

## in this issue...

SwimmerZ Jacks!

Mornington Island

Bassin' the Weed

Bream Tournaments

Jurassic Creek

Baffle to the  
Broadwater

Urban  
Bassin'

Big  
Reefies!



Angler: Jason Preece

Fish: Snapper

Lure: ZMan 8" StreakZ XL in Electric Chicken

Jighead: TT Lures Revhead 1oz 6/0H



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Howdy Folks,

Welcome to lucky number 13 of the free Tackle Tactics Fishing E-Mag. As 2012 comes to a close we hope that it has left you with plenty of good memories of adventures to magic locations and big fish hooked and landed. If not, then don't worry it's time to welcome in 2013, pick a new species or location to target, and circle a few spots on the calendar to plan a trip away fishing.

2012 was a big year for Tackle Tactics with plenty of new products released, including the AFTA Award Winning - 'Best Terminal Tackle' - HeadlockZ HD jigheads. It was a great AFTA Trade Show for the team and we also managed to take out 'Best Medium Stand' at the show.

The year also saw the release of the ChinlockZ jighead, which is ideal for fishing the surface, as well as new sizes in the TT Lures Snake Head and Depth Charge Jigheads.

New colours were also added to the ZMan range, with Black, Copper Penny, Bubble Gum, Neon Pink and Bloodworm added to the 2.5" GrubZ, Gold Rush and Bad Shad added to the 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ and 3" MinnowZ, with the 3" MinnowZ also adding Pearl Blue Glimmer. The 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ had the extremely popular Opening Night and Bloodworm added and Mud Minnow, Redbone Glow and Watermelon Chartreuse were also added to the FrogZ!

Keep an eye out on FB and [www.tackletactics.com.au](http://www.tackletactics.com.au) for more new releases in the new year.

We hope you have a fantastic Christmas and New Year, catch a cracker and stay safe on the water.

Cheers, Team Tackle Tactics



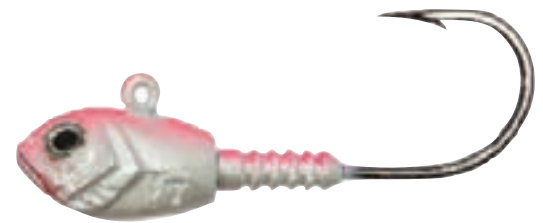
**HEADLOCKZ HD**



**CHINLOCKZ HD**



**SNAKE HEAD**



**DEPTH CHARGE**



Copper Penny



Bubble Gum



Bloodworm



**Jacks**

*By Michael Horn*

**& the Year of the SwimmerZ**

As the title states this has been exactly what it's been for me. The ZMan 4" SwimmerZ has elevated itself to number one status, when it comes to confidence lures this year and has recorded some ridiculous numbers and also some epic captures throughout the year for me.

Over the many years of targeting mangrove jack I've caught them using so many methods, from surface, to extra deep diving lures and I'm always refining my approach and looking for an advantage to outsmart the fish. This year I put all my captures down to these ridiculously life-like lures and a technique I stumbled across while trying different things during those tougher bites on the water. It's turned bad days into epic ones.

When you hear the words 'reaction bait', you normally refer to hard body lures, with sound and a big action, that call fish from afar. You never really think of soft plastic lures in this sense, but when you add weight and speed, it turns these things into just that. Adding these two factors doesn't give the fish a lot of time to consider the presentation, so the bite is usually vicious. When a lure swims and acts like a fleeing bait fish, a predator like a jack wants to do nothing more than kill it and this retrieve achieves just that. Burning and swimming the lure close to cover, or having it falling quickly to escape, seems to turn on that predatory nature of these fish. The trigger goes off and either your drag is peeling or you're standing there with no leader, left wondering what went on... and that's just as exciting!



## The Jighead

Throughout my experience and successes with this technique I have used TT Lures Head Hunter Extreme range of jigheads in the 3/0XH size and mainly in the 1/2oz weight. This weight suits this reaction technique on the structure I mainly fish, that includes pontoons, bridges, walls and oyster leases. Not only does the weight aid in casting and accuracy, it also aids in varying the depth and speeds to cover a lot of water quickly. The other reason I like the Head Hunter Extreme range is that it has a brutally strong hook that has a shorter shank with a wider gape, placing the hook closer to the head of the SwimmerZ. I find most jacks will hit the head first so this jighead is perfectly suited for this.

## The 4" Inch SwimmerZ

This lure has elevated itself to be my number one confidence bait when it comes to rigging my rods before a session on the water targeting mangrove jack. It is must have in your jack arsenal. The ElaZtech material is super-soft and this makes the lure so lifelike in the water, whilst also folding away easily for great hook penetration when the jacks crunch them. When it comes to colour choice I have three main confidence colours, but they are just the lures I throw a lot of the time, hence the captures. All the colours work and everyone's preference is the one they catch fish on, but as a general rule of thumb, most lure colour choices relate to suiting the water colour and water clarity, as well as the bait patterns in the water. As I fish a lot of cleaner water, I prefer the Black Back Shad, Pearl and green colours, like the Golden Shiner. I then vary them throughout the system. Like when using any soft plastic, take that little bit extra time to rig and the lure will swim true and look more lifelike for a big red dog to crunch and get the adrenalin pumping!



## The Arsenal

The tackle I recommend for this technique is more on the heavier scale and preferably baitcast tackle, with 20 to 30lb main line and 20 to 40lb leader. The reason I use baitcast gear is for the shorter, punchier rod, especially when casting around structure, whilst also maintaining power. The low profile baitcast reel allows for better drag and also for thumbing of the reel when you are required to stop and turn the fish. My main outfit consists of a Doby's 664 Savy Series rod and a Daiwa Lexus 300 reel, loaded with 30lb Sunline Castaway and 30lb Sunline FC Rock leader.

## The Technique

The technique I stumbled across one afternoon of a really slow bite, where things weren't going well. It was windy and cold, raining and I'd actually switched off a few times with crappy casting and if it hadn't been for one of these casts I wouldn't have got the bite that I was waiting for all day. I put a few casts in a row on top of a long pontoon and by the third bad cast I lost it and burned the lure back in disgust. I got drilled but pulled the hooks! I quickly fired a cast back down the pontoon, burned it back and hooked a cracker! I landed it and turned the day around... the turning point was this technique and a year of ridiculous numbers followed. Although I've refined it and I alter the speeds and depths, it's been the reaction retrieve with the SwimmerZ that definitely has the results to prove its worth.



The 5" Grass KickerZ, with the nose snipped off, has also produced a few, but it's the 4" SwimmerZ that is Mick's go-to plastic.



## **The Structure**

Where I live here on the Gold Coast is a massive body of water filled with canal systems and a few main rivers where there is an abundance of manmade structure. So a lot of my fishing and this technique has been used on these types of structure and I've also been experimenting on some natural structure in the upper reaches with good results. As with any form of structure, being manmade or natural, the biggest thing to look for and target are pressure points or eddies, where the jacks can sit freely and come out and destroy your SwimmerZ. Pepper these areas with multiple casts and vary your speed and depths to annoy one of these angry fish into striking.

I usually swim the lure with the current, as if gives you more solid contact with your lure and the fish doesn't have advantage of current to blow you away. As stated you need to have constant pressure between you and the fish, with no slack line, as you want every millisecond on your side with these fish. They are really quick to turn straight back to cover, so you need to strike and stun, or turn the fish straight away!

My first preference is to cast to where the water flow meets the structure, in search of those active fish. I then spray casts in all other likely looking zones deep around the structure, in an effort to turn on those not so active fish. Be prepared to apply pressure at the first turn on these fish as they have the advantage of being deep in the cover.

Of the fish I've landed this year, 90 percent of them have been landed using this technique... so get down to your local, buy yourself some 4" SwimmerZ in a range of colours to suit the water clarity where you fish, some TT jigheads to suit and experience the thrill and excitement of these awesome fish!







# Mad Times on Mornington Island

## Story & Photos Liam Fitzpatrick

*Recently I had the opportunity to spend some time fishing Mornington Island and the surrounding islands of the Wellesley group in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Whilst there I utilised the tough and durable, yet supple ZMan soft plastics coupled with TT Lures jigheads and also put the new HeadlockZ HD jigheads through their paces with awesome results.*

