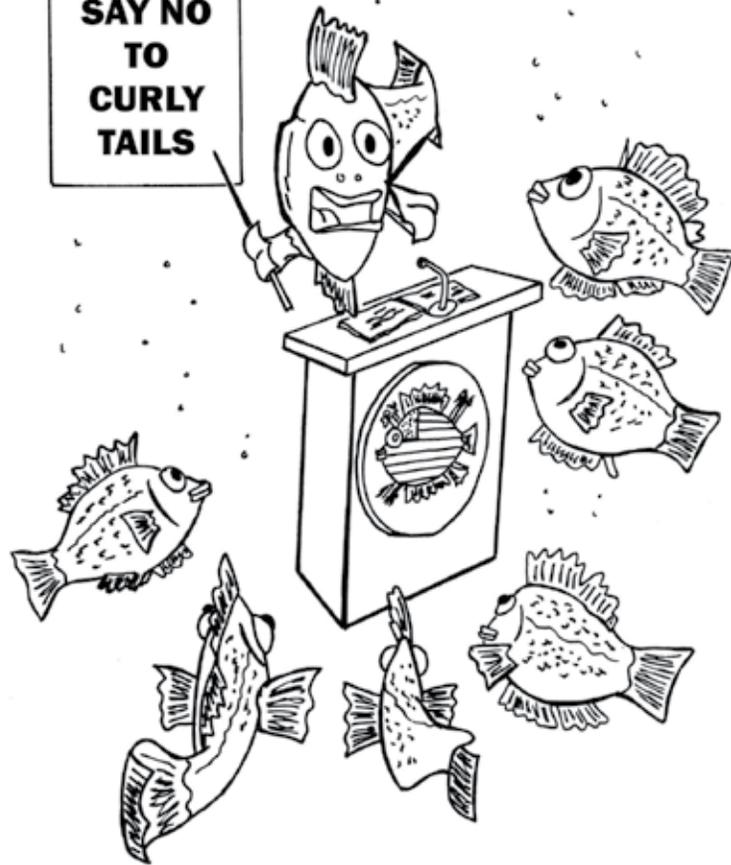
- 1/2 to 1 pound ground venison meat
- 1 tablespoon bacon fat
- 1 minced small onion
- 1/2 to 1 chopped green pepper
- 1 large can chili beans or kidney beans
- 1 medium size can tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chili powder to taste

Brown meat in bacon fat, breaking the ground meat into small pieces as you brown it. Add onions and green pepper and cook until onions begin to brown, about 5 minutes. Stir often. Add beans, tomatoes, salt and pepper, stirring occasionally and enough chili powder to suit your taste. Cook about 1 hour over medium heat.



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SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB

LAKE SHELBYVILLE

SEPTEMBER 22nd

1. Bob Sarko/Rick Clifton	6.7
2. Donnie Lucas/Gabe Fairfield	6.11
3. Greg Humphrey/Luke Humphrey	4.77
4. Jerry Jallas/Carlo Catalano	4.66

BIG FISH

1. Bob Sarko/Rick Clifton	1.16
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CRAPPIE MASTERS

TRUMAN LAKE

SEPTEMBER 26th - 29th

1. Matthew Rogers/Baylor Mead	21.19
2. Mark Englehart/Aaron Englehart	20.9
3. Kyler Beckman/Shannon Beckman	20.27
4. Frank Haidusek/Austin McClure	20.27
5. Jackie Linton/Holly Linton	20.16

BIG FISH

1. Matthew Rogers/Baylor Mead	2.11
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MALE/FEMALE

1. Jackie Linton/Holly Linton	20.16
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ADULT/YOUTH

1. Larry Gorham/Chad Maupin	
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NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB

LAKE MILTON

SEPTEMBER 29th

1. Jerry/Eric	7.13
2. Brock/Brian	6.9
3. Steve/John	6.84
4. Brad/Brandon	6.8
5. Wes/Kolby	6.54

BIG FISH

1. Bill/Jim	1.56
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GRAND LAKES CRAPPIE SERIES

GRAND LAKES

SEPTEMBER 30TH

1. Joe Vanover/Troy Zimmerman	7.84
2. Jeff Toban/Mike Bell	7.44
3. Jeff Yerkle	7.07
4. Andy Ball/AJ Mast	6.93
5. Dustin Chrisman/Austin Chrisman	6.82

NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB

BERLIN LAKE

OCTOBER 6th

1. Andy/John	6.02
2. Wes/Colby	6.02
3. Mike/Andrea	5.58
4. Eric/Jerry	5.42
5. Dave	6.34

BIG FISH

1. Andy/John	1.12
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SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB

