



TACKLE  
TACTICS PRO  
KRIS HICKSON TAKES OUT  
2014 ABT BREAM GRAND  
FINAL - READ MORE  
INSIDE

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Image courtesy of humandfly.com

## Welcome to issue #28 of the Tackle Tactics Fishing Magazine.

We hope you had a good break, Santa delivered some fishing gear and you managed to get out on the water for a fish.

The Tackle Tactics Team have been busily moving warehouses to make a bit more room for new ZMan and TT Lures products that will be officially launched at AFTA in July... although we have a few in mind that we would like to sneak out a bit sooner, so stay tuned.

It's a good time to be a fisho, with the heat of summer easing a little and a mix of seasonal species starting to appear, most of the closed seasons out of the way and an influx of bait into the system. Check out the video links below for some on water action. fish on!

See you on the water... Justin Willmer



**Press  to check out the action!**



Join Dan Kaggelis and the Fishing Downunder DVD crew as they chase quality fish on deep water soft plastics.

TT Lures HeadlockZ HD and Tournament Series XHD jigheads and ZMan 9" GrubZ doing the job on some nice black jew and fingermark.

Full segment available on Fishing Downunder DVD #38 - available from newsagents.



The Fishing Downunder team get out on the water with Cam Whittam and Mick Kaksa, chasing Melbourne metro snapper, bream and salmon on TT jigheads and ZMan plastics. Plenty of tips to get you hooked up around the country.

Full segment available on Fishing Downunder DVD #39 - available soon from newsagents.



# **BREaMin' BackWaters**

**BY CaMERon CRonin**

Living in Sydney, I am lucky enough to have a stack of great bream fishing options available right at my fingertips. From casting plastics into the foamy ocean washes in the lower reaches, to flicking topwater along mangrove lined creeks up in the brackish. I often find myself spoilt for choice and struggling to decide where to target my quarry. In recent times however, that choice has been vastly simplified with my discovery of backwaters and the exceptional bream fishing opportunities that they harbour. Unattractive at first glance, these hidden gems are dismissed by countless anglers that are heading for seemingly greener pastures and as a result these areas offer some red hot breaming options for those prepared to put in the hard yards and locate them in the first place. Simply put, I can't get enough of backwater breamin'.

It's that all too rare combination of serenity and big, hard hitting, lure crunching bream that makes for some addictive fishing and keeps me coming back for more, time and time again. But just like any bream fishing, it isn't always fun and games. Although at times backwaters can fire like you wouldn't believe, they can also be very tricky places to fish and you might have to change a few things up before you start to experience regular success. In this article I will talk about how to find and fish backwaters, my favourite gear and lure selections and also go over a few small tips and tricks that I have picked up over time that should help fast track your backwater success.



Prospecting the backwaters



A quality backwater  
bream on a TT  
Lures Ghostblade

So you may be wondering, what exactly are backwaters? Although definitions may vary from person to person, I believe a backwater to be an open lagoon, fed by a small creek that eventually connects to the main system. Often the feeder creek will be so small that the backwater will be completely cut off from the main system at times. Sometimes there may even be a manmade barrier preventing fish access most of the time. All that is needed to make a backwater viable, in terms of holding bream, is the occasional supply of clean saltwater. This allows bream to find their way inside and make themselves at home.

Now you know what a backwater looks like it's time to try and find one. Although it is possible to go out and physically search for backwaters, I find it far easier to use satellite imaging programs, such as Google Earth and Nearmap. By hovering at an altitude height of around 1 km, you can quickly and efficiently scan your chosen estuary for potential hotspots, zooming in on anything that catches your interest for a closer look. If you think that a spot has the potential to produce, it is then a simple matter of 'Pinning' the location and marking any potential routes into the area, especially if the location is particularly isolated. I am perhaps a little too obsessed with this step, with countless backwaters marked and saved into my computer up and down the east coast, ready for investigation some time down the track. The options here are truly endless for the adventurous angler and for me that's where half of the fun lies!

So now you've chosen a location it's time to pack your gear and get ready to bend some rods! For this style of fishing it is imperative to pack as light as possible. These days I normally try and limit myself to one medium to large tackle tray of my favourite lures, in order to make room for other essentials such



as food, water, sunglasses, camera, mobile phone, sunscreen, toilet paper and insect repellent. While some of these may not be necessary for short range trips around urban areas, it certainly pays not to leave out most of these items, especially into summer when we start to experience hotter weather and harsher conditions.

As I like to fish backwaters from the land, I will usually only take one rod and reel combination along with me. As a general rule I fish gear that is slightly heavier than what would usually be used, for a couple of reasons. The first of these is to stop large bream around the heavy structure that is commonly encountered in backwaters. Secondly is the need to deal with



unexpected by-catch which will often pop up in the middle of a bream session. Depending on where you live, this by-catch may be anything from flathead to mangrove jack and even jewfish.

Backwaters can produce some very interesting captures and I personally have been put in my place by several species of fish that would be much more at home up in tropical Queensland. For these reasons my gear consists of a short and powerful 2-5kg rod and a 2000 sized spinning reel loaded with 4-6lb braid. Leader selection often involves drawing a fine line between finesse and getting busted off by everything that isn't a bream, but I find 6-8lb a good compromise and this will see you putting most hooked fish on the bank.

As far as lures are concerned, there are two main styles I like to use; soft plastics and blades. Recently I have taken a real shine to the 1/12oz TT lures Ghostblade for fishing the open sandy areas that frequent most backwaters. I'm not sure why, but this lure has an uncanny knack of out fishing any other presentation I throw around my local backwaters. It has quickly become my go-to lure for fishing this type of spot. All that is required to fish the Ghostblade is a slow lift and drop, allowing the lure to settle on the bottom for about half a second between each lift. When fishing very shallow ground the slow roll can also be a great option, especially when the bream are fired up.