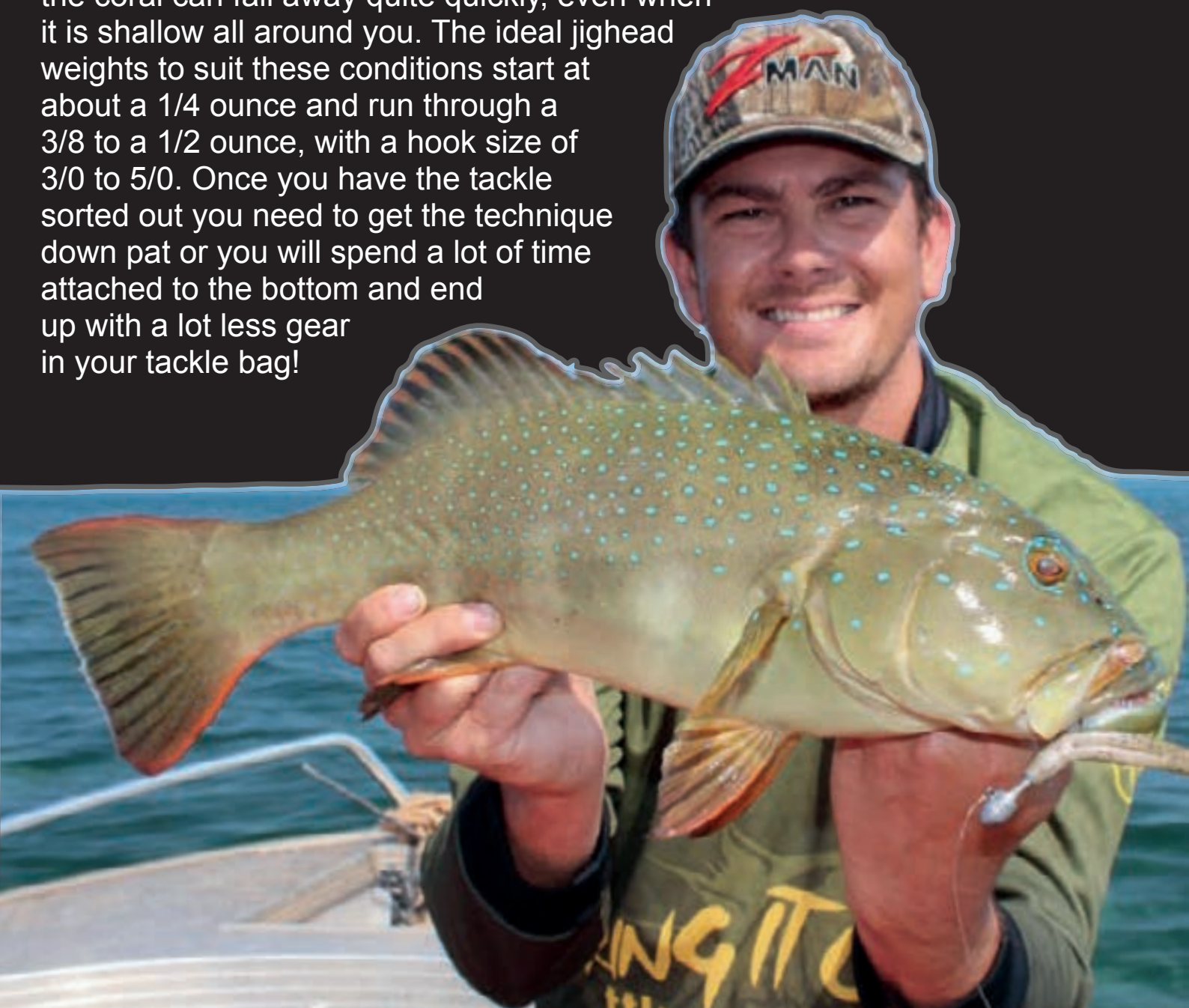
In life it's all about whom you know and knowing people in remote places has its benefits when it comes to fishing pristine fish rich waters. The bloke I know that made all this possible is a mild mannered teacher during school hours, turned rad private operator for Watto's Walkabout Charters as soon as the bell rings and the school holidays kick off. A mate and I flew in with the gentle breezes as the September holidays got into full swing to spend a couple of weeks fishing with Walkabout Watto. Now, with limited space it would be near impossible to fit all the fish by fish details in to this article, so I have whittled it down to some key techniques and tactics to tap into a variety of species in a few different environments in and around these gulf waters.

## **Shallow Water Reef & Bommies**

Finding fish around shallow reefs and bommies is not all that hard but keeping reef dwellers away from this jagged structure is a whole other ball game. My weapon of choice is a 20lb spin stick matched to a quality reel with a smooth and powerful drag, like that on my trusty Shimano Stella 5000SW. This is a must for keeping fish like coral trout and golden snapper away from their line shredding hiding holes.

Quality leader is also a crucial part of the system and the hard outer of a good fluorocarbon can withstand a bit of contact with the reef, although it's best to avoid contact altogether. Leaders ranging from 30-40lb work best in the clear shallow water and allow you to get the most feel and movement out of your soft plastic. The most productive plastics I used over the shallows were without a doubt the ZMan 5 inch Scented Jerk ShadZ and the newer 5 inch GrubZ.

Most shallow water ranges from 1m to about 4m, as the drop offs and holes in the coral can fall away quite quickly, even when it is shallow all around you. The ideal jighead weights to suit these conditions start at about a 1/4 ounce and run through a 3/8 to a 1/2 ounce, with a hook size of 3/0 to 5/0. Once you have the tackle sorted out you need to get the technique down pat or you will spend a lot of time attached to the bottom and end up with a lot less gear in your tackle bag!



Start off by getting an idea of the sink rate of your soft plastic this can be done by dropping over the side and counting it down to a metre or two. Use this as a guide when making your casts. Long casts are ideal in shallow conditions, to minimise spooking the fish with boat noise or even shadows cast from the boat and anglers.



Once the lure is sinking, a good habit to get into is shaking out a little bit of line then closing the bail arm, as more often than not fish will rise up off their bommie to intercept a falling lure. Always be prepared as these fish tend to hit with their head turned already heading for home. Once you're confident you're in the zone, usually this is a metre or so off the bottom you can start one of a few really effective retrieves.



The first one consists of a slow constant retrieve with tiny hops to keep the plastic hovering just over the top of the rock and reef. This works well when fish may not be too keen to travel far to take a plastic.



Second retrieve is the stock standard hop, hop, hop and wind up some of the slack, before letting it sink back down into the zone. This retrieve works well when conditions allow you to stay in contact with the plastic while it sinks and any bump or twitch in the line indicates a take and the hook can be set.



Thirdly is a retrieve that works really well when tides and water movement are in full swing. It consists of high lifts of the rod tip to take the plastic well out of the zone but allowing the water to take it back down to an area well away from where it last was. The retrieve presents the plastic to fish that may not have seen it or back to fish that may not have been convinced the first time, either way a new offering drifting down into the zone has every chance of getting smashed.



## **Rad Wreck Fishing**

Wrecks all over the place hold a myriad of baitfish and predatory species alike and when you drop big plastics down on fish holding structure such as a sunken trawler, like the one we fished, you can guarantee something is going to take a liking to it.

Thanks to a VMR search pattern a few months earlier Watto had acquired the coordinates for this wreck and as land slipped out of sight we eagerly anticipated what lay ahead. Typically when I fish a wreck I opt for a medium to heavy spin stick, something I class as my 50lb outfit. It consists of a Smith GTK 74PG with a Catalina 4500H, spooled with 50lb braid and 50lb fluorocarbon leader.

Now an outfit like this can put some serious pressure on a fish, but with this much pressure terminal failure can occur and this has been a problem in the past. Thankfully I had been given a handful of the new TT Lures HeadlockZ HD to try in 1/2, 3/4 and 1 ounce and with a heavy duty Mustad hook, that looked like it could tow a boat, my confidence levels were well and truly up.



The new HeadlockZ have been designed to suit the ZMan range of soft plastics, although they still suit any style of existing soft plastics on the market. My go-to ZMan StreakZ is the 8 inch StreakZ XL in Bubble Gum colour and it was the first bait I rigged on the 1 ounce HeadlockZ jighead for the initial drop. The wreck soon appeared in 20m of water and quickly blacked out the sounder with fish stacked top to bottom. The first fish hooked was a small trevally and as it neared the boat a large shadow loomed behind it that appeared to be a big cobia. This was soon dismissed by the boys and put down to my bad eyesight. None the less, Vic's plastic was swallowed on the drop and took off leaving his 30lb stick screaming as it conceded line at a rapid rate. We managed another trevally or two before we needed to chase the fish and it wasn't long until calls of shark were thrown around the boat.

Long story short, fifty minutes or so into what was turning into an epic battle, of Hemingway proportions, the fish showed itself and was indeed a large cobia that effortlessly took line again once it saw the boat and ten minutes later we had a gaff shot, although it never looked like happening. For the next half an hour the fish circled the boat, always out of range but constantly moving water over its gills. Meanwhile Vic had been slowly easing the drag pressure throughout the fight to reduce wear on the 40lb leader, so at this stage it was a stand still battle.



After an hour and a half the estimated 60lb cobia received a gaff shot under its chin and dove, nearly pulling the gaff out of Watto's hands. He hung on and went to lift the beast in the boat as it twisted and rolled, wrapping the line around the gaff. It broke the line, disappearing into a sea of foaming white water...

As we drove the 2km's back to the wreck I prepared myself to stick it to a big cobia and not give it an inch. We pulled up and I spotted a big cobia cruising off the bow. A quick cast in front of it and I watched it turn and follow the plastic down and a few seconds later the line picked up speed coming off the spool. I closed the bail and came up tight on a solid chunk of cobia. My intention was to put the HeadlockZ to the test and either straighten one out, pop the leader or use every pound of both of them combined to wear this fish out and get it boat side as quickly as possible. After ten minutes of white knuckled abuse on the gear and my body I managed to bring a tired cobia to the gaff for another nice shot under the chin, only this time the fish came over the side with little resistance.