LAKE SPRINGFIELD

OCTOBER 6th

1. Sammy Wright/Zach Pierce	6.35
2. Erick Clark/Brian Buchanan	6.04
3. Jerry Jallas/Carlo Catalano	5.74
4. Mike Rockford/Danny Rockford	5.29

BIG FISH

1. Luke Humphrey/Greg Humphrey	1.17
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CRAPPIE USA

LAKE CUMBERLAND

OCTOBER 6th

AMATEUR DIVISION

1. Rodney Goforth/Darrel Hyde	13.21
2. Luke McCoy/Aaron Gully	13.11
3. James Heflin/Jamie Heflin	12.7
4. Terry Weber/Don Beasley	12.48
5. Antwan Roberson/Stacey Morphis	11.92

PRO DIVISION

1. Ben Garland/Barry Turpen	15.13
2. Chris Creech/Rodney Stevens	14.57
3. Steve Hess/Dan Lutcha	13.83
4. Steve Ferguson/Frank Finley	13.5
5. Kris Mann/Terry Mann	13.44

BIGFISH

1. James Heflin/Jamie Heflin	2.21
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BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOC.

HICKORY CREEK MARINA

OCTOBER 13th

1. Blake Berry/Hunter Bourke	8.26
2. Seth Eden	7.52
3. Payton Usery/Cody Usery	6.35
4. Ronnie Davidson/Brad Blew	6.19
5. Josh Dodgen/Ryan Dodgen	5.93

BIG FISH

1. Blake Berry/Hunter Bourke	1.32
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CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUBCHESTER FROST PARK/**FORGOTTEN CHILD CHRIST-
MAS FUND****OCTOBER 13th**

1. Kyle Welcher	BASS	9.9
1. Thomas Henshaw/Mickey Henshaw	CRAPPIE	7.13
2. Mark Buffington/Hank Weathers	BASS	9.7
2. Neal Alvis/Scott Bunch	CRAPPIE	6.56
3. Tony Clark/Brian Reed	BASS	7.08
3. Terry Kilgore/Chuck Splawn	CRAPPIE	6.53
4. Nathan Hill/Daniel	BASS	6.9
4. Brian Howard/Mike Johnston	CRAPPIE	6.41
5. Barry Broome/Ryan Godsey	BASS	5.73
5. Bryan Cordell/Aiden Cordell	CRAPPIE	6.12

BIG FISH

1. Mark Buffington/Hank Weathers	BASS	4.46
1. Thomas Henshaw/Mickey Henshaw	CRAPPIE	1.44

FISH THE CAROLINAS LLC

JORDAN/HARRIS

OCTOBER 13th

1. Kevin Hawkins/Benjamin McGuirt		13.07
2. Freddie Sinclair/Blake Sinclair		10.45
3. Stokes McClellan/Jordan Newsome		10.19
4. Tim Robertson/Nick Robertson		10.06
5. Rod King Jay/Garrard		10.04

BIG FISH

1. Kevin Hawkins/Benjamin McGuirt		2.2
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FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB

LAKE LOCHLOOSA

OCTOBER 13th

1. Jack/John		8.04
2. Tracy/Matthew		7.07
3. Tim/George		7.06
4. Randy/Shawn		6.09

BIG FISH

1. Tracy/Matthew		1.14
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MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB

GRENADA LAKE

OCTOBER 13th

1. Jeremy Aldridge/Clint Egbert	14.18
2. Jimmy Ayers/Michael Clinard	14.11
3. Kody Hammilton/Randie Hammilton	13.73
4. Steve Marquis/Keith Sullivan	13.56
5. Jason Eichwurtzle/Parker Eichwurtzle	13.55

BIG FISH

1. William Tyer/Richard Sanders	2.62
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SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION

WHEELER LAKE

OCTOBER 13th

1. Joe Lambert/Justin Lambert	9.33
2. Jonathan Kirby	7.03
3. David McCarley	5.61
4. Keith Dodd/Darrell Keil	5.53
5. Kevin McCarley/Rick Robinson	5.41

BIG FISH

1. Joe Lambert/Justin Lambert	1.61
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TWIN LAKES CRAPPIE CLUB

KY DAM AND 68/80 BRIDGE

OCTOBER 13th

1. Tony Shephard/Mike Shephard	7.38
2. Tony Snelling/Tim Crice	4.84
3. Michael McGregor/Jeff Outland	4.76
4. Scott/Christy	4.46
5. Austin Brown/Buddy Coy	4.19

BIG FISH

1. Tony Shephard/Mike Shephard	1.38
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HOI CRAPPIE CLUB

CLINTON LAKE

OCTOBER 13th - 14th

1. Terry Davis/Rick Montooth	11.45
2. Chad Anderson/Quentin Frost	9.31
3. Josh Nast/Dustin Reynolds	9.13
4. John Zschau/David Zschau	8.92
5. Brent Whitecotton/Danny Whitecotton	8.2

