

Bass Fishing on Ultra Light Tackle

- Part One -

The advantages and disadvantages of fishing Light Tackle are numerous. All things considered though it is, in my biased opinion, the difference between Angling and Fishing. The rewards are great and though many might argue the added expense in the form of lost tackle, it is not as dramatic as one might think. For obvious reasons one has to choose one's fishing areas with care, while trees and sticks are a no-go area.

As one gains confidence in light line, weed banks will hold no fear - it becomes an art to know when to give and when to take with a fish that has run the gauntlet through weed. On the lighter weeds the thinner diameter of the line allows it to cut through anyway, while even in heavy weed one will be surprised at the strength of 2kg line. It all comes down to confidence in oneself, the tackle, the knots and knowing when to put pressure on the fish. Hopefully through the following tips learnt from many trials and errors, those of you willing to indulge yourself in Light Tackle Angling will experience many a thrill and joy of tight-light lines.

Knots, line and drag settings are a delicate balance of factors one needs to get right if any measure of success is to be enjoyed. Knots are probably the single most important aspect of fishing light. Many will have their own preferences with knots, however I have always used a short double leader by looping the line through itself seven to nine times and pulling the line (four ends) up tight using saliva for an even knot - a factor which is critical. Thereafter the knot is checked with a good tug - which tests and does not break - again a learned art.

Even if one has to re-tie several times it is worth the time and effort. The short section of double line (15 to 20cm) then gives extra strength when the fish entangles itself in weed or the line rubs through or over weeds and sticks.

It is not in the scope of this initial article to go into too much detail on knots, and this aspect will be covered in greater detail, along with rigging baits, in the next issue.

The Line and Drag Setting

With the choice of line for Light Tackle Bass Fishing one needs to have a good abrasive resistant line that is not too soft. MAXIMA LINE has always done the job perfectly for me and as a result my faith in Maxima lines is sound. One cannot put enough emphasis on the fact that one must have confidence in line and knot.

Softer lines tend to get dented or kinked with overwinds, general use and as a rule do not stand up to the test of the rigors of bass fishing. One needs to keep a constant check on



The author with a 10lb 6oz (4,72kg) bass taken on 4lb line. She was weighed and released.

any signs of abrasion on the line before setting off and even during fishing.

The setting of one's drag is again down to personal choice. The most effective and quick method I have found however, is to thread the line through the eyes, giving a couple of metres extra, then pull on the loose/exposed length of line at a point approximately three quarters of the way down the length of the rod, while holding the rod in the other hand. One obviously needs to be careful not to break the rod doing this incorrectly which can even be done with light line. The drag should release before the rod bends to excess or breaks, or before the line snaps.

Thereafter I will fine tune the drag up or down according to type of lure and conditions. In the most part I tend to work with a medium drag setting except when fishing soft baits when I will try and work pretty close to a maximum drag setting (due to the power needed to set the hook). With a medium setting one has the luxury of being able to give the fish line when necessary, while conversely, with practise one can learn to apply tension on the reel spool with thumb, in the case of a bait caster and finger with a spinning reel to turn or put additional pressure on a fish. This method is far easier done with a bait caster and while more difficult with a spinning reel, it becomes second nature with practise.

The Rod and Reel

I have found that as long as the rod is of good design, has a reasonably forgiving tip, with quality and correctly spaced eyes, one will be well set up. I cannot stress the fact enough, that on 2kg line one does not need long flexible trout type rods. Yes rods of medium length for flipping and surface fishing are suitable, while a light to medium action rod of 5'6" to 6' is more than sufficient for spinner baiting, crankbaits and soft baits. This applies when using a baitcaster, while when using a spinning reel one has to soften up on the rod a touch.

However, don't go too soft as one loses the ability to control a fish. Effectively it is all about a compromise between leverage and a forgiving tip. However, what is possibly more critical, is a reel with a quality drag. The use of a reel with an inconsistent drag will dampen one's enthusiasm to fish light. Without doubt due to the simple mechanics of the drag system the baitcaster/centre pin reel has a big advantage over a spinning reel in this regard.

Furthermore, the 90° angle of the line around the bail arm roller on a spinning reel is where one's ability to put direct pressure on a fish is reduced.

Having said all this does not mean that a spinning outfit does not have its place in fishing light for bass especially when fishing finesse rigs and lures. I believe should you concentrate on using a spinning reel, one needs to master the ability to back wind to give a fish line where required.

It has to be said in conclusion though, that if you want to put those "lunkers" in the boat, a centre pin reel with a quality drag and a rod with a bit of "beef" is the only way to go. It truly is worth the effort to master these reels when fishing light.

The Hooks

When fishing light it is essential to have sharp hooks and choose lighter/finer gauge wire hooks which offer less resistance when penetrating. In regard to the size of hook, sure, downsize a bit, but one does not have to go extra small. For the most part 2/0 and 3/0 worm hooks are perfect moving down to 1/0 when fishing finesse.

Balance of Rod, Reel, Line, Lure / Bait and Hook Size

In summary one needs to try and reach a happy medium with the balance of your rod, reel, line, lure and hook size. As one increases one's arsenal of tackle and experience, one will soon find the set-ups that are personally best suited for oneself, for spinnerbaiting, surface fishing, softbaits and so on.



It is a matter of what one finds works best for oneself and having confidence (That buzzword again!) in ones set-up. For example, I had a number of breakups on a certain rod of mine when crankbaiting and I began to believe it was too stiff for 2kg line. I changed reels and tried it out for soft baits and have since discovered it was perfect for this application. Conversely I have found the odd rod too soft and sure, some of these have been put on the shelf, but some are used when fishing thickish cover. It is all down to personal preference and what one adapts to and becomes comfortable with. Experience and confidence will gradually allow one to work towards erring on the stiffer side rather than the softer set-ups.

Conclusion:

When one analyses a poor or unsuccessful outing, eight times out of ten, it had nothing to do with the weather, moon phase or conditions, but rather the fact that one lost sight of the basics.

Footnote Regarding the Ethics of Light Tackle Fishing

Some may consider light tackle fishing unethical, assuming over-played and stressed fish, along with fish that break-off, die.

I assure you that in my opinion it is unfounded. In all my days of Light Tackle Fishing, 90% of which have been catch and release, I have yet to find a dead or dying fish after several days of continuous angling on the same waters. Furthermore, on a number of occasions where fish have broken off, we have actually recovered our floating lures, in some cases a week or two later. One can argue too that fish wrapped around sticks on heavy line sometimes die and I have yet to recover a lure from a fish, lost in this fashion. Fish caught on light tackle, that were then translocated appear to have always survived.

As promised, in the next issue we will discuss the importance of casting, offer some basic discussion on playing the fish once hooked, and look in greater depth at the types of knots used, the different lures used and their rigging, and some of those often overlooked intangibles... like confidence and the need for correct preparation.



ALUMINIUM WELDING

1/4P

F/C

REPEAT 13 - 1

TRUMACH MARINE (RAYTHEON)

1/2 P

F/C

REPEAT 13 - 1