This proved to be the most effective technique to entice a bite from the big cobia that always appeared in the top third of the water column, just mooching around. Once sighted you put a cast out in front of them to get their attention and allow the plastic to sink. As the plastic descended towards the sanctuary of the wreck, the cobia would chase off after it, aware that if it gets too close to the wreck, this easy meal will be gone. These fish seem to respond better to this technique, rather than bouncing the plastic in front of them or around their level. On the sink they have a decision to make, chase and eat the offering or let it go. Their instinct seems to get the better of them all the time and they chase this bait that is swimming away from them unaware of what is in hot pursuit... or I figure that's how they see it.



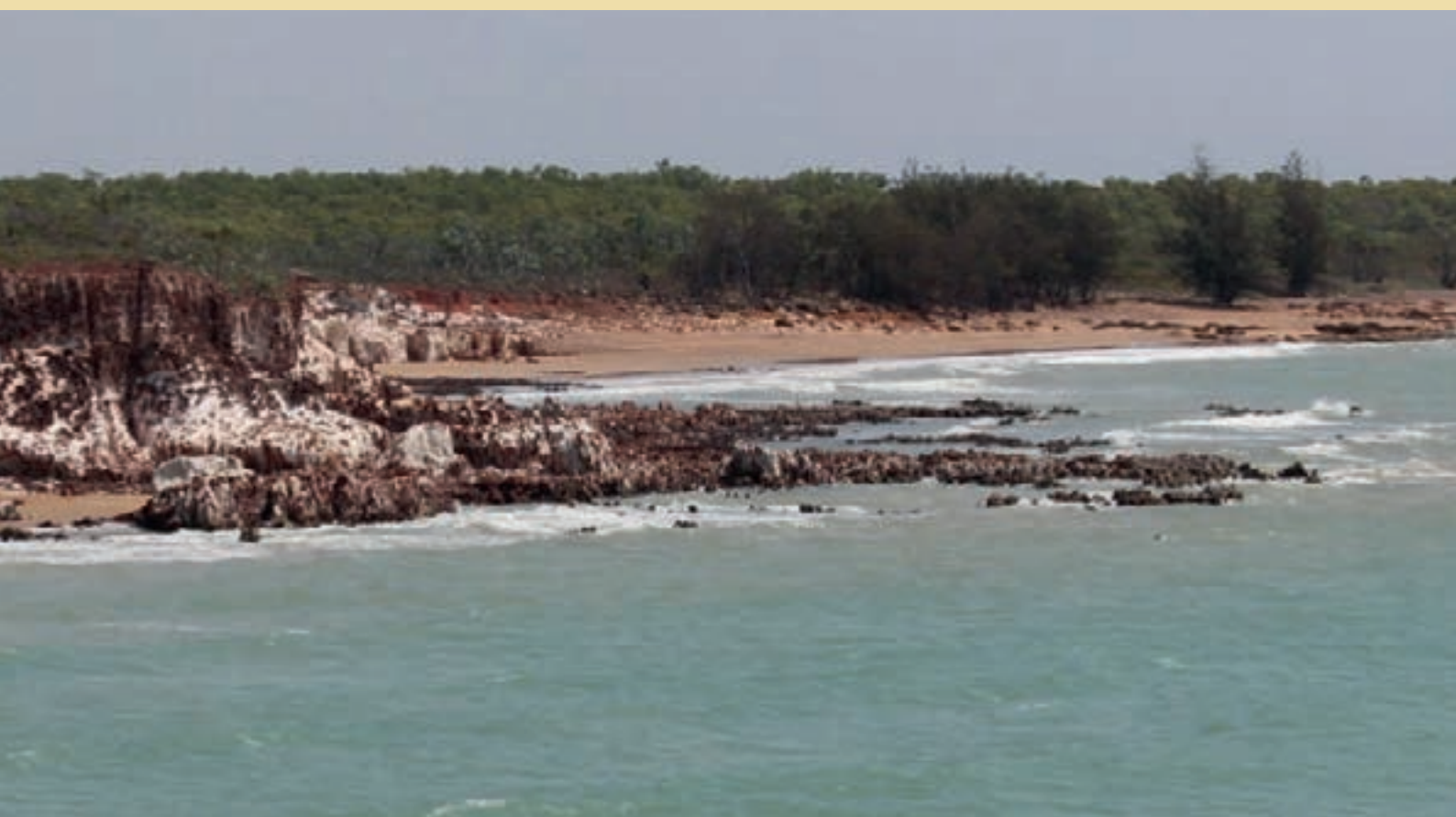
# **Barra Madness**

We were lucky enough to find ourselves thrown into one of the maddest barra sessions anyone could ever wish for, on one of our final days on Mornington Is. The tide was high and just starting its twelve hour journey out when we found the barra headland from hell. There were scattered bommies everywhere, covered with oysters and mullet schooling all over the place. I was already throwing a plastic when we stumbled onto the fish and with the first take and a solid run, followed by an aerobic jump and a bust off, we knew we had found a patch of barra.

I re-rigged this time with a heavier leader of 50lb and connected it via a Varivas knot to some 30lb braid. My plastic of choice for this session was the ZMan 6 inch SwimmerZ in various colours and while the tide was still high I rigged them on a 1/2 ounce TT War Head jighead. We had a strong northerly blowing and the tactic we employed, to fish this 100m patch of rock, was to use the reef pick to anchor up two cast lengths away from the area we wanted to target. After the leading edge had been thoroughly worked over we simply let out some more rope to open up the edge close to the shoreline.

This allowed us to work the lures more effectively through the obvious corridors and ambush points as the tide fell and they became more visible. Once these isolated bommies and edges were located and a fish movement pattern was established we used three basic barra soft plastic retrieves to tempt bites.

Firstly I would let the plastic sink slightly and just slow roll the lure over or along the bombies, just to target fish that may be moving through the water column, such as those coming up on a passing school of mullet or actively searching out food.





The second is a fairly common whipping retrieve that consists of sinking the plastic into the zone and aggressively whipping the rod tip once, twice, three times and then allowing the plastic to sink again. Repeat this all the way back to the boat.


The third is a mixture of the two, with some added slow lifts just to get a subtle action out of the bait after a similar sink back into the zone. The only other modification was downsizing the weights as the tide fell out, going from the 1/2 to 3/8 to 1/4 ounce as the water went from 2.5m down to 1m over the length of the session. This session saw 16 barra come on board ranging from 60cm to 85cm, with fish caught on soft and hard baits and we lost heaps more to jump offs, pulled hooks, chaffed and shredded leaders and typical powerful runs back to the nasty stuff.

The time spent in this part of the country proved the need for durable soft baits that can withstand the onslaught of fish after fish and still go back in the water to do it time and time again. The ZMan range of soft plastics proved invaluable in this remote area as baits fished longer and harder than others. To back them up, the various styles of TT jigheads stuck it to fish and never let go. If you're ever heading to remote places like Mornington Island, don't forget to grab some ZMan plastics and TT Lures jigheads.



# Flathead on Softies

By Matt Reeves



**Matt with a flathead on a ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Motor Oil**

Fishing for flathead on soft plastics is by far the easiest style or lure fishing around. These fish will smack anything that goes past their nose and what's even better is that they can grow in excess of one metre in length!

A few years ago I decided to switch my technique from bait fishing to fishing with soft plastics and what better fish to start targeting then flathead. My local estuary 'Narrabeen Lake' is stocked full of small flathead and is a great place to start with plastics. My first few flathead were on non ZMan shrimp style plastics, but I found it quite a hassle to have to change the plastic every time I caught a fish, especially when wading. After researching a few things on soft plastics and asking around, I found the best option was to go to the tackle store and ask what they reckoned. The first few things they recommended to me included the 3" ZMan MinnowZ and a few other paddle tail style plastics.

After giving a few things a go for flathead, I was finding that the paddle tails were producing a lot more fish so I stuck with them with great success. One thing that I remember being very impressed about was the strength and 'stretchiness' of the ZMan plastics, a plastic that I had heard nothing about back then. These plastics were racking up the flathead in the lake and have been in my box ever since.

Fishing for flathead was becoming a daily thing and I was starting to get serious about it. I decided to do some research on the internet, to see if there were any competitions, just to see how I would rank up against other anglers. While researching I came across a tournament series known as the 'ABT' and there I saw a flathead section. What a coincidence, the upcoming weekend was a comp to be held at my local the Hawkesbury River. I couldn't miss out on the chance to fish this and little did I know this was the last chance to fish this style of flathead comp before the ABT cancelled the flathead series.

The comp was set in the middle of winter, when the flathead tend to shut down a lot more, so we knew it'd be tough. Waking up on the competition day it was a big let down to know that we were to be fishing in freezing, 30 knot plus winds and thunder storming conditions. That didn't stop us from fishing through to the very end of the day though and within the last few casts of the day I hooked and landed a flathead that went just under 70cm. This flatty managed to take out the big flathead section of the comp and I was hooked from then.



**Matt with a couple of solid flathead from St Georges Basin.**



## Big Flathead



Targeting flathead can lead to some quality by-catch including big bream and jewfish.



After learning a lot more about fishing for flathead I decided to stick with a few brands and work from there. These brands included TT Lures jigheads, ZMan soft plastics and a couple of others. By doing this I saved a lot of money by sticking with these and not going out and buying everything under the sun, like I did when I started fishing lures. I focused on shad / paddle tail style plastics, along with a few other 'grub' or 'curly tail' style plastics.

