

**SCORE WITH SPRING STRIPERS**

**THE**  
**W** **fisherman**



**SUPPORT  
OUR  
TROOPS**

April 24, 2003 • No. 17  
New Jersey,  
Delaware Bay Edition

**\$1.75**

**BASS  
TACTICS**

- Wormin'
- Live Bunker
- Rigged Eels
- Surf Study

**Delaware  
Shad**

**DREAM  
BOAT  
CONTEST**

**WIN A TRITON 2200 WA**  
See Inside For Details



0



74470-65936

17



# BIG BATS FOR BIGGER BASS

## liveling trophy stripers

by Freddie Gamboa

It's a beautiful spring morning, and you're navigating your way back behind the inlet when you notice some surface activity and cruise on over to investigate. You notice it's a school of bunker and snag one, now liveling him into the feeding frenzy. Suddenly, there is a huge splash and you see the tail of a striper as wide as a broom smack your bunker into midair. Now if that doesn't make your heart skip a beat, you may need to take up another sport.

This is the type of action you can expect each April and May as the bunker schools arrive in large numbers. The ticket to scoring those big bass that are gorging on bunker, is to locate the bait, rig 'em live, and present that swimming bunker down deep where the stripers lurk.

### LOCATING AND SNAGGING BUNKER

My first place to look for bunker is at creek mouths and along the beaches. What you look for is the tell-tale "finning" of the bunkers on the surface. On windy days, this can be difficult to observe, so what I do is look for dark blotches among the ripples. I then circle the area and monitor my fish finder. If I then see schools of bait, I'll begin my attempts at snagging bunker.

This technique is fairly easy to master. Using a weighted treble hook, cast into the school, and sweep the rod in long deliberate strokes. Another technique that's a bit more difficult to master, yet much quicker and more efficient for catching large amounts of bait is with a cast net. You will need a net that sinks quickly and has a wide radius. I presently throw a net that weighs 30 pounds and has a radius of 12 feet.

If locating bunker becomes difficult, the last resort is to look for the bunker boats. They are unmistakable in appearance and usually travel in pairs. Once you

### THE SPAWN

It's important to remember that many of the bigger bass you'll hook up with this spring while liveling, particularly along the Delaware and up into the Raritan, are spawning females. A big roe-filled cow of 30 pounds or more can be carrying thousands of future lineiders, so a quick release is a good idea.



Liveling by hand and underneath schools of bunker this spring will generally result in much bigger bass.



Since bass eat their prey headfirst, tail-rigging bunker makes sense. It also allows you to guide the swimming bait to where you want it to be by applying light pressure on the line.



# 2003 MAKO MANIA MAKO SHARKS

Entry Fee \$325.00

## \$50,000 In Prizes!

### 18th Annual Mako Mania Tournament

Cosponsored By Anheuser Busch-Crown Beer Distributors Of Wall, NJ

**TOURNAMENT DATES...SAT/SUN, JUNE 14 & 15**

**CAPTAIN'S MEETING.....FRI, JUNE 13 - 6:30 PM.**

FISH EITHER OR BOTH DAYS - TO FISH TWO DAYS, YOU MUST ENTER TWICE

**HOSTED BY: CLARK'S LANDING MARINA**

Including Captain's Meeting & Weigh-ins. Refreshments & Door Prizes At Captain's Meeting.

Departure 6:00 a.m., Manasquan Inlet • For Info. Call 732-892-3666

**Presented By The Pt. Pleasant Charter Boat Association**

*A Percentage Of Proceeds Will Be Donated To Fisheries Conservation.  
Please Help Us Conserve Our Resource!*

see the boats working the school, pick a spot a safe distance away from them to begin snagging your own bunker.

#### TACKLE AND RIGGING

When livelining stripers, I use a 6-foot Shakespeare Ugly Stik rated for 15 to 25 pounds, which is sturdy enough to cast bunkers and to set the hook on a trophy bass. I use a Calcutta 400 spooled with 14-pound G-Power from Gamakatsu, preferring that reel for its smooth drag, the line because it's a co-polymer monofilament with little stretch and a small diameter, which provides excellent casting qualities.