The Ghostblade is a deadly finesse option

Of course soft plastics still have their place and are a must have for fishing the snaggy sections in order to keep your tackle box full and lost funds to a minimum. My personal favourite is the ZMan 2.5" GrubZ; a killer around the snags. As I mentioned earlier, backwaters are also home to a plethora of larger 'by-catch' species, so it always pays to bring a few scaled up plastics such as the ZMan 3" MinnowZ and 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ, along with a couple of jigheads to match, just in case the bream don't fire.

While I consider the abovementioned lures as 'must haves', it is also important to bring plenty of other styles, especially when exploring a new location. While I do try and limit myself to one box, I tend to squeeze as many lures into that box as possible, with small poppers, stickbaits and diving minnows all being regular inclusions in my lure line up.

Last but not least, before you set off for your chosen location have a close look at your spot on the computer and consider whether you will be able to fish it from the land, or if you will be better off using a kayak or a small inflatable. I know what it feels like to turn up at a super-promising backwater, after a huge trek and find a stretch of about ten metres of fishable water. Trust me, it isn't very much fun!

Since I started fishing backwaters, I have been blown away by the numbers and quality of bream residing in waters that many wouldn't even rate a cast. Although it may not be everyone's cup of tea, I strongly encourage anyone reading this to get out and give backwater breamin' a go. Once you've had your first taste of success, I guarantee you'll be hooked and wanting more. You never know... you might even become as addicted as I am!





A scenic view of a waterfall cascading over rocks in a lush, green forest. The water is white and frothy as it falls, creating a misty spray at the base. The surrounding trees are dense and vibrant green, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

# REGIONAL RECONNOITRING

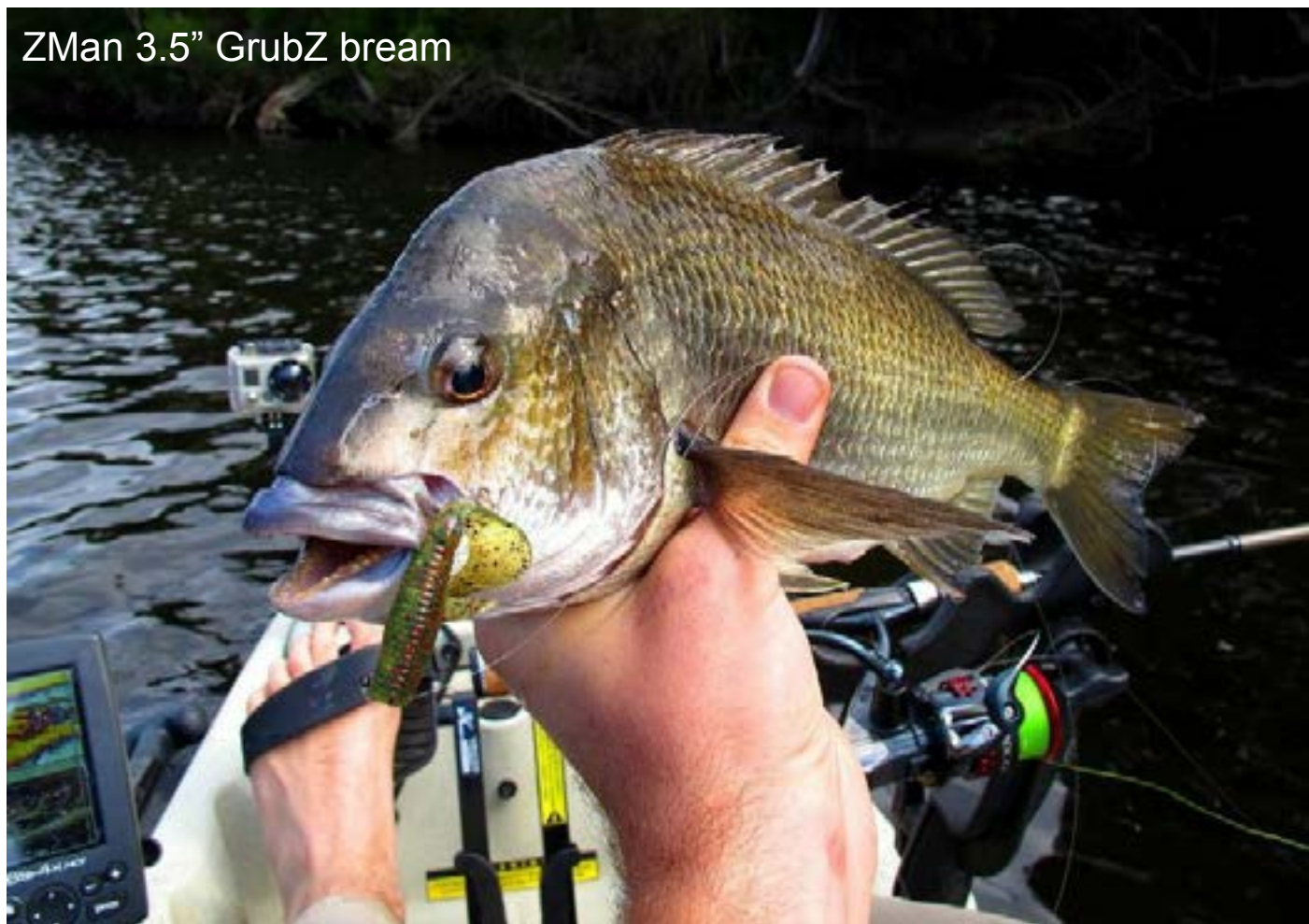
BY ASH HAZELL

Since moving from WA to Melbourne, and starting up Barrow Boys Brewing, I regret that fishing has taken a back seat for me. The occasional flick around my local Yarra and Werribee Rivers have been enough to keep me from getting too rusty but they've not been enough to satisfy my longings for dirty big bream... the type that you pull from tight structure on ultra-light line, triggering a few missed heart beats in the process. It's technical, adrenaline filled fishing, where the objective is to fill my memories (and memory cards) with big bream, rather than my freezer. So, when given the invitation to head into Eastern Victoria with my mate 'Mods and explore some new ground, I just couldn't refuse.

