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Angler: Sue Wells
Species: Sooty Grunter
Lure: ZMan 3" MinnowZ in Houdini
Jighead: TT Lures HeadlockZ HD

A man wearing a camouflage cap and sunglasses is smiling while holding a large, golden-brown fish. The fish's mouth is open, and a bright green frog is hooked in its mouth. The background is a bright, outdoor setting.

FROGZ

Vinnie Versfeld

One of the most exciting ways of targeting fish on lures surely must be surface lures. Not many other methods of targeting fish combine all of the senses as much and I think that is what makes it so exciting and addictive. Whether it is chasing GT's on poppers or walking tiny stick baits over a flat, it just gets the adrenaline flowing, the heart racing and the blood pumping, watching a fish come up and smash a surface lure! The viciousness of attack varies from time to time, from a subtle slurp, right through to something resembling a Polaris missile set on kill mode!

I have been experimenting with ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ for a while now and man they are addictive! Making that cast and watching those legs flailing in the air and then landing with a distinct 'plop' already has chaos written all over it. When you start the retrieve they kick out that unmistakable 'gurgle' sound and then you're watching a massive bow wave appear behind it, chasing it down. It really is a fantastic composure test. FrogZ have also proven highly effective on a variety of species and especially barramundi, which I will be concentrating on here, but they have taken everything from JP's (jungle perch) through to toga in the fresh and jacks to GT's in the salt.

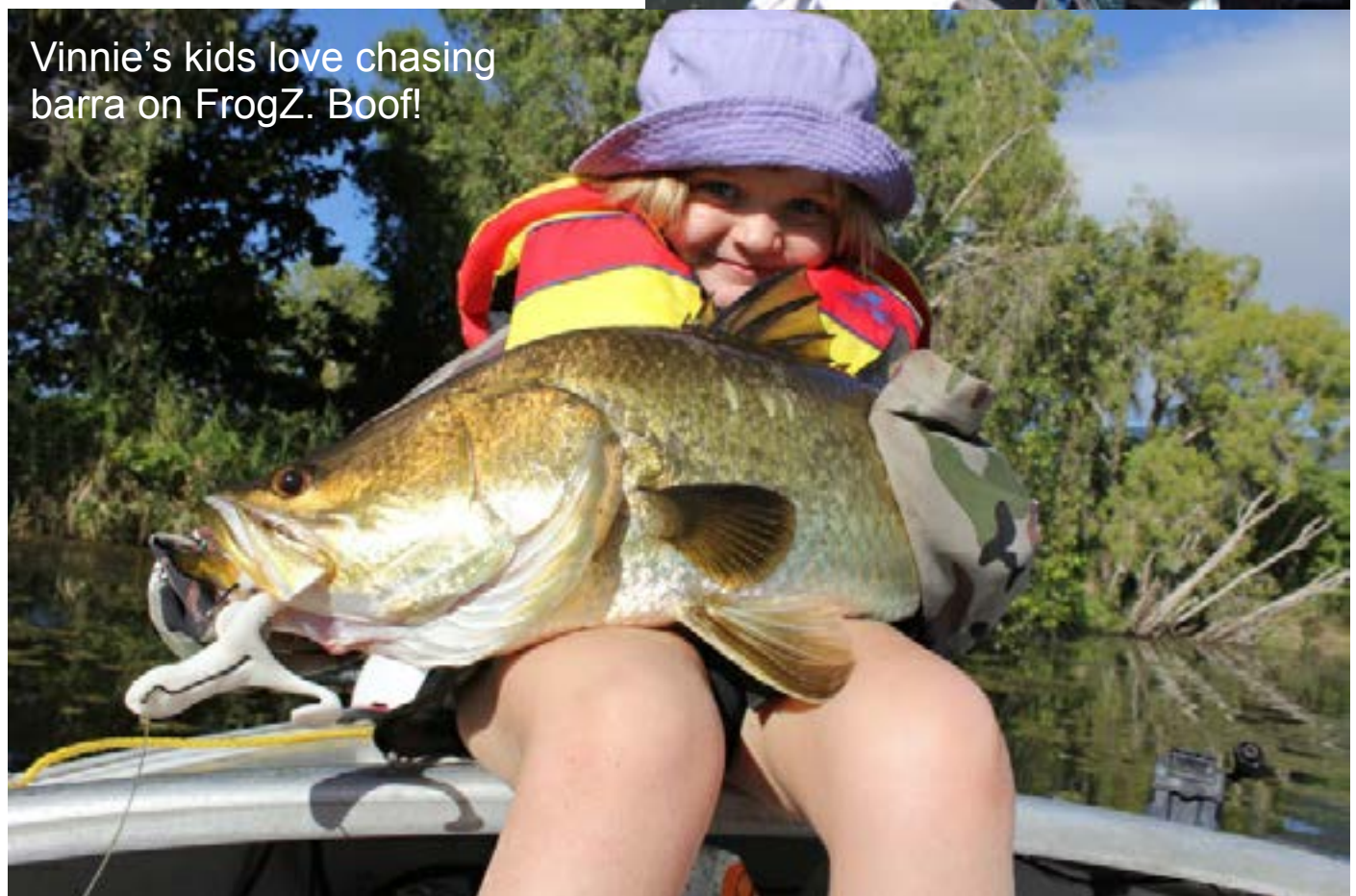
This sooty inhaled a Watermelon Chartreuse ZMan 4" HL FrogZ.