At the business end, I use 1/0 4X treble hook from Gamakatsu. It's an extremely sharp hook with substantial holding power. In rigging the bunker, I like to hook them in the tail, for two reasons. First, bass usually eat their prey head first, and 95 percent of the bass I land are either hooked in the roof of their mouth or in the lips. The second reason for tail rigging bunker is that by applying light pressure on the line, I can guide my bait where I want it to go, towards a bait school, bridge support, or rock pile.

#### FISHING BUNKER DEEP

Obviously the first place to fish is where there are large schools of bunker present. I can't tell you how many times I've seen anglers snag bunker only to leave the school without fishing it. If you don't see the school being harassed near the surface, it doesn't mean that game fish aren't down deep feeding from below. That's where you want to put your bait.

If you don't have a downrigger on your boat, there's a homemade downrigger system I've used in the past that works well. Count off 40 feet from your hook, and place a dropper loop in your main line. Then, cut a 12-inch piece of 50-pound test, tying a 50-pound snap swivel on one end, and a dropper loop with a 10-ounce weight at the other. Once you've located a good pod of bait, rig your bunker and let him swim away until the dropper loop clears your rod tip. Then, snap your 12-inch segment in the dropper loop on your main line and free spool the weight until it hits bottom. Figuring out where the deepest line of the bait school is located, suspend your bait underneath by reeling up the appropriate amount of line.

For example, if you're working a bait school on the edge of a channel, and it's 30 feet on the ledge while you're marking bass 20 feet down, try free spooling the

*Bigger Bass continued on page 35A*

## NEW JERSEY'S RICHEST SHARK FISHING EVENT

THE  
SUPER BOWL OF SHARK  
FISHING  
23RD ANNUAL  
SOUTH JERSEY  
SHARK  
TOURNAMENT

JUNE 12-15  
2003

**EARLY BIRD ENTRY!**

ENTER BEFORE JUNE 1ST AND BE ELIGIBLE FOR OUR  
"FREE ENTRY DRAWING"

**SUPER CALCUTTAS!**

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY COULD TOP A RECORD \$200,000

PLUS THE

**\$50,000 MONSTER SHARK BONUS**

ALL OF THIS PLUS NIGHTLY DOCKSIDE DINING, ENTERTAINMENT  
AND THE BEST SHARK FISHING IN NEW JERSEY!

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS TODAY

**(609) 884-2400**

ENTER AND/OR PURCHASE T-SHIRTS ONLINE • SJMARINA.COM



2002 TOTAL PRIZE MONEY

**\$188,900**



### Old Eels *continued from page 15*

E. Add a few turns of string or yarn to build up the area around the stainless wire.

F. Apply a generous coating of two-ton epoxy to the shank all around the wire, so that when it dries it will lock the wire in place. If you have a drying motor, you can turn the hook so that the epoxy will dry evenly. Otherwise simply wait until the epoxy starts to set, and quickly apply it then. (You are not looking for anything pretty; this is purely about function.)

G. Let the hooks dry overnight. By the next day, the stainless barb or "spike" should be held firmly on the shank. You should not be able to turn the barb with your finger.

### RIG A FEW

Wipe the dead eel clean of any excess slime with a dry paper towel.

Bend the eel firmly in your hand at the tail (both directions) to break the spine (photo 3).

Using dacron, tie a palomar knot to the eye of the rear hook, leaving at least twelve inches of dacron on either side. Thread the ends of the dacron through the eye of the rigging needle.

Run the rigging needle through the anal vent, then out through the mouth, pulling both ends of the dacron with it.

Work the eye of the rear hook into the anal vent, and then move the hook up until you come to the bend of the rear hook.

Hold the rear hook at the bend and pull the dacron tight through the mouth to remove any slack (photo 4).

Insert the front hook. Run the point through the area just below the gills (photo 5).

Run the dacron of the rear hook through the eye of the front hook, making half hitches on either side. Then make a series of half hitches on the shank behind the eye to lock the connection in place (photo 6).