BIG FISH

1. Terry Davis/Rick Montooth	1.16
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GRAND LAKES CRAPPIE SERIES

OCTOBER 14th

GRAND LAKES

1. Josh Vanover/Try Zimmerman	8.26
2. Jeff Toben/Mike Bell	7.79
3. Jason Koesters/Zach Fishbaugh	7.46
4. Andy Ball/AJ Mast	7.24
5. Kevin Nagel/Dale Bowerstock	7.07

CRAPPIE CALENDAR

NOV 2nd - 3rd	CRAPPIE USA	BARCLEY/KENTUCKY LAKES	SUPER EVENT
NOV 3rd	CENTRAL ILLINOIS	CLINTON LAKE	CLUB
NOV 3rd	FISH THE CAROLINAS	WATEREE	CLUB
NOV 3rd	NORTHEAST OHIO	CUP LAKE/JIN STROUSE MEMORIAL	PICK LAKE TOP 5 TEAMS
NOV 4th	CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUB	CHESTER FROST PARK	CLUB
NOV 4th	SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE SPRINGFIELD	CLASSIC
NOV 10th	COOSA RIVER CRAPPIE CLUB	NEELY HENRY	CLASSIC
NOV 10th	PEACH STATE CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKW SINCLAIR	CLUB
NOV 13th	FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	SANTE FE	CLUB
NOV 10th	MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB	ENID LAKE	CLUB
NOV 10th	SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB	DECATUR	OPEN BUDDY
NOV 10th-11th	KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	MILFORD LAKE	CLASSIX & VERERAN
NOV 11th	CENTRAL ILLINOIS	LAKE SHELBYVILLE	VETERAN'S OPEN
NOV 17th	EAST TN CRAPPIE CLUB	CHEROKEE LAKE	CLUB
NOV 17th	LAKE OKEECHOBEE CRAPPIE SERIES	LAKE OKEECHOBEE	2nd QUALIFIER
NOV 17th	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	WOODS RESERVOIR	CLUB
NOV 17th	SOUTH CAROLINA CRAPPIE ASSOC	WATEREE	CLUB
NOV 17th	TWIN LAKES	FISH ANYWHERE	OPEN
NOV 18th	CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUB	CHESTER FROST PARK	CLUB



CAT recently held its 11th Texas State Crappie Championship Tournament on Lake Fork on October 12-13, 2018. This was a two-day tournament. Even with changing fish patterns and torrential rains, anglers brought impressive and record-breaking stringers to the scales. Division 1 had 25 qualifying teams enter the championship and Division 2 had 18 teams. Here are the results:



In Division 1, David Gibby (Valley View, TX) and Cody Standerfer (Prosper, TX) won first place with a two-day total of 14 fish weighing 27.64 pounds. This broke the record for the largest two-day string caught during a Texas State Crappie Championship. Second place was won by Clay Gann (Hideaway, TX) and Todd Froebe (Lindale, TX) with junior angler Landon Froebe with 14 fish weighing 26.66 pounds. Kelly Satterwhite (Teague, TX) and Eric Walker (Lewisville, TX) took home 3rd place with 14 fish weighing 26.43 pounds. Other awards - Pro Angler Elite Rod Challenge Award Day 1 winners were Chris Waters and Kirk Grounds (13.93). David Gibby and Cody Standerfer (14.14) won Day 2. Bobby Garland Big Fish Award Day 1 winners were Weston Belcher and Brain Carter (2.63). David Gibby and Cody Standerfer (2.67) won Day 2.