Right, let's get into the nitty gritty of it all. It's really simple and the adage of "a kid can do it" really applies as my kids love throwing them.

Gear

I suggest throwing FrogZ on spinning gear and a 2500-4000 size reel is ample. I match this with a 6'6"-7' fast action rod and run 15-20lb braid on the set up. The reason I run the spinning gear is that it gives me the longer casts that I prefer when running the FrogZ. You want to try and cover as much water as possible. I use the longer rod to firstly give me solid hook sets and I also retrieve the FrogZ with a raised rod tip to assist with their action and to keep them from fouling on weed etc. In terms of leader material, I run a foot or two of 50lb, tied with a loop knot to a TT Lures ChinlockZ SWS (Snagless Weight System) hook in 4/0. Then I simply 'Texas Rig' the FrogZ onto that.





The weedless rigged FrogZ is ideal for fishing weed and other structure.



Prime locations and retrieves

FrogZ are effective pretty much anywhere but they most certainly come into their own over matted weed, like oxygen weed and lily pads, due to their weedless design and fish 'calling' ability. As mentioned I make long casts,

concentrating on weed edges and points. When fishing grassy banks and weed edges I prefer making long parallel casts to the edge or bank, while when hitting points I try and cast across the point.

If there is current, always retrieve the FrogZ with the current if possible. In impoundments and stationery water I always try and fish them with the wind/wave action as that always creates a bit of current and fish will be facing into it in most cases. Fish will be more likely to attack something coming towards them than over their backs. If you choose a likely spot, be it a weed point, snag or other structure, try and cast the FrogZ at least five or six feet past the intended spot and then retrieve it 'through' the spot, instead of fishing them at the spots.

As far as retrieves go I prefer a slow and steady retrieve. When you retrieve the FrogZ they have a distinct 'gurgle' and to me it's like when a guitar is being tuned... you know when that tone hits the sweet spot and if it sounds right to you, it probably is. Nine times out of ten fish will follow the FrogZ for a short distance before annihilating it, and yes I mean annihilate! The attacks from barramundi especially are savage to say the least.