We loaded the kayaks and gear, a few days' solid and liquid rations, cameras and high hopes, then set off on the long drive. Getting there just before sunset meant we had time to scout the area for water flow, clarity and launch spots, and then rig up for an early start.

Being out of it for a few months, there were some new lures to test out and so it was the ZMan 3.5" GrubZ and 2.5" Slim SwimZ that would be first wetted when I hit the water. Not knowing much about the system we were pedaling into, there was a mix of excitement and that back-of-the-head fear that we would be sourly disappointed. It didn't take long to put that fear to rest, with the first good bream in my net after a dozen casts.

ZMan 3.5" GrubZ bream



When fishing new systems, it's crucial to give attention to the particulars. With the heavy unseasonal rain we followed east, this was even more important. The flow was strong enough that the paddle upstream was noticeably more difficult and the volume of fresh water created a halocline/thermocline that could be distinguished with sonar. The further upstream we were, the deeper the barrier and the deeper the bream seemed to be feeding.

Because of this, we focussed on the lower-mid reaches of the river. Being far shorter than the Murray, it wasn't too hard to find the more productive water. We quickly realised how snaggy the system was and had to adjust our fishing style so we weren't losing lures every dozen casts. It was a fine balance to stay in the strike zone without touching the bottom.



Make note of what's happening in the system



The locals weren't disturbed by the kayak's presence



In the meantime, the scenery was amazing and we were so stealthy on the kayaks that the wildlife, including a large water dragon, didn't seem bothered by our presence at all, keeping an eye on us but never behaving like they were alarmed. This is one of the benefits and joys of kayak fishing, where a slow bite can still be a rewarding day on the water.

Thankfully we didn't have to rely on terrestrial entertainment because there was plenty of action below the water. Bream were plentiful and persisting through the smaller fish was rewarded by their parents and occasional grandparents being fooled by our careful presentations.

A cracker bream on a Motor Oil coloured ZMan 3.5" GrubZ



The real treat for the weekend for me was hooking up to a species I've never tussled with before. I was working a reedy bank with a steep drop off and picking up the occasional bream on the 3.5" GrubZ in Motor Oil colour, a proven fish catcher in cloudy conditions. An ambitiously placed plastic, in amongst the reeds, was twitching its way back to me when it was slammed on the pause. All I could do was hold on and thumb the drag as the unfamiliar fish in unfamiliar waters gave my lure a tour of the submersed reeds. Knowing there was no chance of pulling it back through with only 4lb leader, I went in hoping for the best. It wasn't hard to locate the fish as it pulled my line through the grassy reeds. In a spectacularly awkward fashion, I net-paddled my way over to it and searched the stalks for what I hoped was the biggest bream of the trip. A few missed attempts with the net and I managed to see it in the darkness, just able to get below it and safely into the mesh. It took me a few seconds to realise it wasn't a bream, but instead my first estuary perch, at approximately 50cm... I was stoked!

The variety of structure, fish and scenery, along with the challenge of cracking the pattern was just what I needed to revive my drive for this action packed, yet relaxing sport and we're already planning the next trip to another far away system.

Cheers! Ash Hazell





# THE BARRA LOLLY

By Paul CHEW

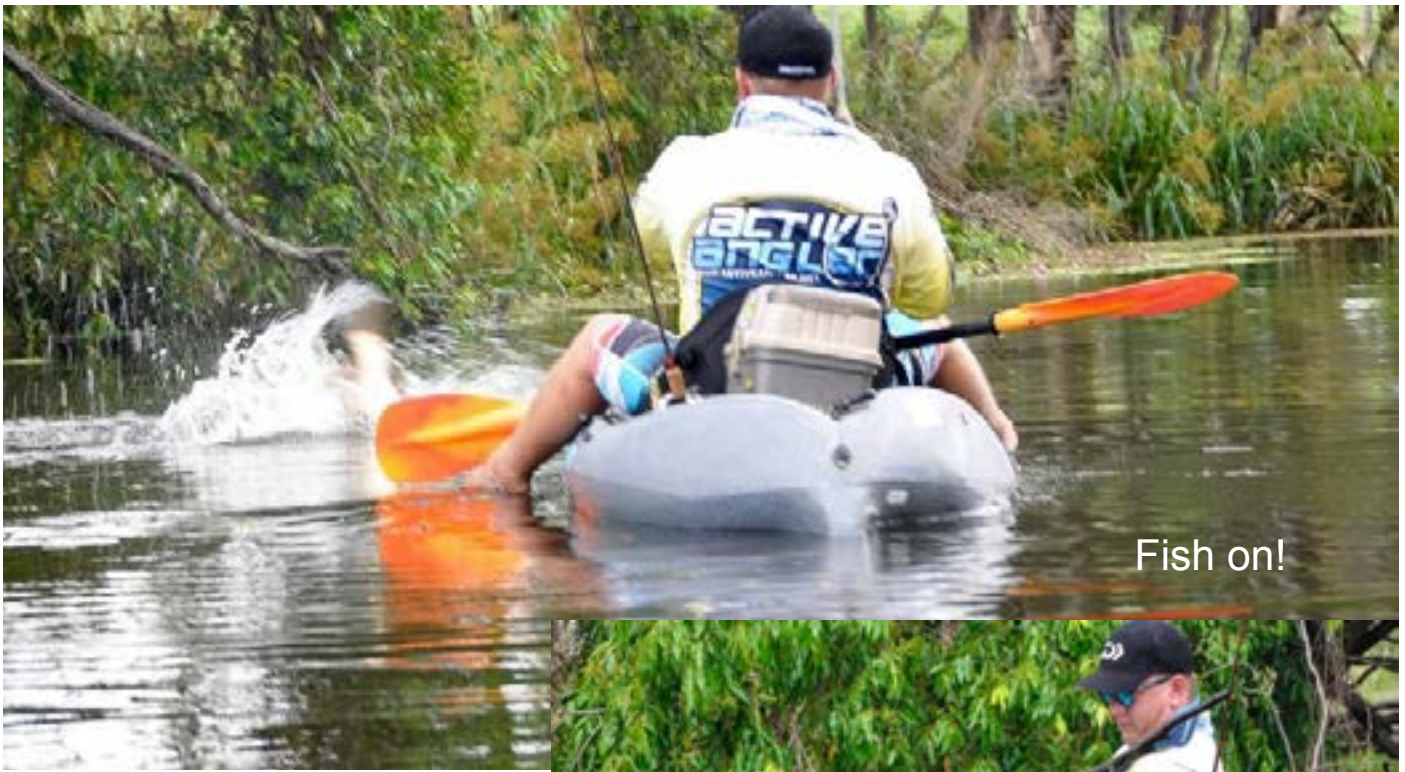
For the fourth time this morning, I unzipped my tackle bag, grabbed out my roll of Schneider and morosely started the well-practiced ritual of tying another leader onto my baitcast rod, while thinking about how ridiculous this was getting. Looking at the braid waving in the breeze, I was second guessing myself. Was the leader too light? Do I need heavier braid or do I just need to fish for something more within my capabilities on the yak.