Trim the ends and apply some super glue or "Hard as Nails" to keep the half hitches from coming loose (photo 7).

Press the head of the eel to make sure the stainless "spike" is in place (photo 8).

Make a loop in a spare piece of dacron (or a smaller diameter braid-type material). Apply half hitches (or a butcher's knot) just in front of the "spike" to lock the eel to the shank of the hook (photo 9). This will keep the eel from sliding down the shank, or from sliding side to side. Trim the ends of your braid, and apply glue to this knot. (The glue you've applied to these knots will be dry by the time you finish the eel.)

Run your finger along the belly of the eel to find the eye of the rear siwash hook. Insert the tip of a knife through the skin at the belly and through the eye, making a small opening for

insertion of the drywall anchor (photo 10).

Trim the tip of the drywall anchor so that when inserted, it will go about three-quarters of the way through the body of the eel.

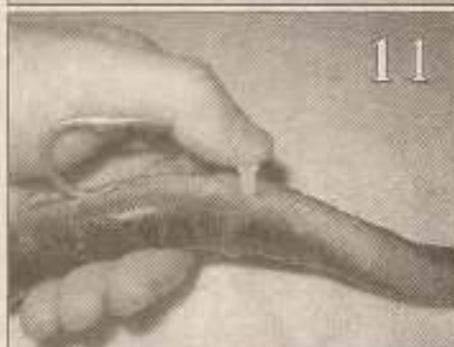
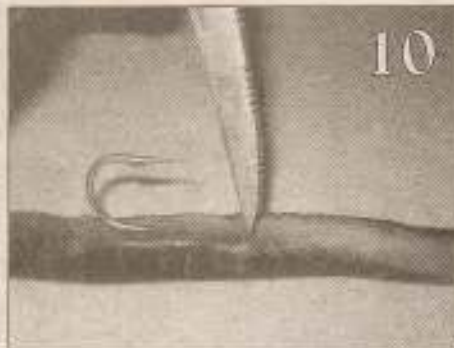
You will note that when the tip of the anchor is removed, you will be able to spread the anchor with your fingers. Spread the tip of the drywall anchor open (slightly) and line it up so that when you insert the anchor, the tip will spread open on the spine of the eel.

Insert the drywall anchor through the eye of the rear hook and push it as far as you can into the eel. This step might be a little awkward at first, but with a little practice, you will quickly learn to feel the anchor settling into place (photo 11).

Insert a small screw into the drywall anchor, and apply pressure while turning the screw until snug. You should feel the anchor open until it locks into the eye of the siwash hook (photo 12).

Immediately place the finished eel in ice water, or prepare for freezing. The skin can quickly dry and then crack if left in the open air.

In next week's issue, we'll finish up with storing, hook sense and how to fish them!



### Bigger Bass *continued from page 8*

weight to the bottom, then reeling up 10 feet, beginning a slow troll around the outer edges of the mass of bait. Once hooked up, fight the fish until you see the dropper loop with the 12-inch segment, unsnap it, and continue on fighting the fish. This is where it helps, of course, to fish with a buddy or two, especially when it comes to netting that big ol' bass.

Last year was a phenomenal year for catching trophy stripers. In reviewing my log I realized that from early April to mid-May, I caught well over a hundred stripers from 15 to 30 pounds, never seeing one under 32 inches the whole time!

Hopefully, your boat's ready and gear assembled, because the menhaden are on the move, and there are big bass on their tail.

### CAST NETTING FOR LIVE BAIT

One of the most efficient tools for catching live bait is the cast net, yet choosing the right net and learning to master the technique has kept many fishermen from attempting this method of catching bait. In Captain Al Lorenzetti's video, *Cast Netting For Live Bait*, the "art" of throwing a cast net is revealed through the use of slow motion and detailed video footage. Captain Al also discusses the various configurations to help viewers select a cast net that meets their needs. *Cast Netting For Live Bait* is available through The Fisherman Library for just \$24.95. For information, call 732.295.8600.