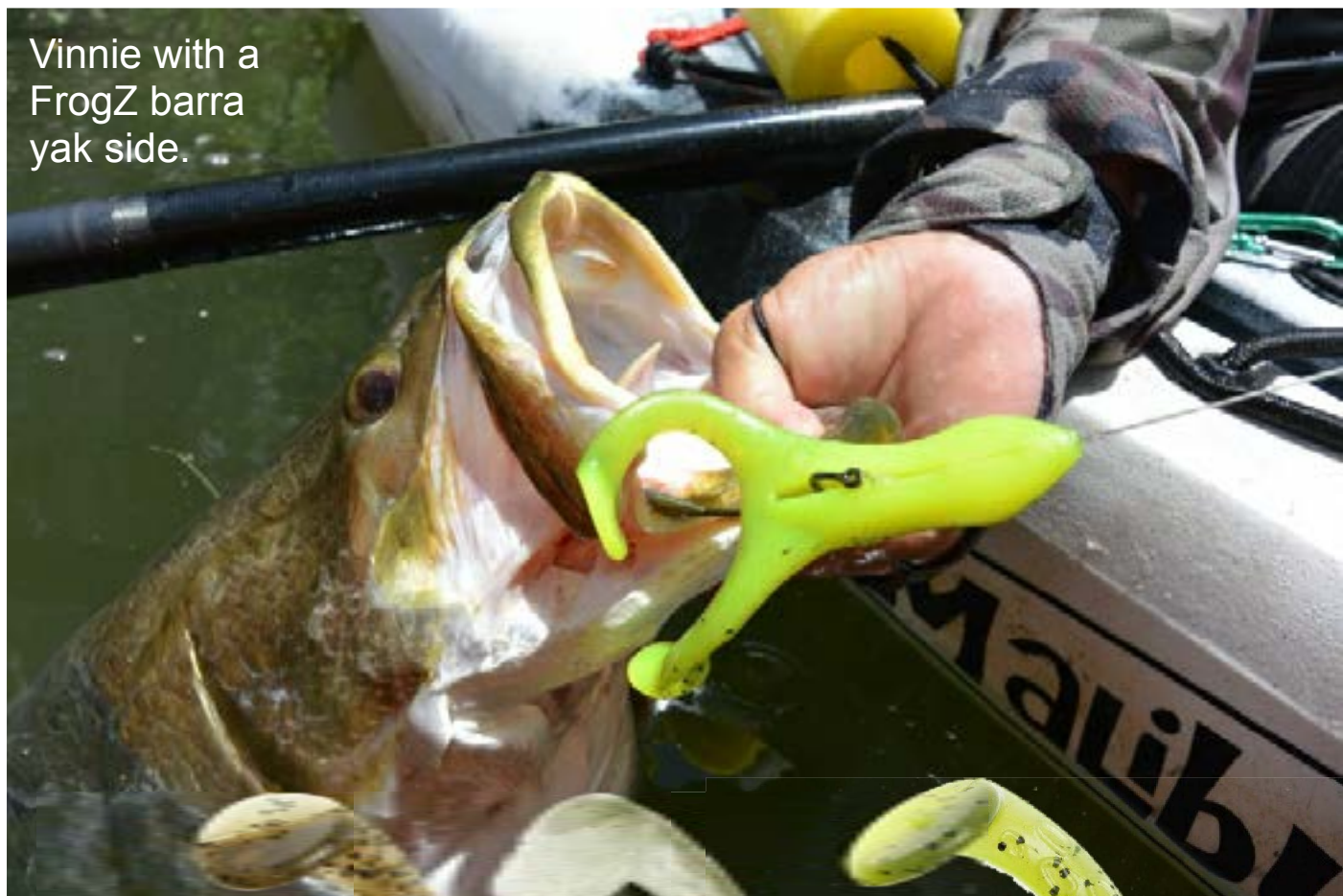
When you see a barramundi following it, don't lose your nerve. Keep the retrieve going and don't stop or speed up, especially if they have a swing and miss, just keep going as most times they will come back for a second swing. Keep going until you come up tight and then set the hook forcefully. If you find fish following the FrogZ and not eating them, I find a colour change is often the game changer in converting follows to hook ups. In this case I will try and go to an opposite colour to the one that I am fishing in an attempt to convert the bites. My last resort will be a retrieve change.