The last wipe out was brutal, leaving me with shaking hands and 'good' mate Pete laughing once again at how quick and powerful these impoundment barra are in the skinny headwater creeks. I had always rated salties higher for speed, but these fish, now they had reached that 75-80cm mark, surpassed any fishing I have done as far as explosive bust offs go. Leaving even jacks behind, mostly due to their sheer bulk.

Gone are the days when you could just muscle them out of the timber, particularly on a kayak. There are few things funnier than our first Lenthals Dam trip, where Pete tossed a walk the dog lure out, up a creek that you are flat out turning the kayak around in. His lure disappeared in a boil of froth and foam, and his yak lurched onto the plane, rod buckling as the 80+cm barra lunged half out the water, headlong through the nearest big lay down tree. Pete made a few gurgled squeaks before the lure pulled free, thankfully before he ended up skewered on a broken off gum tree branch.

Enter the arena...





This scenario has now been repeated numerous times, with the few fish we have landed making the mistake of jumping clear of the water in an effort to relieve themselves of the troublesome hook lodged in their mouth. Recently, we



have started using the newish ZMan 4" DieZel MinnowZ, more out of necessity than anything else. They are proving to be barra lollies, with a few colours proving to be standouts - Mood Ring, Sexy Mullet and Motor Oil leading the pack.

As far as rigging goes there are a few methods that we use and all



involve rigging weedless. For slow rolling, the TT Lures Snake Head jighead is worth a run. For a slightly different action a small ball sinker in the bottom of a loop knot gives the lure a slightly different body roll. When using either of these rigging types, the retrieve is merely a slow roll, with the occasional twitch of the rod to create a bit of a dip in the swimming motion.



All smiles as the barra lolly does its thing



The other rigging technique that has been successful for me recently involves using a TT Lures 4/0 Chinlockz jighead, both in the weighted and unweighted series, for two different situations. The weighted Chinlockz I use after around 7am, once the barra have dropped a little deeper in the water column. This is just to get it right on their nose, while still being able to use a super slow roll/twitch retrieve to entice a bite.

The unweighted version I use before sunrise and after sunset as a surface 'wake bait' style presentation. A slow roll retrieve is all that's required to give off a consistent tail beat and create the wake. Just on a tangent the 5" Pop ShadZ is proving a success at this also, however I cannot as yet show you a photo on this lure as I have managed to lose every fish I have hooked on one, for one reason or another... but that's a whole other story! The DieZel MinnowZ are accounting for more hook ups than hard bodies and at a quarter the cost it makes seeing your busted off braid waving in the breeze a little easier to take.