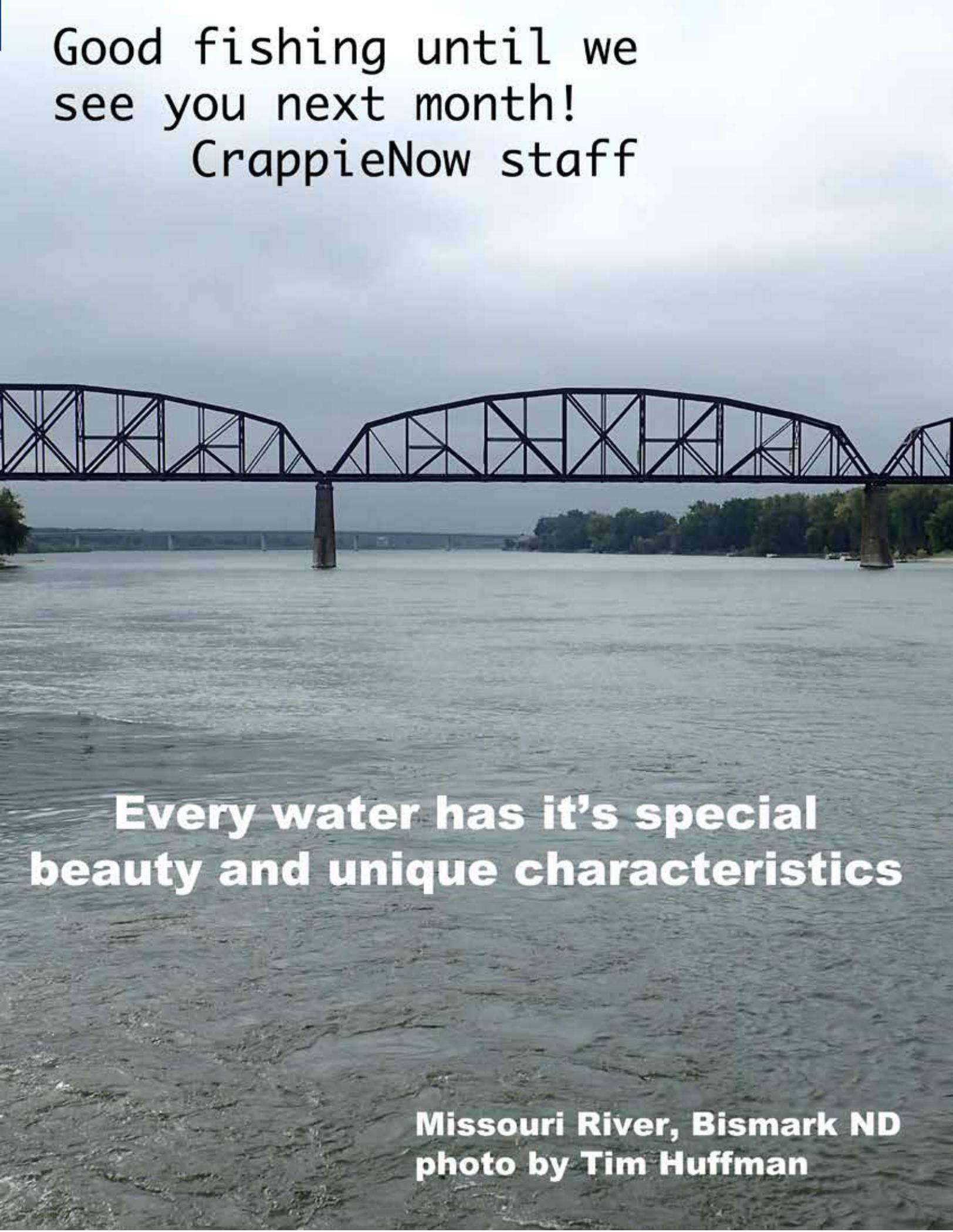
In Division 2, Brandon Miles (Bullard, TX) and Steve Goncalves (Midlothian, TX) won first place with a two-day total of 14 fish weighing 24.30 pounds. Miles and Goncalves capped off incredible season with a with a Championship win. Second place was won by Bob McAffrey (Killeen, TX) and Greg Young (Weatherford, TX) 13 fish weighing 24.02 pounds. Brent Bryson (Leonard, TX) and Mikie Bryson (Leonard, TX) took home 3rd place with 14 fish weighing 22.37 pounds. Other awards - Pro Angler Elite Rod Challenge Award winners for both days were Brandon Miles and Steve Goncalves (13.12 and 11.18). Bobby Garland Big Fish Award Day 1 winners were Brandon Miles and Steve Goncalves (2.29). Bob McAffrey and Greg Young (2.29) won Day 2.

The annual awards banquet was held at the Emory Civic Center October 12, 2018. The team of Clay Gann and Todd Froebe won the “Anglers of the Year” honor in Division 1, and the team of Brandon Miles and Steve Goncalves were named “Anglers of the Year” in Division 2. The prestigious 2018 Ron Conatser Sportsman of the Year award was presented to Robert Russell and the 2018 “Top CAT” Award was posthumously awarded to Matthew Carroll.

About CAT

Crappie Anglers of Texas is a non-profit organization dedicated to the sport of crappie fishing. With over 280 members nationwide, CAT has been instrumental in gaining national attention for crappie fishing in Texas and continues to develop its member’s knowledge of crappie fishing through educational meetings, seminars and fishing tournaments. All CAT tournaments pay back at least 100% of the anglers’ entry fees. For Information, go to the CAT website (www.crappieanglersoftexas.com) or contact: Pat Martin 214-729-0139 jpz.martin@verizon.net

Good fishing until we
see you next month!
CrappieNow staff



**Every water has it's special
beauty and unique characteristics**

**Missouri River, Bismark ND
photo by Tim Huffman**