I find the FrogZ are most effective... when you throw them. I wish I could narrow down that they are more effective early morning or late afternoon, but they have produced fish throughout the day and night. I have had great success on them at night too, so don't be worried about throwing them after dark.

So, next time you want to have a crack at some surface action tie on a ZMan FrogZ and watch it paddle its way back to you... BOOF!

Vinnie with a FrogZ barra yak side.





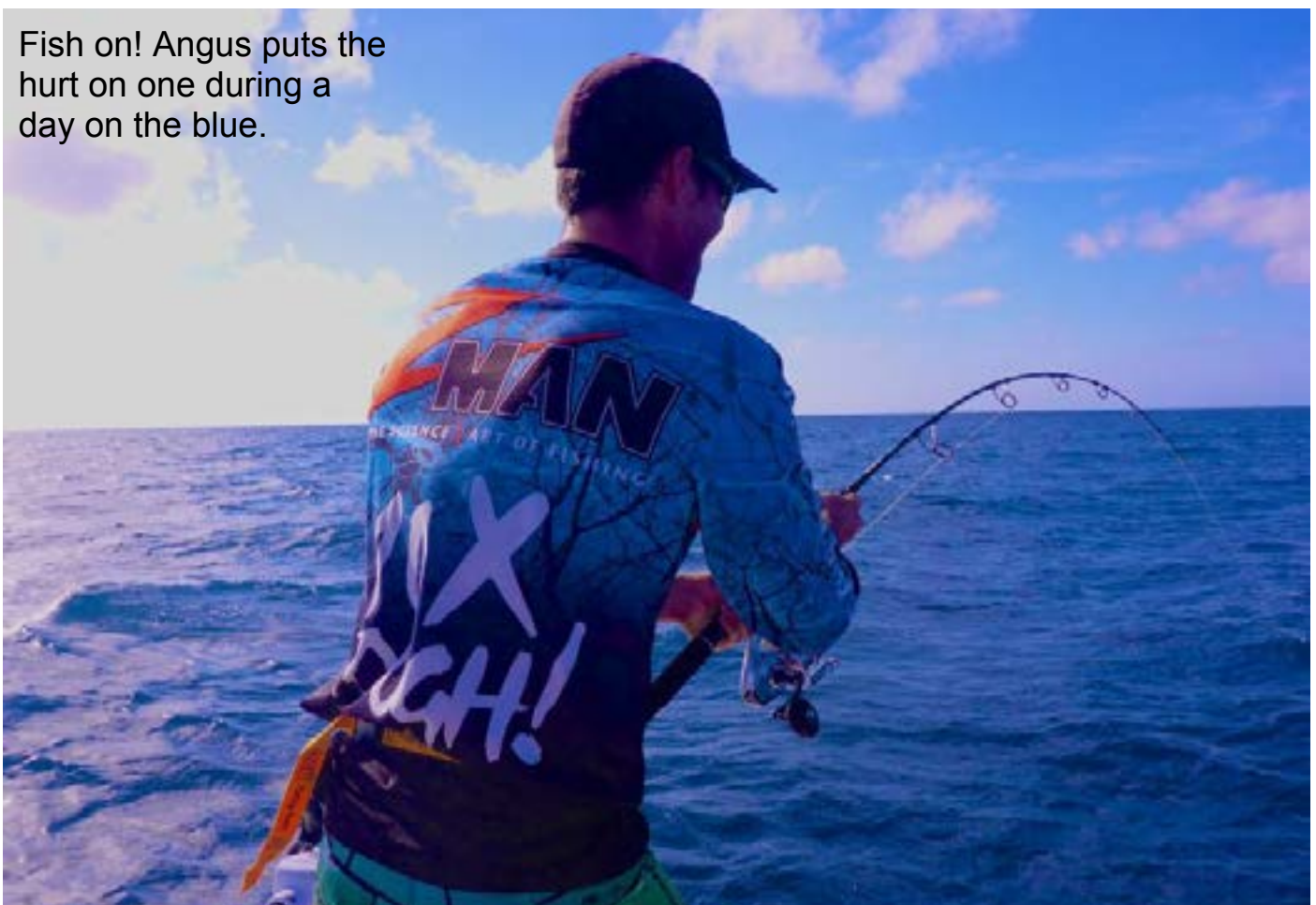
A Day on the **Blue**

Angus James

The excitement and anticipation that builds up before any fishing session is always a buzz! Especially when heading out on the blue water! What will the first fish of the day be? What species will be encountered? What amazing things will I experience today? These are all the thoughts running around my head prior to a days fishing off the coast of Far North Queensland. Pushing the throttle down and cruising out to my favourite fishing marks to tangle with the species that lurk in these waters is a real thrill.

To maximize the day's results I'll make sure I have the right gear for every situation. As I'm venturing out to my destination, I scan the ocean for any surface activity and birds working. For these encounters I always have tied on the ZMan 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ, rigged on a 1oz TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jighead. This presentation is perfect for long casts into the tuna bust ups. It can be worked fast across the surface, creating an erratic skipping sub surface action, while also heavy enough to be allowed to sink down under the bait ball nice and quick to see what is lurking down below the surface activity. On many occasions I have picked up some great fish under small tuna bust-ups, including Spanish mackerel, golden trevally and cobia just to name a few. They are waiting down there for the scraps from the baitfish. Just letting this presentation naturally sink will get the bites.

Fish on! Angus puts the hurt on one during a day on the blue.



Quality trevally are just one of the many species on offer.