Pete with a nice barra

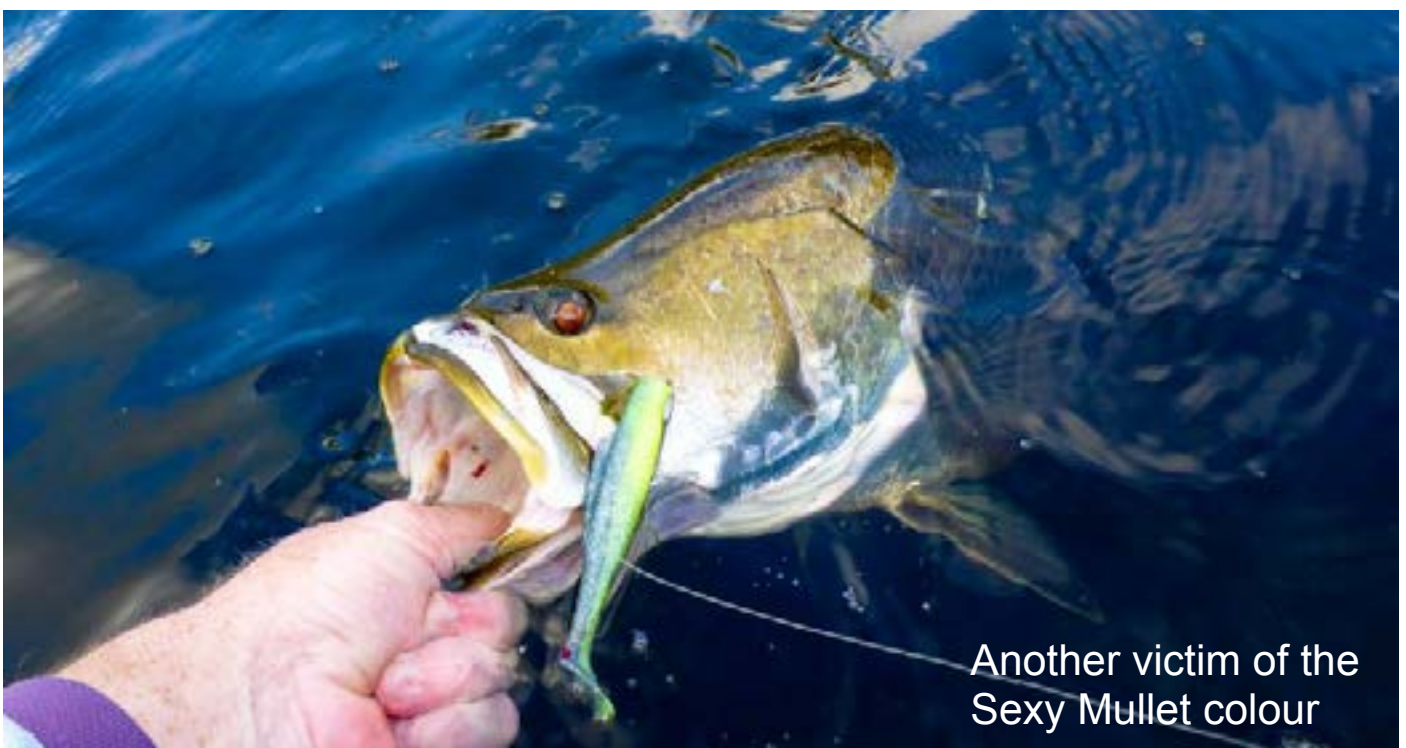


While I seem to moan and complain, it's an addictive way to fish. Probably the most exciting close quarter battling I have done, with most of the fight feeling like you are completely out of control! The barra, I don't think, are particularly trying to bust you off on a particular tree, rather they just burst headlong in any direction until you end up tangled or the leader knot jams in a sunken tree and they gain their freedom. Would it be easier to fish out in the open water? Probably, but it wouldn't be half the fun.



One that didn't find the timber

We are squashing our barbs, so hopefully the fish we lose will rid themselves of the lure quickly anyway. Interestingly Pete, after getting poleaxed again last trip in under two seconds on a surface offering, collected his lure a couple hours later as we were paddling back home. The barra had initially busted him off, taken off about 200 metres and commenced jumping in an attempt to rid itself of the lure. However, after about 3 or 4 jumps in a ten minute period we moved away, with the lure still rattling at every jump. As we passed the area later, the fish jumped again and Pete said "I think that was my lure that just went sailing away". So he paddled over and sure enough, it was floating. I am sure the fish rid themselves of the Diezel and ChinlockZ in a very short space of time.



Another victim of the Sexy Mullet colour

Paul with a quality barra  
from a brutal environment



If you are contemplating heading up into the backwaters of the impoundments chasing these fish, remember to take a bit of a first aid kit along as there is rarely any phone reception. A good supply of water is also a must. As mentioned earlier, it's an addictive way of fishing and even though we are on the wrong side of the scoreboard at the moment, we are still putting plans in place to level the playing field a little. So if you feel like something to get the heart rate going, grab a pack of Diezel MinnowZ, some ChinlockZ and a change of underwear, and head up the backwaters of one of the available impoundments.

### **The Wrap**

Just as a side note, while out and about exploring these back blocks, please take out your rubbish. In fact even take out what you can that isn't yours. All too often I pull up to be greeted by broken bottles and empty cans. For the most part these areas are freehold lease access and we can so easily be shut out by the actions of a small minority doing the wrong thing. Just take a sec to have a quick look around and see what you can do to keep things tidy.

Tight lines

Chewy

# JIGS & BLADES



**BY Dane RADOSEVIC**

About 5 years ago I dropped my first micro jig, in the form of a metal slug with a single hook attached to the back end, to the sea floor and was rewarded with some quality sized golden trevally and kingfish. I was using one of my standard soft plastic outfits, as I didn't have any specialised micro jigging rods and multi coloured jigging braid. After experiencing success using this technique I decided to research a little further and soon discovered an array of gear specific to this style of fishing.

Micro jigging is becoming a growing trend, similar to the soft plastic craze of previous years. It is a versatile technique, simple to learn and most importantly, it catches fish! A variety of species can be caught using this style of angling which include most pelagic and reef dwelling fish, along with a number of estuary species. When learning a new technique I prefer to apply the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle and this is how I approached micro jigging when I first started.

Since my first attempts at jigging I have invested in more specialised micro jigging rods and now understand the advantages of using one over an ordinary graphite rod. Micro jigging rods generally use high modulus graphite blanks that are slow tapered and display an even curve from the tip through to the butt when loaded. I would highly recommend purchasing a rod specific for this technique in order to impart the correct action required from the jig to entice a strike. The results can be very rewarding, as many have match the rod with a suitable allows the smaller jigs to particularly if there is a bit of coloured braid on these when the jig is about to hit

already discovered. I prefer to spin reel as this style of reel sink to the bottom faster, current flowing. The use of multi reels assists me in predicting the bottom.