Flathead fishing has taken me to a lot of places up and down the east coast, right up to the Gold Coast in Queensland and right down to Batemans Bay on the south coast of NSW. The south coast of NSW is known for its trophy flathead and there are a lot of fish producing estuaries. This was a must visit location for my dad and I, and for you if you love your flathead fishing. We knew people that lived there and they confirmed that there were some monster flathead living in this estuary by showing us some very convincing photos. On day three of the seven day trip we were on here, I managed to land my PB flathead of 101cm while fishing a 3" plastic rigged on a TT 1/4oz jighead, fishing in about 8m of water. Before this fish I had landed about five flathead around the 40cm mark within a ten minute period. Keep in mind that any flathead over 60cm we released, as these fish are usually the breeders.

Over the time that I have been targeting these fish I have learnt that you don't need heavy gear at all, with my most common setup when targeting flathead being 8-12lb leader and around a 6lb braided main line, spooled onto a 2000-2500 size reel, with anything up to a maximum of a 3-6kg rod for chasing big flatties. The lures I will normally have rigged consist of 4" ZMan SwimmerZ, 3" MinnowZ and 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, with bright and natural colours being my most productive. While fishing these types of plastics there is also a good chance of some great by-catch including big bream and jewfish!

If you're looking at targeting those bigger flathead look for structure such as deep drop offs, timber lined banks and gravel bottoms, or sneak up on the flats. I have often found flathead to be sitting under feeding schools of tailor in scraps that the tailor leave behind.

Get out there and give it a go. Bring it on!

Flathead are a great lure target for beginners... in fact Matt can catch them with his eyes closed! ;)



# Bassin' Amongst the Weed

By David Brace



In Tackle Tactics E-Mag #10, a variety of tactics for locating and targeting Australian bass in our local impoundments throughout winter were explained. Now with summer upon us and water levels in my local impoundments receding rather quickly, due to the lack of rain in Queensland's South East, locating the fish that can be found in these bodies of water has been challenging.

In summer Australian bass tend not to school, like they do in the cooler months, creating an additional challenge to the angler, as they scatter throughout the impoundments finding refuge in less than open water. Australian bass seek comfort within the snags of lay down trees that have fallen victim to years of erosion along the lake banks, along with rocky outcrops. However as water levels drop, these fishy havens are often left high and dry. Another lake structure then provides contentment for these native fish, however casting and trolling lures through this thick weed can be somewhat frustrating to the angler, as the weed constantly fouls the sharp, pointy hooks of most lures.

Targeting Australian bass, within these shallow weed beds during summer, is best attempted either very early in the morning or late in the afternoon and into the evening. During these periods, bass search for an easy feast of gudgeons and shrimps amongst the strands of weed. It's also advantageous if you can locate a weed bed that is shadowed from the sun, as bass aren't particularly fond of light. As the sun reaches its heights during the day, these weed beds will become too heated and the bass will retreat to deeper water, where sometimes no structure will be visible.

The two lures that I have personally found to be most effective when chasing these feisty fish in and around the weed are the TT Lures Striker range of spinnerbaits and a lure that is made up of several components. Using TT Lures new range of HeadlockZ HD jigheads as a base, I attach a TT Lures Colorado bladed Jig Spinner, along with a ZMan Lures 3" MinnowZ soft plastic to create a deadly presentation.

What type and how thick the weed is, that you'll be casting or trolling these effective lures in, will determine what weight spinnerbait or HeadlockZ HD jighead to use. The Jig Spinner and the frame of the spinnerbait act as fantastic weed guards, preventing the hook from being fouled by the weed as easily. The blades of both lures also send vibrations through the upper layers of the water column, attracting fish.



Dropping water levels can leave some of your favourite snags high and dry.



Dave with a spinnerbait bass.



TT Jig Spinners add flash and vibration to your soft plastics.



It may be a case of trial and error as to what colour and weight lure will work on the day, so mix it up and see what will trigger a bite. Varying your techniques, whether you are casting or trolling, to determine what depth and speed the lure will be swimming at, will also be beneficial to a successful day on the water. Increasing your leader size to 15lb will also give you the confidence to pull these hard fighting fish back up through the thick weed, as they are likely to dive deep within this structure once they know they have been hooked.

Recently I had an opportunity to fish these lures using varying techniques, fishing my local in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. After an hour of targeting the weed edges and only catching smaller bass of around 20cm in length, a change of tactics was needed. I started fishing in the thick of it all, on top and in the middle of these weed beds, using the aforementioned lures. Within an hour a golden perch found itself being photographed, along with four good-size bass, three of which averaged 45cm in length and one which tipped the 50cm mark. This was reward for approaching a different mindset. being persistent and challenge with a



# My Grand Final Experience...

By Will Lee

*Team Tackle Tactics Pro Angler Will Lee takes us on journey through some of his tournament experiences from the 2012 tournament season.*

With another tournament season done and dusted there are some winners and grinners, and then there are those that are no doubt looking forward to some better results next year. I had a year of ups and downs, so I thought I'd share a few of these with you that I experienced in the grand final events this year.

## Classic Grand Final

My team mate Nic Meredith and I had been super pumped for this one all year, since qualifying at the Easter Classic in April.

As it turns out this was a tournament I'd rather forget! It all started when Nic found out four days out from the tournament that he couldn't fish Saturday due to work commitments. We were both still keen to compete, so I checked with Simon Goldsmith (ABT tournament director) to see if it was okay for me to fish by myself Saturday and with Nic on Sunday, seeing as it was a 'teams' event. We got the all clear!

Will focused on the line as his ZMan 2.5" GrubZ sinks slowly toward the rubble bottom.







Will works the electric and a lure during the Tweed Round

I was also sweating on parts arriving for my Mercury so I could use my boat for the event. I had a backup plan in place though, just in case it wasn't ready and organised to have a mate's boat on standby.

During practice on the Friday, all the spots I had intended to check out were nearly unreachable due to ridiculously strong winds blowing straight down the Broadwater. So I looked all over the Coomera River for areas and as it turned out I didn't catch a legal sized bream all day.

My confidence was pretty low heading into the first day and with less wind than the pre-fish day I decided to fish Sovereign Island, an area where I have caught big fish in the past. I fished hard through the entire session but struggled to even catch a bream... let alone one big enough to weigh in. At one stage I pulled up the electric, the cord snapped and I fell back onto my rods and broke my favourite stick clean in half!

After accepting my donut, I headed home to Brisbane and was just looking forward to a good day out on the water with Nic the following day. I cleaned the boat down and flushed the outboard. Everything seemed good until I went to trim the outboard down onto the support bracket and had no trim and tilt. That was the straw that broke this Camel's back, so I pulled out from the second day in order to get things sorted for the big Grand Final at Bribie the following weekend!

Trailer issues put Will back in his own smaller rig, but got him hooked up!



## ABT Grand Final – Bribie Island

I'd been so pumped for this event all year! It was a chance to fish the most prestigious event there is in bream fishing, on my home waters. My plan was to fish Bramble Bay because I know it like the back of my hand, but I spent a lot of my time before the event learning areas in the Pumicestone Passage because the ABT rules are that if it is forecast to blow more than 20 knots then the event is restricted to inside the Passage.

I was so prepared for this tournament, so I thought that nothing could stand in my way. I'd even organised to use the TT Lures bay boat so if the northerlies, that are typical for November, picked up in the bay, I could get back to Bribie without any hassles.

Ninety minutes before the start of the tournament my plans came to a grinding halt. I'd just got onto the highway on my way to Bribie when I heard a rattle coming from the boat trailer. I looked back in the side mirror only to see the left hand wheel wobbling. I knew I was in trouble and pulled over as soon as I could. The car and boat stopped okay but the wobbly wheel didn't as it shot off down the highway!