By now my arms are well and truly warmed up for the days fishing ahead, pushing on and continuing my adventure to my next destination. Admiring the ocean with the wind in my face. What will the day bring? With hundreds of wrecks lying on the sea floor off the Queensland coast it is easy to come up with a solid game plan. From shipping containers to World War 2 aircraft and of course the large number of vessels that have fallen to cyclones and rough weather over the past years. Wrecks can offer some of the best offshore fishing available. At certain times of the year these places cater for just about every species that live in our tropical waters.

When I arrive at my chosen location, I spend some time prospecting the area, using my sounder to locate any structure, mark fish and find my drift line. When I have put this together, then it's game on! Depth and wind speed will determine what size HeadlockZ I will be running; normally I will use a 2oz in the 40m mark.

My favorite ZMan to send down is the ZMan 8" StreakZ XL. This plastic is the perfect option to cover all species from the bottom dwellers such as coral trout, fingermark and cod, to the hard-hitting pelagic line peelers such as giant trevally, queenfish and mackerel. They all love chasing this bite-sized presentation up through the water column and on occasions I have had them vertically launch out of the ocean boat side as I'm lifting my plastic out from the water! Exciting stuff!

As I open the bail arm and send down my presentation I always watch my line, as many times the fish will hit the lure on the way down. The tails on the StreakZ give of a nice tight swimming action, making it hard to resist. When I feel my ZMan has hit the bottom, I erratically jig it up around 5m off the sea floor. I will repeat this action until I have completely drifted over the structure. I will then wind and jig up as fast as I can to get the attention from the pelagic species such as mackerel, tuna and trevally. I love using this system as it allows me to target as many species in the one drift as possible.

Angus's go-to ZMan
8" StreakZ produced
this quality trevally.