Dane with a solid golden

Dane is rewarded first drop using a 40g TT Lures Vector Jig



The shape of a jig is obviously what determines its action. For example, if a jig has two straight sides it will more often than not sink in a swaying motion to the bottom, whereas a jig with one straight side and the other shaped will often flutter down, imparting a little more action. When TT Lures released the Vector jigs I was excited, as they had their own twist on cross section and shape, slightly different to many of the other jigs I'd been using and I was very intrigued as to what the action of the jig was going to be like.

I was very keen to test these jigs out and experiment with different retrieval methods to see how they would perform in my local area. I could not have asked for a better first impression! As the 40 gram Vector Jig hit the bottom, I gave it two slow lifts and started to wind when, whack, I came up tight to a solid fish first drop. It turned out to be a golden trevally. They say first impressions are everything... I dropped back down again and repeated the same process and it was only a matter of minutes before I had set the hooks into another solid Goldy. These fish just loved the jigs!

After experimenting with different retrieves, including ripping the jig up as quick as I could and just a simple single hop off the bottom, I had results on both retrieve styles, accounting for school and Spanish mackerel, golden and tea leaf trevally and nannygai. The Vector jigs have really impressed me and they are an easy and versatile jig to use, perfect for someone new to this style of fishing.

The sharks beat this Switchblade caught trevally to the surface... it can be time to move on when this happens.



Another lure that has had great success in my local waters is the 1/2oz TT Switchblade, a definite game changer on a tough bite. The vibration these blades put out is enough to trigger a strike from even the most stubborn fish, usually drawing what is known as a reaction bite. This type of bite isn't usually activated by the fish's instinct for food but rather out of aggression. Blades are an ideal lure to use when searching an area, as they allow an angler to cover a lot of ground and can draw the attention of nearby fish as they pick up the vibrations through their lateral line.

The 1/2oz TT Switchblades have four tow points at the top, allowing the clip to be moved from one hole to another, in turn altering the action of the blade. The closer the tow point is to the front of the blade, the faster you can work the blade and the tighter the vibration. Whereas if the clip is set to the back tow point a slower retrieve is required, however vibration is increased. It pays to experiment on any given day as, with most styles of fishing, the target species and external factors will determine what works best for the situation on the day.



Dane's go-to 1/2oz Switchblades are available in 20 colours and feature 4 attachment points.

I have found the most successful technique for me is to employ two short, sharp hops, which mimics the action of a wounded baitfish trying to swim off but then sinks back to the bottom. For this style of retrieve I generally like to set the clip in the third hole back, generating maximum vibration with each hop. Most often the blade will be hit at the very top of the second hop, or on the drop back. Therefore it is important to stay in contact with the lure at all times and be prepared to strike.

A cracker queenie on a Switchblade





There are no hard and fast rules to fishing with either jigs or blades and it pays to take the time to experiment with different retrieves, as habitat, conditions and other factors vary and changing it up could pay dividends on the day. I also don't personally get too fixated on colours, as again conditions such as water clarity, etc. will dictate what may be most suitable on the day. However do carry a range of colours and be prepared to change your presentation until you find what works. I tend to focus more so on the action and presentation of the lure, rather than the colour and I believe this has increased my success rate greatly.



Switchblade



Vector Jigs

# Bream Tournaments



**Taking the Plunge**  
**By Will Lee**

So you've been to your local tackle store and bought every colour GrubZ and you have every available weight jighead built on size 1 and 2 hooks. It's the middle of winter and the bream are spawning at the mouth of the river and you're catching cricket scores every time you go. This is probably the point where you're thinking you've really got the bream saga figured out. Later on in the year you're at a family BBQ and you escape to the lounge room to catch the latest episode of AFC and as it rolls on the so called 'Pros' struggle to catch their limit of five legal bream. You think back to winter, where you caught sixty of the things and think it shouldn't be that hard. Now your mind really starts ticking over and you start thinking about entering your first comp.

Today there are numerous formats and ways to get involved in bream tournaments. You can take your pick from the Team Series, Kayak Series or a tournament where you're randomly drawn to fish with a non-boater or boater. Let's take an in-depth look at each of the three formats.

Will with a solid tournament bream



A happy team display some of their fish



Without doubt the most popular format today is the 'Teams' type series. These are held all around Australia and generally have different event organisers from state to state, with most events affiliated with ABT to give you the opportunity to qualify for a National Teams Grand Final. The teams tournaments allow you to choose your fishing partner for the event and most people will fish with a family member or a friend, making for a fun and comfortable day on the water, without the added pressure of fishing with a complete stranger. If you don't have a fishing partner but want to fish a teams event, try searching for a partner by making a post on one of the online bream fishing forums. A lot of teams events are a one day only affair and are normally held on a Sunday, making it easy for people with limited time. Most teams events represent good value for money, with plenty of randomly drawn prizes, while at the same time rewarding the top teams with cash pay outs.



The 'Kayak' tournaments have boomed in popularity, just like the sport of kayak fishing itself. Kayak tournaments are a great entry level event and are probably the most affordable of the three. Generally the playing field is level as nobody can take off at a million miles an hour to get out in front of the pack or access water that other craft can't. Kayak tournaments test the individual and there is no other format where executing your game plan is as important. It's vital to have a good look at the weather forecast and tides before a kayak event so you can plan your day and ensure you get back to the weigh-in on time without any mishaps. Hobie have taken kayak tournaments up a notch, adding a 'Worlds' event to the circuit which gives the lucky anglers who qualify a chance to test their skills against some of the best kayak anglers in the world!



The boater/non-boater format is without doubt the best there is to improve your fishing ability and techniques, not to mention the friends you'll make along the way. You have two options with this format; you can enter as a 'boater', which means you need to take your boat to the tournament or as a 'non-boater', which means all you need to take is your fishing gear and a PFD.