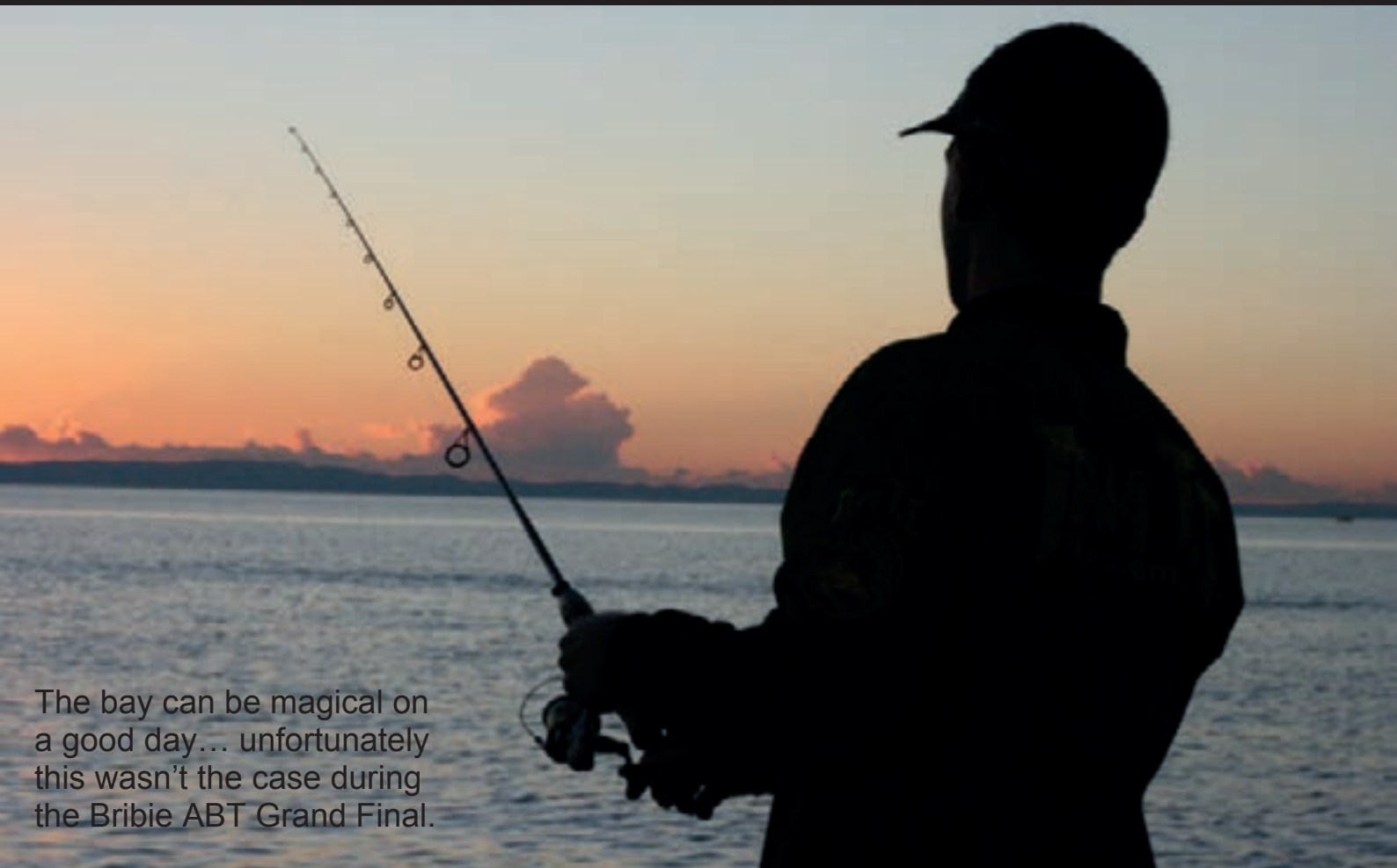
I made the call to tournament director Simon Goldsmith to inform him of what had happened and to see if there were any spare spots for non-boaters (in qualifying events they normally leave spares in the case of a breakdown). There wasn't, so I quickly unhitched the boat, made a call to All Brand Caravan Services (who I can't thank enough) to come and pick up the boat from the side of the road and fix the trailer.

All that was left to do now was to race home and pick up my little bass boat, quickly throw all my gear in it and haul ass all the way to Bribie. I made the start line with five minutes to spare and met up with my anxiously waiting non-boater, Scott Slattery.

I knew the bay was going to get hell rough, with the typical November north-easterlies predicted to pick up in the afternoon, so being back in my smaller boat I chickened out on making my run all the way to Bramble Bay. I'd caught a good number of average sized fish in the Caboolture River a few weeks prior to the event and thought I'd have no dramas scraping a bag together. I also knew it would be a quicker run back against the wind and chop in the afternoon.

The conditions in the river looked perfect and I put the first fish of the day in the well on my second cast. It sucked down a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ skipped under an overhanging branch and I thought it was going to be game on! That was actually the end of the game for the Caboolture River and after not catching another fish for the next two hours. I knew it was time to get out of the river before the tide got too low, so we made the run to Scarborough Reef to try and fill our bag. We arrived there half way through the session and as soon as we did the wind increased to twenty knots and the seas got rough. Scott and I made the change from plastics to cranks, just so we could stay in touch with the lure. The fishing was super slow and we managed one legal each.

By 12pm Deception Bay had become super rough so I made the call to get going and leave ourselves plenty of time to get back. We made it back in a bit over an hour but got absolutely drenched and had the bilge pump running the whole way! With a little bit of time left in the passage I checked out some flats which I thought I might need later in the tournament and pulled our fourth legal for the day. I was a bit disappointed at the time, not to have five fish in the well and was sitting 25th.



The bay can be magical on a good day... unfortunately this wasn't the case during the Bribie ABT Grand Final.

All Brand Caravan Repairs got the TT Lures boat trailer fixed while I was out fishing on day one and it was ready to rock for the second day. My non-boater for the second day was Vaughn Lewis and he was sitting in 5th and was a chance at winning the non-boater division so I was keen to get us onto some good fish. The plan was simple, do what I'd intended to do on day one.

Vaughn and I spent the first couple of hours sorting through small bream, only to find one that was big enough to put in the well. I really just wanted to kill some time before hitting my honey hole. I'd talked this spot up to Vaughn and he was keen. I even told him that we'd have it all to ourselves. On arrival, Steve Morgan had just finished fishing nearly the entire area and had caught his five fish. We took note of how he was fishing and made sure we did something different. Morgan was crank baiting and Vaughn and I were rigged with ZMan GrubZ, so we remained confident!

He didn't leave much behind, but Vaughn did manage a couple of nice fish on the GrubZ. Time had got away from us and we only had two hours left. I gave

Vaughn the option; we could go and find a couple of small but legal bream or just go and hit some big fish spots and hope to catch at least two. We both agreed he needed some big ones to be in with a chance. The fish kept us waiting but did eventually play the game and we filled our bag with some average sized fish and also got a nice upgrade. Vaughn held onto 5th and I was sitting in 17<sup>th</sup>, which meant I had made the Top 20 shootout for the final day.

The bay was a dead certainty to be closed on the final day, which didn't bother me. I was a kilo and a half behind the pace and knew I wasn't a chance of winning. The night before the final day I made a game plan for a fun day out where I'd fish Surface ShrimpZ (ZMan 3" Scented ShrimpZ) on the flats and stay out of anyone's way that was in contention.



Will with a nice bream on a ZMan 2.5" GrubZ.

On arrival at the boat ramp I was greeted by wind gusts of forty knots, which all of a sudden had me thinking that this tournament was wide open. With such horrible fishing conditions, anyone could win it. I got serious and made a phone call to my father, Mick Lee, who hadn't made the Top 20, but had caught some nice fish in the passage on the second day and asked him for a bit of advice.

I started the day fishing a protected area out of the wind but there was too much water on the structure I wanted to fish and I knew the fish wouldn't bite until the tide receded some more. There was still plenty of time so I went and searched for fish on the flats. Plenty of anglers were on the flats and it didn't take me long to notice the lack of fish being caught, so I retreated back into protected waters and stayed patient for the tide to drop.

Snapper get the adrenalin pumping, but don't make the scales in a bream comp.



Once the water had dropped down out of the mangroves the fish went berserk and every time I skip cast a Motor Oil GrubZ into the shade, it would get eaten by a bream. The fish weren't huge but I put five in the well. They bit hard for an hour and I had to leave them biting otherwise I would have got stuck with the tide dropping.

I was one of only three anglers to weigh five fish on the final day and I had snuck my way into the Top 10, finishing 7<sup>th</sup> in the most prestigious event on the tournament calendar. You couldn't wipe the smile off my face the following week!

Big thanks must go out to my sponsors for all their help this year, All Brand Caravan Services, Sunstate Hobie, Gary Howard Rods and of course the team at TT Lures!

I've decided to take next year off from competitive fishing and pursue some other fishing interests but I'll definitely be back in 2014!



Will Lee and Ash Hazell with some cracker bream from a pre-fish in the bay. Even though the weather didn't allow Will to fish his spots, he adapted well to finish 7<sup>th</sup> in the Grand Final.



# Jurassic Creek

*By Robbie Wells*

With unstable weather patterns and less than favorable boating conditions often falling on the summer holidays, it's a great time to hunt down some skinny water and chase some Aussie icons.

Our summer wet season is fast approaching and unlike previous years we are experiencing our driest few months in recent times. With the last few years of excessive flooding in all of our creeks, rivers and of course dams, the systems have well and truly had a flush out. In the process this water has been carving new water holes and creating new snag areas and log jams, not to mention replenishing our freshwater species like cod, Aussie bass and yellowbelly (golden perch).

Armed with Google Earth I target areas to the west from the Sunshine Coast to Maryborough, but skinny water is available nationwide and holds a wide range of species, depending on the location. I target feeder creeks with high banks and look for holes or long pools, with runs of skinny water either side. These runs might only be 50-100 metres long, but with the previous mentioned dry spell a lot of these areas are landlocked, or are only a few inches deep, so unless heavy rainfall occurs the fish have a very limited area to escape, condensing themselves in the deeper water. My favorite country is the tight windy stuff with high creek banks, normally indicating large volumes of water have travelled through the area, in turn gouging deep holes on every bend and creating large snag areas.





What blew my mind was the quality and the quantity of fish I encountered in such skinny water. Our current honey hole is no more than two metres wide in sections, pooling out into around five metres wide and around twenty metres long, with water just trickling over gravel beds each side of the hole. A stealthy approach is paramount, as clear water, high banks and shadows hinder the angler's potential to catch fish. I always stay low and work the water ahead of me from a distance. I start by flicking my plastics in close against the edges, slowly working my way into the middle and then toward the opposite bank. Work an area every five metres or so and avoid casting down the creek as far as you can in no real pattern, as the skinny water spooks mega easy.