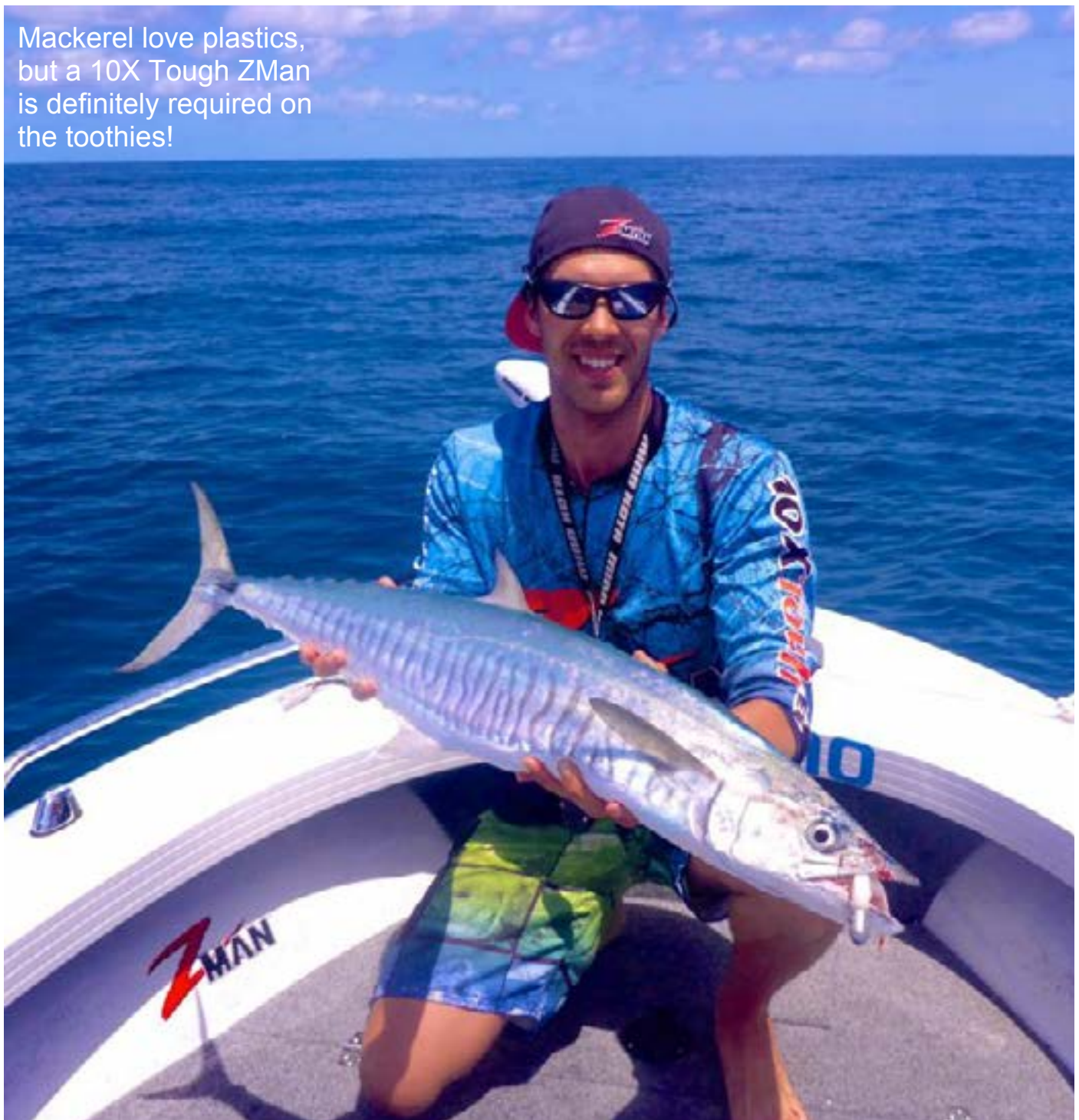


Another great option to have in the tackle box is the TT Lures Rev Head HD jighead. This has turned those quiet days on the water into loud ones! Adding that extra bling to your favorite plastic is a sure way to get the attention from every species. They can be worked as fast as you like, or a simple lift and drop will get you hooked up.

TT has so many options to use out on the water and that's what it's all about, finding out what the fish want and offering them the right presentation. See you out on the water!

Cheers Jimmy

Mackerel love plastics, but a 10X Tough ZMan is definitely required on the toothies!



Soft Plastics 101 - What about Colour?

There are many theories on colour, but the most common seems to be – when fishing clear water and bright days, use a lighter, more natural colour and when fishing dirty water and low light, use a darker colour plastic as it offers a better silhouette in the water. If these aren't working, then throw a fluoro colour, such as bright pink or chartreuse.

