

Pure Luck

It has been said that many great things happen over conversation. In most cases, this is referring to business meetings, dinners or parties. Studies do indeed show that human productivity is higher while participating in interaction with others. This of course includes vocalized conversation. However, I am unfamiliar with any studies showing a correlation between speaking and working a bait-caster in hopes to catch the fish of one's dreams.

On June 15th, (one day prior to my birthday) the best gift I received came a day early. I had awoken to a phone call at 5:00 AM from one of my best friends. Similar to me, he is an outdoor enthusiast that enjoys an occasional fishing trip. His father is the owner of a string of private fishing ponds located in northwest Louisiana, less than an hour from where I live in Shreveport. He called me to ask if I'd like to join him on a morning of fishing. As any angler who is passionate about the sport would do, I happily agreed to participate. Baits were in the water around 6:15, and it was quickly apparent that the bass were biting that day. Within an hour, my friend and I had caught and released what I remember as about 20 largemouth bass (Keep in mind that any fishing story can tend to recall a sometimes-more-than-slightly exaggerated number). My go-to lure in the summer was and still is a lipless crank bait with a shiny stomach and back. It was quite a weapon of choice for that morning and was working to perfection.

My friend and I each manned a bass boat by which we maneuvered through the open water using trolling motors. For one that doesn't know, a trolling motor is a foot-controlled device that uses a small rotating blade located at the front of the boat to steer and move at a generally low rate of speed. This allows for someone to fish and at the same time control the boat through areas that one wishes to go. I had noticed from across the pond that my friend had caught what seemed to be ten fish in ten casts. Without downplaying his skill as a fisherman, it is important understand that the most likely explanation behind his success was more so the location he was fishing than his ability with a rod and reel. I quickly darted to his side of the pond, taking note of the changing overcast of the clouds as I moved across the water.

It was a generally clear morning that day, so I was somewhat surprised to see the clouds appear out of nowhere and darken the scene. I learned through different experiences that bass can become more aggressive towards baits with brighter, flashier bodies when a dark cloud cover appears. I quickly tied on a white-bellied, shiny blue top water popper and tossed it along the bank. One can usually expect a strike within a second of the lure hitting the water, or

immediately following a series of jerk-pops performed in suggested intervals of 3 pops followed by a reel-in and then a re-cast. The “pop” being referred to is literally a jerking motion made by the fisherman, causing the tight line to pull the bait forward quickly but with low distance change. The curvature of the lip of the bait paired with that “popping” action creates a loud splash that mimics a wounded bait fish on the surface of the water. I proceeded to jerk the bait several times, left with no response by a bass. Instead, I was met with a conversation behind me from my friend, forcing me to turn around. A few moments into the conversation I heard a loud smash across the water behind me that most closely resembled a cannon fire. I quickly turned around to find that my lure was gone. I raised up my rod, understanding that I did not set the hook fast enough and the fish likely got away. Luckily for me, the fish had struck the bait so hard that it set the hook itself on its reproach down into the depths of the pond where it came from. After a long round of reeling the fish in, I could see the most goliath largemouth bass I had ever laid eyes on. Its open mouth easily matched the circumference of my face. I prayed that the line would not snap, and my prayers were answered. I netted the beast and brought it onto the boat. The heat of the day had caught on quite quickly, and the temperature was nearly 100 degrees. In fear that even a short venture out of the water in that climate could harm the fish, I halted my trophy-hunter mentality telling me to weigh the fish. Though I have no evidence of the bass’s actual weight, I do have a testament towards it. I have caught several fish weighing in at over 8 pounds, and this fish would *easily* surpass that mark.

That catch was truly one to remember. Every angler strives for a fish of that magnitude to grace their lines as they streak countless attempts across the water. I was truly at the right place at the right time. The perfect eclipse of the fish’s location, the brief cloud cover, and my choice of lure made for a perfect catch. Though I would love to advertise that the reason behind my successful conquest for a trophy bass was my skill as a fisherman, I simply cannot do such a disservice to the great community of anglers out there who know better than that. It was a great act of coincidence. It was *pure luck*.

Terry Pat Reynolds II

Shreveport, Louisiana