Robbie with a yellowbelly on a TT spinnerbait

TT Rev Head jigheads add flash and vibration to your soft plastic



BJ with a solid bass and yellowbelly from the skinny waters of Jurassic Creek



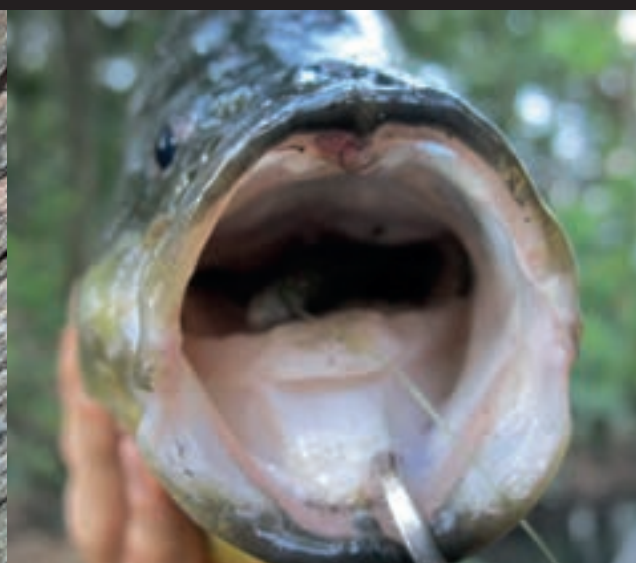
High cutaway banks are a sign of the high volume water flow that creates deeper holes



Hide behind trees and bushes, keep low, wear dark clothing and basically do anything you can to maintain a stealthy and hidden approach. My arsenal consists of two rods. On the first, a baitcasting barra combo, I normally run a TT Lures spinnerbait or a ZMan ChatterBait, both in gold and black, or purple and black. This combo is mainly used for the, so far elusive, Mary River cod. Elusive as I've had two run ins with old Mary so far and been dusted up both times, with the fish taking me into a thick timber log jam on both occasions. Once it was all over in a Nano second and the other time in a mere five or six seconds. It's amazing the power of a 90-95cm Mary River Cod; even 30lb braid and 40lb leader on a tight drag was no match. The second combo consists of a 2000 series reel and a light 1-3kg, 7' spin rod. This can be a real pain to hike through the bush with, but in steep and bushy areas they are a pleasure to use, casting light plastics around most objects with ease.

The stand out Jighead and soft plastic combo is without a doubt the TT 1/8 – 1/4oz 1/0H jighead rigged with a ZMan 2.5' GrubZ in Watermelon Red. This is sometimes blinged out with a TT Jig Spinner; that extra flash is killer on Yellas. You could also use a TT Rev Head jighead, but I believe the Jig Spinner gives more action at a slower retrieve speed. I prefer the 1/8oz in the skinny, but when fishing the high banks the 1/4oz will stay in the deeper water, or the strike zone required, a lot easier. The Baby Bass colour in the ZMan 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ fished on surface with the new TT ChinlockZ scored a couple of the bass last trip, while the Motor Oil 2.5" GrubZ are holding their ground for second in the sub surface plastics. The cod hooked were both on gold and black; one on a spinnerbait and the other on a ZMan ChatterBait.

A TT Jig Spinner, jighead and ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Watermelon Red



TT ChinlockZ Jighead and Zman 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ in Baby Bass.



In all, the couple of times we have done the mission to Jurassic Creek we have caught and released 12 football sized Yellas, 4 solid bass, a couple of silver perch and a small Mary River cod, not to mention the couple of hosing's from a larger specimen.

Plus, the bonus in the whole experience, is the journey and where it takes you. It may take ten missions before you find those one or two honey holes, but if you keep these in your memory banks, you will always have some secret spots, or back up spots I call them. I don't fish them very often, but they're always reliable and there if the weather turns bad. With all fishing there's always the unknown and I wonder what's around that next bend. So next time it's blowing its head off, or less then favorable, go on a skinny water mission and you may be surprised what you find around the next bend...

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year  
HOW GOODS AUSTRALIA

Cheers on the water,  
Robbie Wells



# Baffle to the Broadwater

*By Paul Chew*



It's not all about the fishing. Jodie with a couple of solid mudcrabs.

## A little about the Broadwater

Nestled on the confluence of four small creeks, the Broadwater is a magical place to spend some quality time getting away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Situated about one hour north of Bundaberg and an easy 35 minute drive from 1770, this little piece of paradise offers great swimming, fishing and some incredible kite surfing conditions all year round.

Fishing in this area is very diverse, with beach fishing, wading the pristine sand flats, reefs not far offshore and of course some great mangrove jack fishing as well. The hidden jewel in the crown of the area is Broadwater Haven, 68 acres of pristine bushland, featuring ten eco-friendly, well appointed self-contained cabins, sitting only a few metres from the water's edge. Owned by Frank and Noela Goetz, this pet friendly getaway really is one of the most relaxing places we have ever stayed, with everything you could ask for on hand. Recently new managers Paul and Janie Kayes have moved in, giving Frank and Noela a chance to get out and about in the 4WD and do a little travelling of their own. Walking opportunities abound, be it on one of the tracks that traverse the property, on the sand flats at low tide, or crossing the creek and walking for miles on the secluded windswept surf beach. Being a keen amateur photographer, one of the highlights of the stay is the abundance of wildlife that inhabits the place, everything from kangaroos on the sand flats, to frilled neck lizards basking on the fence posts, as well as some spectacular sunrises over the sand dunes.



The top end of Deepwater Creek is a kayaker's dream; skinny water where you can cast easily to both sides of the creek, fallen timber every few metres and a few hidden rock bars as well. Combine this with very little tidal run and high banks and tree line to minimise wind and it all kind of comes together perfectly for those that are paddle minded.



The yak is an option and Andy used it to land some nice trevally and jacks.

## And a little about the fishing

I always head here with great plans to do huge amounts of fishing, but upon arrival the laid back nature of the place kind of takes hold and more often than not, I find myself having a quiet beer on the deck watching the tide do its thing. Andy on the other hand, fishes dawn till dusk some days, either walking or kayaking the flats towards the mouth, where Mitchell and Deepwater Creeks converge, chasing tailor, bream, flatties and queenfish.

On the high tide last trip there were numerous small trevally sighted and Andy finally tempted the one pictured with a 2.5" GrubZ in Bloodworm tossed way out in front of it and hopped back slow so as not to spook them in the gin clear water. There is also some awesome topwater fishing to be had on dawn and dusk, with Frenzy poppers bringing more than a few nice queenies undone. Unfortunately Andy bit off more than he could chew (no pun intended) when he hooked a behemoth of a queeny on his light rod casting a Baby Bass 3.75" StreakZ, which resulted in him being spooled before he had a chance to even bust it off or chase on foot.





Paul with a nice jack  
from a magic location.



Most of the time I prefer just picking up a rod and a few lures and walking the gutters in front of the cabins for a few flathead, or digging a few yabbies and sitting in the water under the trees at the front, catching a few whiting on the high tide. During the cooler months, if you can drag yourself away from the open fireplace out the back, some quality whiting and flathead are landed right out the front of the cabins.

Boats are launched from about half tide up, at the private ramp, with most preferring to leave them anchored up in front of the house for the night. This makes it easy to dive up and check the crab pots early of a morning. Frank is more than happy to launch with the little tractor if you prefer. For those that eat mud crabs, it seems best here a month or so after a decent amount of rain, with some of the best crabs you will ever catch coming from Mitchell and Deepwater Creeks. Mullet or tailor frames seem to have the best success, with chicken frames also a good choice.

For most that visit for the fishing, the lure of the magnificent mangrove jack is what draws them to this area and rarely are they disappointed. Options to target these fish are just about endless; whether you're running up the creek from the cabins, or launching at the headwaters of Deepwater and fishing your way down through the myriad of log-jams and sunken rock bars.

During a trip in early December, we boated 8 small jacks and lost a few more including a horse of a fish that Pete Jones had the hooks pull on after doing all the hard work, extracting him from the tangled tree where he was residing. That's fishing I guess. We launched up the top, headed down about 2km and started working the edges over with hard bodies and 3" MinnowZ rigged on TT Snake Heads. The bites came pretty much straight away, with a few fish coming on poppers as soon as they landed. It was an awesome afternoon of fun, apart from losing the bigger fish.

We also fished the Baffle pretty hard on the Saturday with scarcely a bite, besides a couple of cod and a few tarpon, for Pete and I, despite throwing everything in our tackle box. Andy was in the Yak, and got a little trevally and lost a 4" SwimmerZ to a fish, but that was it. We have had our best fishing in the Baffle after a few storms have dirtied the water, up from the Ferry Crossing ramp, but on this occasion the water was gin clear right up at the Elieulah Ck Bridge. The live bait fisherman were having a ball at night though.

Trevally are good fun on light gear.