Other suggestions include matching your soft plastic colour to the water colour, as bait will try and camouflage itself and if you are faced with water so dirty from rain runoff that it looks like you could walk on it, try something with a bit of gold glitter in it like ZMan's Gold Rush, Space Guppy or Golden Boy colours.



Natural, lighter colours tend to be more productive in clear water and bright conditions. Examples: Opening Night, Pearl Blue Glimmer, Baby Bass and Bad Shad.



Darker colours offer a better silhouette in dirtier water and low light conditions. Examples: Rootbeer Gold, Mud Minnow, Gold Rush and New Penny.



Fluoro colours can work in all water types and are worth using, especially when the other colours aren't working. Examples: Nuked Chicken Glow, Chartreuse Glow, Pink Glow and Space Guppy.

Fun On FINGERMARK



Territory Marine

**ARNHEMLAND
BARRAMUNDI
NATURE LODGE**

opal



BY SHAWN TAYLOR

My last guiding stint in Arnhemland was a bit of a lightning trip and other work commitments meant that I could only snag two days to catch up with my younger brother for a fish after my client's departure from Barralodge.

My clients for this trip were focused purely on barra, so I had packed virtually no bluewater gear, and as fate would have it glass out conditions greeted Andy and I as we crept out of our favourite little coastal creek after a great night's surface fishing for bazzas.

Only a short run offshore from this particular creek Andrew had found some gravel patches that were holding some good size golden snapper (fingermark). It took about 3 seconds for me to harass him into blasting out to this area, as my plane wasn't flying out until that afternoon and I was determined to fill my trip with as much fishy goodness as possible!

Golden snapper (fingermark) are one of my favourite species, both as a fighting and eating species, and when I lived at Barralodge I spent a lot of time offshore looking for new ground and putting clients onto these awesome 'goldies'.

Another happy client with a solid golden snapper (fingermark).



It's not all about the barra, check out this solid fingermark!



As Andy gunned the Ocean Master out towards the spot, I quickly started ferreting through our tackle bags looking for appropriate offerings for our finery friends. If this type of fishing had of been on my itinerary I would have packed plenty of ZMan 5" Scented Jerk ShadZ, 7" Scented Jerk ShadZ, 4" Scented ShrimpZ and big GrubZ, all the placcies that I have had past success with.

Luckily Andy had some 6/0 HeadlockZ HD jigheads in 3/4 ounce, which were perfect for the job at hand, but as to what to load them up with, well this time all I had was paddle tails. I flicked through the plastic wallets until I came across some bigger offerings, including ZMan 5" Scented PaddlerZ in my favourite colour (Redbone) and one of the newer colours that I had been having good success with around Hervey Bay (Sexy Mullet).

Andy pulled up at a small reef complex, about halfway to his gravel patches that had produced in the past for us, but after rigging our plastics and dousing them with some Pro-Cure scent our first drops were both intercepted before they reached mid-water. I loaded up my Millerod, only to be bitten off and Andy's fish, darting around in short erratic bursts, gave away the fact that the spot was loaded up with small macks, super keen on shredding our leaders and reducing our already limited jighead supply. The decision was made to continue on out to the wider spot and hopefully leave the razor gang behind!

I tied another leader and before long Andy was dropping off the plane and setting the boat up for our first drift. Although fingermark inhabit a wide range of environments, from creeks, man-made structure like jetty pylons and also offshore reefs, they also like these more nondescript gravel patches and gutters.

It pays to focus close attention on your sounder when mooching around or trolling offshore, as you may come across some new honey holes that don't jump out at you with pinnacles and uprisings, but a more subtle change in bottom hardness or depth.