The night before the tournament starts the event organisers will hold a briefing which is compulsory to attend. There you'll be required to show them your fishing license and boat insurance details (only if you're a boater) at the registration table. After that's done the 'official briefing' will start and the rules and boundaries for the tournament arena will be explained. It's a good idea to drag yourself away from 'chatty' friends during this period so you don't miss out on any vital information.

Once the finer details are explained, 'the pairings' for the weekend will be announced and this is where you will find out who you're fishing partners are for the weekend. When you meet with your fishing partners make sure you plan a time and place to meet in the morning and if you're a non-boater always ask what type of boat and vehicle you'll be looking for in the morning as it can often be tricky to find your partner's vessel amongst another 70. It's also a good idea to exchange phone numbers and accommodation details in case things don't go exactly to plan the morning of the tournament. As a non-boater you have a chance to fish with some of the best bream anglers in Australia and as a boater you get the chance to knock off some of the best bream anglers in Australia!

Will with a couple of solid bream from a kayak comp.





It's not just the fish that will test the tournament angler

One of the great things about getting involved in tournament fishing is that you will find yourself fishing systems that you'd never actually considered fishing. As exciting as fishing a new system is it can also be daunting, especially during a tournament, so good preparation prior to the event is the key to success. It's not too often these days that an entirely new system will pop up on the tournament circuit and there are plenty of archives floating around on the internet that document tournament results. Past results are a good place to start doing your research as you'll get an idea of the type of areas you may be fishing and the techniques that have been successful in the past.

A lot of people will 'pre-fish' the system before the tournament. Generally the best time to pre-fish for an event is two or four weeks before the event as you will get similar tides and/or moon phases as those on the tournament day. Some tournaments have a 'pre-fish ban' in the lead up to the tournament, so make sure you check out the rules to save any embarrassment.

Murphy's Law says if your boat is going to break down, it will happen during a tournament and probably in that one event where you're the odds on favourite to win it. Breakdowns are inevitable and they go with the highs and lows of tournament fishing, but they can be easily avoided by spending a little time doing maintenance. A lot of people leave their maintenance until the last minute and this will often eat into valuable 'pre-fishing' time, so make sure you're well prepared in advance.

Plenty of tournament anglers carry more tackle to an event than you'll find in a small tackle store, but it is really not necessary and can sometimes be a hindrance more than anything. A minimum of 2 or 3 rods is definitely an advantage, allowing you to have different presentations rigged for different circumstances or a spare ready to go if you're keyed in on a pattern. If fishing as a non-boater, be mindful of the boat you're fishing from and it's a good idea to ask your boater at the briefing how many rods they have room for.



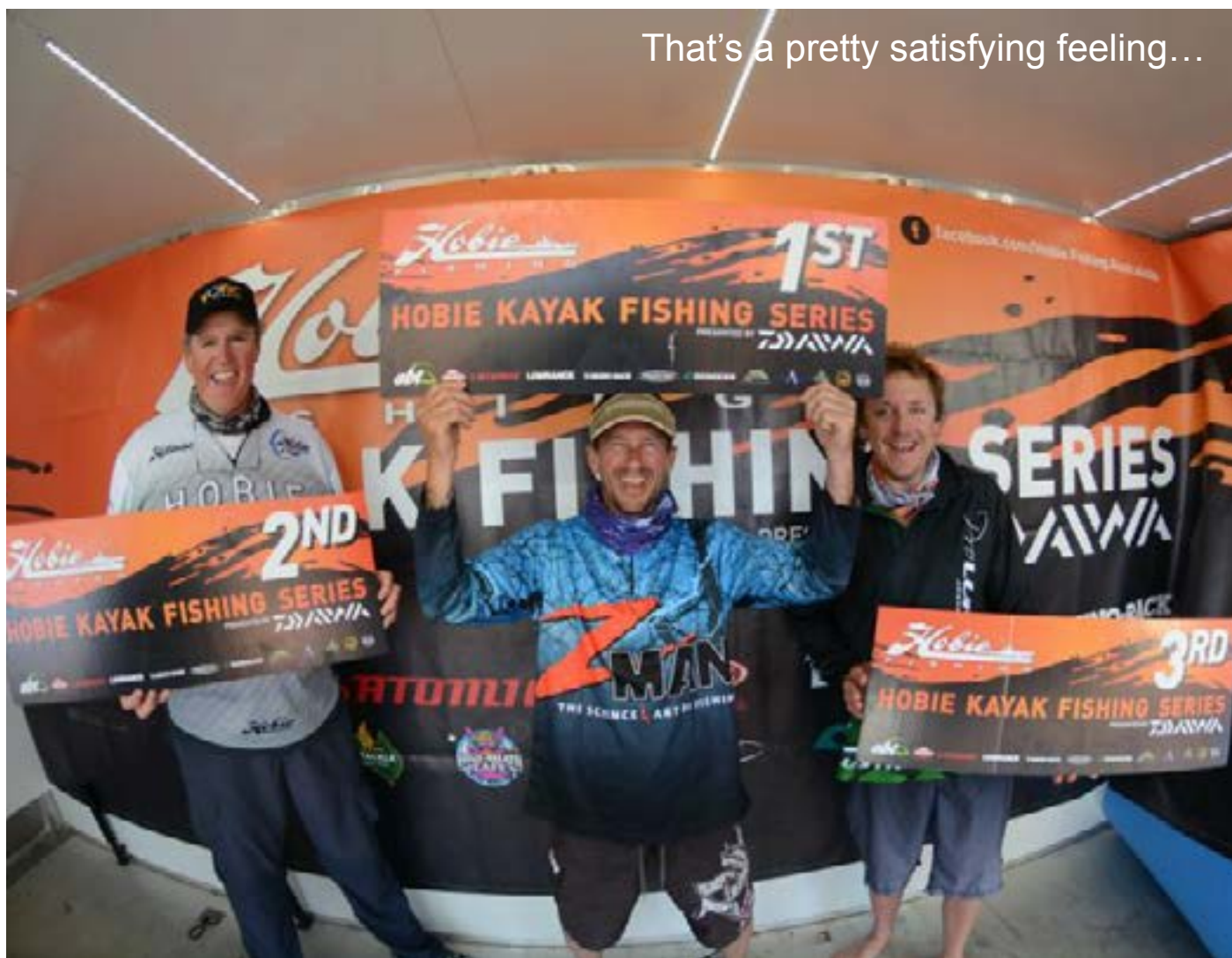
An impressive sight - Hobie PA kayakers ready to launch