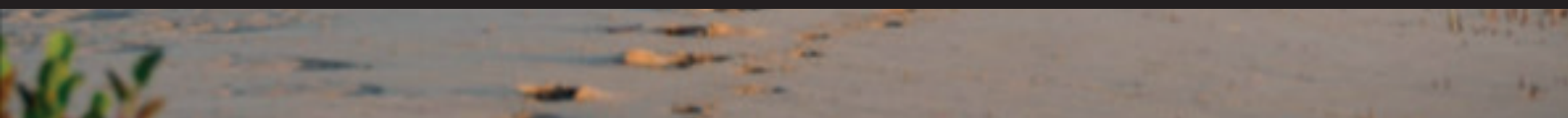
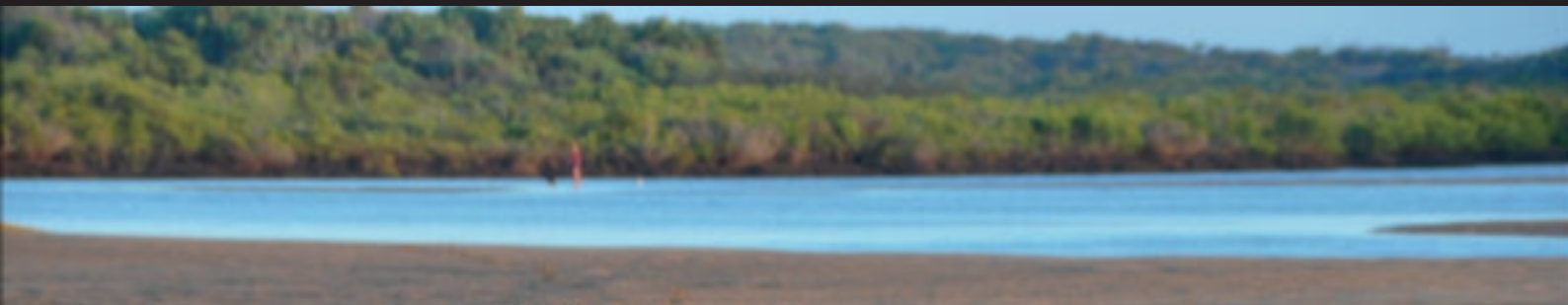
Andy having a bit of fun with a small jack on a ZMan 3" MinnowZ



## Lures and Techniques

We prefer to fish the area with lures, Tilsan barras, Rapala X-Rap Shads and Richos lures being our go-to hardbodies, with Zman 3" Minnowz and 4"Swimmerz our go-to softies, rigged on TT Snake Head jigheads so they can be thrown deep into the heavy timber and hopped slowly back out. This should see you locked up to some of these crimson lure thieves. On the most recent trip, the 3" Minnowz in Houdini worked a treat, with fish hitting them on the initial drop after the cast. Also don't discount topwater fishing in the upper reaches of Deepwater Ck, as a slow worked popper often results in an acrobatic tarpon, trevally, or mangrove jack crash tackling the lure. This type of fishing is not however for the faint hearted, sometimes leaving the angler with trembling knees and a look of utter disappointment on their face. Fishing at some of the lay down timber and deeper rock bars can produce some red hot jack fishing during the summer months, fishing deep and slow in the months coming out of winter often produces the best quality fish. This part of the system, where your lure is often landing in the shade of an overhanging palm tree, also holds a healthy population of small barramundi, providing welcome by-catch for anglers.

Don't be afraid to downsize lures too, as a big jack will often engulf a small lure meant for a bream or trevally. Plastics are thrown in close, let sink to the bottom then just slowly hopped back out to the boat. Don't be afraid to let your offering sit on the bottom for a few seconds, as a bite will often follow a short pause. With Jacks being a schooling fish, the best time to get one is right after you have just landed one. Fishing this style you have to be on top of your game, ready to go hard and use good rod angles to try and extract the red devil from his underwater lair. Fishing a good quality 20lb braid main line and between 20 and 40lb mono leader should see you win more of these battles than you lose.



## What else is on offer

Another string in the bow of this area, is that the top end of Deepwater has a little weir, which then forms a few kilometres of freshwater, billabong style fishing, which can be easily accessed by kayak at the causeway crossing on the way to Wreck Rock Campground. This little waterway holds freshwater jacks, and will provide me with some peaceful hours exploring this summer. Just to elaborate a little more on Wreck Rock, it's a small outcrop of rock on the surf beach a few kilometres up from Broadwater Haven, and boasts a small campground, at which sites are at a premium, and must be booked in advance. Wreck offers some great landbased fishing at times, with all the usual pelagic species on offer.

So if you are looking for place to unwind for a while, be sure to check out one of my favourite parts of the Queensland coast. A typical day on holiday consists of a morning walk with a spin rod and plastics, lunch round the communal BBQ area, then a flick for a jack in the afternoon, finished off with a cold drink or two under the she oak trees by the water. A week really isn't enough, by the time we spend a morning over at Agnes Waters doing some shopping, do the short drive out to the picturesque Wreck Rock, where there are some great photo opportunities, and maybe a fish over in Baffle Creek, time soon gets away, and its time to get back to the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Broadwater Haven truly is a hidden piece of fishing paradise, taking you back to a time when life was less complicated, and it's a place that just keeps drawing you back time and again.. Tight lines..



*Cameron takes us on a mission chasing one of his favourite species, bass, in the skinny backwaters around his local area. If you don't have bass in your local creeks, it may still be worth a mission because depending on where you are in the country, similar techniques could produce bream, redfin, trout, saratoga, sooty grunter jungle perch and other species.*

After peppering a large pool with our weedless rigged ZMan GrubZ, it was clear that with only a few tentative strikes, the bass were definitely not out to play here. We moved downstream along the edge of the creek until we came across another, this time much smaller pool of around 1.5 x 3m and littered with thick aquatic vegetation. Although it was only a metre or so deep, it was still worth a shot, so we both scrambled down the crumbly banks and prepared to make the cast.

Cameron with a solid skinny water bass.



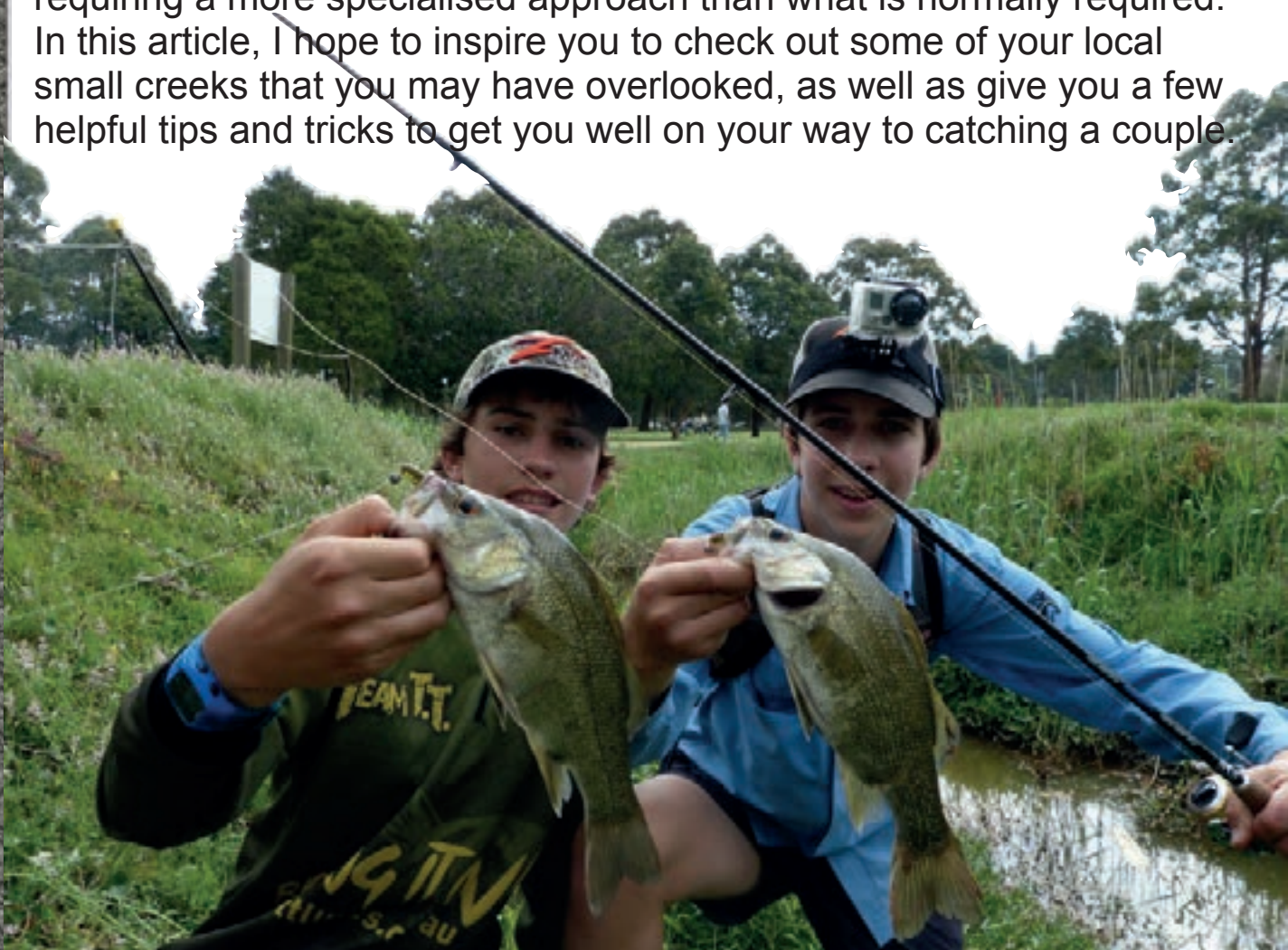
**Urban Bassin'**

**By Cameron Cronin**

Standing on a raised mound of dirt, I placed my rod tip over a promising undercut on the opposite bank (remember this pool is only one and a half metres wide!) and free spooled my ZMan down through the water column. Just then, I was interrupted by a call from my friend Marcus, fishing the other end of the pool... I'm on! As he fought out his newfound opponent, I turned my attention back to my lure, only to find that it had already been engulfed by a hungry bass on the drop! Double hook up!

After a quick tussle we managed to land both of our fish, with mine going 34cm and Marcus's 36. Although they weren't massive fish, it was still awesome to land them both from such skinny water and it made for a great start to an even better day. We then continued to fish the pool landing four more fish, including another double hook up on similar sized bass and plenty of missed opportunities. By the time we decided to pull the pin and head home, we had landed eight more bass and eight redbin from another area of the creek.

Looking around a place like this really makes you realise how well our native fish have adapted to living side by side with humans. This particular spot is flanked by apartments, a main road and a golf course. However, fishing for these 'urban' bass isn't as simple as it seems, with the fish often shutting down to conventional bass techniques and requiring a more specialised approach than what is normally required. In this article, I hope to inspire you to check out some of your local small creeks that you may have overlooked, as well as give you a few helpful tips and tricks to get you well on your way to catching a couple.



So first things first, where do you choose to fish? No matter where you live, if you're on the east coast of Australia, it is extremely likely that somewhere near you is one or possibly many small creeks winding through suburbia, just begging to be fished. But before you rush off, there are a few factors that you need to consider. The first and probably most important question you need to ask yourself is this: Is it connected to salt water, or at least sometimes connected? This is because if there is no access to at least brackish areas, bass can no longer breed and therefore it is extremely unlikely for there to be a natural population of bass in the area. Apart from this, the areas you fish should have at least 80cm deep water, (although bass will still hold in as little as 30 cm if there is enough cover) with plenty of structure / cover for bass to shelter in. On a side note, if you are struggling to find some suitable water, Google Earth and Nearthmap are almost invaluable as they allow you to scour your entire area from a bird's eye view, quickly tracking down any suitable water. So, now you have suitable creek in mind, it's time to go fishing!







So now you have arrived at your destination, it's time to rig up. As these bass live in such close proximity to people, they often become very timid compared to an isolated population and require very small and lifelike lures to fool them into striking. This is when I turn to my all-time favourite, the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ. I'm not sure why, but there is just something about this cool little lure that urban bass cannot resist and these days it's what you're going to find on the end of my line 90% of the time. Match this with a suitable TT Lures HWS (Hidden Weight System) jighead and you have a deadly presentation that you can skip cast into the tightest of spaces, drawing strikes from even the most shutdown of fish. Sometimes however, there are too many dense snags in the area to use a conventional jighead, without massive lure losses and this is when I opt to tie on either a weedless hook or a TT Jig Spinner. I find that both of these options drastically reduce the snag up rate and the blade on the Jig Spinner also seems to help trigger aggressive strikes when the fish just aren't in the mood to hit a standard presentation.

Once you're rigged up, all you have to do now is work out where to cast. Most of the time this is a fairly simple process that can be made even easier by giving each area a score out of 5 in your head. This may sound weird to some, but for me personally this has paid dividends and definitely helped me catch more fish. For example, my perfect snag that I would score a 5, would consist of: A large snag sitting next to a deep, shady undercut bank positioned in a calm area out of the current. Also, there would be no obvious branches that predators like cormorants and other predatory birds could use as an ambush place nearby. On the other hand I would score a spindly snag placed in shallow water offering no protection from the sun and predators a 1 and not even bother placing a cast. Once you have nailed down this system, (and it's pretty easy to master) you can easily and quickly place the first casts in the most likely areas to produce fish.

Also worth noting is that because the waters urban bass reside in are often so tight, it is worth learning to bow and arrow cast. To do this simply flick the bail arm over, pinch line against the rod and allow the lure to drop 80cm or so from the tip, grab the lure by the bend of the hook and then pull back until the rod is completely loaded up. All that's left to do then is aim and release. This comes in handy when you want to achieve pinpoint short distance casts, but have no room to make a standard cast. Without it I'd be lost!

So what are you waiting for! Grab a pack of GrubZ and get down to one of your local creeks. Just don't be too surprised when your lure gets slammed in that creek that you always thought couldn't possibly hold any fish!



Marcus with the results of a double hook up!

# of the Tropical North

By Jason Preece

**BIG Reefies**



ZMan 8" StreakZ XL  
plastics rigged on  
TT Tournament  
Series XHD are the  
perfect recipe for  
stopping big reefies!

On a recent trip up to Bligh Reef, out from Lockhart River in far north Queensland, I was lucky enough to take a group of guests to experience what the remote outer Great Barrier Reef has to offer when an 8" soft plastic is dropped to the bottom... mayhem!!!

The trip started with a few hops in a light plane from Cairns through Coen, then arriving at the bustling Lockhart River Airport. An oversized 4x4 bus to transport us up to Portland Roads, where Nomad Sportfishing's mothership, 'Odyssey', was anchored for the night before our journey out to the reef, met us at the gate. The anticipation and excitement started to build as we bumped our way down the dirt road. Where the palm trees parted at the end of the road, we could see our home for the next week sitting in the mangrove lined bay.

The next morning involved getting the mothership and all the sportfishing boats out to the hardline of the reef where we could start to fish. The guides drove the smaller boats out as it was a bit lumpy. We only just beat the big boat out, but there was definitely time for a quick cast. I drifted over one of the shallow flats and cast my 6" SwimmerZ rigged on a 1/4oz TT War Head and wound it across the surface, just to see what it looked like in the clear water.....boom! A Maori wrasse bolted out and smashed the little red SwimmerZ and managed to make it back to its hole, as I wasn't really expecting it! After a bit of persuading he came out and I was able to get a quick pic before slipping him back into the water.



ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ rigged on HeadlockZ HD jigheads were the go on the flats.



We had the guests in the boats by about lunch time and it was game on! A stiff southeaster was blowing, but with the protection of the maze of hard reef edges and channels, there were plenty of places to get out of the chop. The deep, cobalt water rose up from the depths onto the expanses of sheltered aquamarine reef flats that was home to large numbers of angry reef dwellers and pelagics alike. These fish found it very hard to resist a lightly weighted plastic! Actually, they couldn't resist and up in the shallows the 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ was nearly producing a fish a cast. Most of them were smaller emperor and trevally, which were great fun on the light gear, with the odd freight train like a 50kg Maori wrasse that decided to slurp the little placky in and depart at warp speed across the shallow bommie encrusted flat, until we found ourselves tying on a new HeadlockZ HD jighead and trying again.

We were just drifting over the shallow flats, in maybe 2-4 metres of water and casting in the direction of the drift, with just enough weight in the jighead to get to the bottom. HeadlockZ HD jigheads in 1/2oz were working a treat, as we were using 50lb line we needed a little extra weight. After the cast, the boys were keeping in contact with the plastic on the drop, as they frequently got smashed prior to reaching the bottom. If not whacked on the drop, then erratic hops off the bottom, with large lifts of the rod tip, was doing the damage. The boys managed to extract a few nice Maori wrasse and some thumping emperor, as well as a few jobfish over the shallows, but the fun really started when we reached deeper water.

Between all the fingers of reef that surround Bligh reef, there were deep channels where the current pumps through with the tide as the water from the lagoons empty out into the deep blue. Every little corner or lump on the bottom had a huge pressure edge on it and these held stacks of bait... and as we found out bigggg coral trout.

I had a show on the sounder that looked like a school of pelagic fish, active and off the bottom, so we put on a few 4oz TT XHD jigheads and ZMan 8" StreakZ XL plastics and the boys were still struggling to find bottom in around 40m of water... the current was pumping! I held the boat in reverse as we drifted over the lump to slow our drift and boom! Double hookup on some substantial fish, that tore 100LB off the big Stellas as they tried to make it back to the bottom. The boys managed to get the fish under control and I was expecting a couple of dogtooth tuna, as they ate a fairly fast retrieve. As they came to the surface though they were both fat and red... bigggg coral trout!!!



We spent the next few days using this same technique in the numerous deep channels and drifting the deep edges saw double and triple hookups on a regular basis! The coral trout ranged from 10 – 15kg, which is no slouch when it decides to latch onto a plastic that is getting jigged to the surface at a fair rate. Some fish were hitting the big StreakZ only metres under the boat, as they were following them all the way up to the surface! There were other reefies and a few pelagics in amongst the onslaught of monster trout, including numerous corination trout, some monster flowery cod, long-nosed emporer, giant trevally, gold spot trevally and a few macks to round off the mix.

The boys were basically dropping the big 4oz jigheads to the bottom, hopping them once or twice and then starting a fairly brisk jig and wind retrieve, not unlike what you would use for kingfish in the cooler Southeast QLD waters. Most of the fish smashed the plastic within a few seconds of starting the fast retrieve. The hops were getting them interested and the darting action, as the 8" StreakZ took off towards the surface, got the fish very switched on! The boys had caught some awesome fish, it was nearing the end of the trip and with the plastics supply dwindling it was time to return to "Odyssey" for a cold beer and to relax after another awesome days fishing.





We hope you enjoyed the read.

Have a fantastic Christmas filled with family, friends, love and laughter, and we'll catch you all again in the new year.

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