As far as lures go you'll need to carry a selection of ZMan soft plastics, TT jigheads, TT Switchblades and Ghostblades, plus some hard bodies and a couple of surface lures as you'll never quite know what the fish want to eat until the tournament day. It's a great idea to pack a 'day box' the night before a tournament. A 'day box' helps you to condense your tackle into one tray that you can keep handy and has everything you will need throughout the session in it. Having a 'day box' ready to go stops you from eating into valuable fishing time sorting through the endless amount of tackle that you've brought to the tournament. A checklist is another great idea and ensures that you have everything you might require on the day of a tournament.

Tournaments are not for everybody but there are a lot more positives than negatives and anybody that has ever been involved will vouch for that. It's important to approach tournament fishing with a willingness to learn and leave all expectations and ego at the front gate as they'll only set you up for disappointment. Really, there is nothing to lose, so check out some websites and magazines, choose a tournament to get involved with and go for it. You might just have the time of your life!

That's a pretty satisfying feeling...



A catch up with...



**Kris Hickson**



The TT boys gather at the bump tubs to weigh in

Tackle Tactics Pro Kris Hickson has tasted success in virtually all tournament formats, fished the AFC and the Hobie Worlds. Kris took the time to answer a few questions about his journey.

### **How did you get into tournament fishing?**

Martin Richardson was the one to get us into it. We had been catching bream on lures for a fair while and had just got into the soft plastic thing. There was an ABT bream round at Forster and Martin convinced me and the old man to go out and have a crack, so we did. Haven't stopped since.

### **What went through your mind when you realised you had won the recent Grand Final?**

To be honest, I can't even remember. It was such a massive moment for me and I was kind of in shock. I think the first thing I thought was feeling bad for Ross because we honestly thought he had it in the bag.

### **Did you have a plan going into the Grand Final and did it pan out as you had hoped?**

Definitely had a plan and a backup plan and backup plan for the backup plan. In the end I think I used everything I had to get the fish I did... if what I did on the last day didn't work, I had nothing left.

The winners and their prize



### **What are some other highlights of your fishing career?**

There has been quite a few now. The 4 big ones that mean the most to me were – 1. Winning the Megabucks at Forster - Pretty much the first substantial win I had achieved. 2. Winning the first Oz open when it became an individual event. 3. Getting a bream on a stick for NSW AOY. But aside from the GF just gone the best of all was to win the Classic GF with Brownie under Team TT's on our home water, The Mighty Manning.

### **What Tackle Tactics products are your go-to's when it comes to comp time?**

I have such a varied arsenal that it's hard to pinpoint just a few, but Hidden Weight jigheads and now the HeadlockZ Finesse are the first to get tied of most times and the standard Bloodworm 2.5" GrubZ are proven fish catchers, so they always get a run. The introduction of Pro-Cure has been awesome too. I use that stuff like tomato sauce and mustard on a hotdog!

### **What advice would you give to someone wanting to target bream on lures for the first time?**

Keep it simple, absorb as much info as you can and spend the money on the right gear. Also be patient. It took most of us plenty of time to get the knack of it.

## **What advice would you give to someone wanting to fish their first tournament?**

Just do it! It can be daunting but the guys there are more than welcoming and the organisers are always willing to help out and guide you in the right direction. Don't have too high expectations of yourself and just have fun, that's what it's all about. Plus you learn so much.

## **What are some other species you enjoy targeting and why?**

Everything... I like catching everything! I probably spend the majority of my time up the creeks chasing bass or out hunting a jew, but when I'm not at a tournament I try and chase something different every weekend, if not a different species, then I want to catch it on something different or in a new location.

## **If you could fish anywhere in Australia right now, where would it be and why?**

Right at this moment? Pretty much every time I am fishing somewhere, I am thinking about fishing somewhere else! I would love to be somewhere the barra are on for the opening season, at the time of writing this, but this changes day to day.

## **If you could fish anywhere in the world right now, where would it be and why?**

With a mate in Canada ice fishing. Mostly for the experience and to see what it's all about. A lot of the fishing I do is about the location and techniques as much as the quarry themselves.

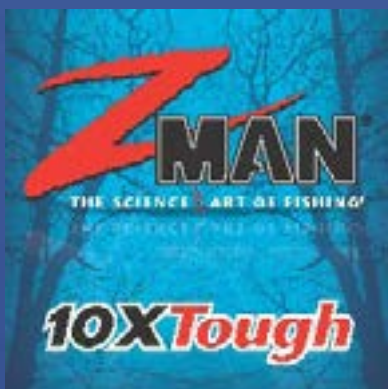
## **Do you have any other sponsors you would like to thank or anything you would like to add?**

A massive thanks to Daiwa, Hobie, Humminbird, Minn Kota, Blueeye and biggest of all Manning River Marine for standing behind me through the years and giving a bloke a shot to prove himself.



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