Andy had run over this spot on a previous trip and had proceeded to pull some real nice specimens off it. I was stoked when my first drop reached the bottom without a 'mack attack'. I then proceeded to lift the PaddlerZ off the bottom a metre or so and let it 'swim' back to the bottom. It must have been two or three of these 'hops' before I came up tight on a powerful fish that had my 4000 Stella giving a bit of line and my Millerod loaded up nicely. Down the back of the boat Andrew was in the same situation. He was on the Redbone PaddlerZ, while I had gone for the Sexy Mullet colour.



Andrew with a quality fingermark on a HeadlockZ rigged ZMan 5" Scented PaddlerZ in Redbone colour.

The other advantage of these types of spots is that there is not as much nasty stuff down there to get 'bricked' and 'busted up' on, so once off the bottom you can take it a bit easier. That familiar gold/maroon colour soon materialised in the water column and I was wrapped as a pair of beautiful fingermark came to the net. We repeated this process over and over, with some ripper fingeries coming aboard. Keeping a few for the Barralodge chef and releasing many others.

It is a well-known trait of these fish to put down the school after being released. A lot of Territorians employ a 'dobbers box' when fishing for them, keeping fish destined for release in a live well whilst fishing and releasing them when finished fishing. I think it's important to remember a couple of things on this.

1. Bag limits are in possession limits, so any fish in your live tank counts, even if destined for release.
2. The fish's condition and welfare. It is for this reason we don't employ this scenario. If the fish go off the bite we move to new ground and try and pick a few off it.



Can't argue with that by-catch!



Shaun with a nice fingery.



Andy with a chunk of fingermark.



The smile says it all!

One thing with fishing is that you are always learning and once you think you know it all, you cease to get better. The lesson I learnt on this one was to remember not to 'pigeon hole' myself as far as lure selection goes. If I had of had my full kit, I would have gone straight for the Jerk ShadZ, with the PaddlerZ not even getting a look in!

Andy has also had success on the ZMan 5" Grass KickerZ on the reef, so I will definitely put a paddle tail amongst the mix when next in this scenario... although I am very keen to also try a TT Arrow Jig covered in Pro-Cure Squid Super Gel Scent. A known squid lover, the golden snapper should be all over this like me on a Wild Turkey can!

Luckily I don't have long to wait, as I am guiding three mates shortly who are very keen to experience not only the barra, but the many species that inhabit the offshore reefs of Arnhemland.
Fish on!!!!

Shaun Taylor

Shaun with a quality rubble patch fingermark.





SOJOURN FOR SOOTIES BY ROBBIE WELLS

The sooty grunter (*Hephaestus fuliginosus*), also known by the name black bream, or I like black jack because of its obvious sport fishing ability, is a species of fish that inhabits coastal and inland freshwater creeks and rivers of primarily northern Australia, from the upper Burdekin River in Queensland to the Daly River in the Northern Territory.

They are also located in the western catchment of Central Qld from Mackay region south west to Rockhampton west and small isolated pockets further south west of the Bundaberg region.

For me just reading the above conjures images of pristine country, of gin clear northern creeks entrenched in rainforest and of tannin stained waters meandering through enormous overhanging paperbark and eucalyptus trees.

The truths about how the sooty grunter came to inhabit the lower regions are few and far between but enough digging around has found that when the new highway was constructed and rerouted along the coast large numbers of sooty grunter fingerlings were dispersed into the system, where they have flourished and are a regular and welcome by-catch when chasing wild southern saratoga that are native to the region. Further south, at about their most southern limit, the sooty grunter population is believed to have been established through flooding etc. from hatcheries and aquaculture facilities that were previously in the area.



Sooty country!

Sooties now inhabit a large area of Queensland and love flowing freshwater streams; preferring rapidly flowing waters with a rocky sand bottom and limited aquatic plant cover. They will live side by side in the same water with JPs (jungle perch), mangrove jack and barramundi in the north, in clear rainforest streams, along with saratoga and bass to the south, adapting to slower moving water and more rock bar and typical wood snag waterways with ease.

Of course heavily timbered creeks, tributaries with limited flow or large periods of time cut off from flow will affect water quality dramatically over time. This alone inhibits the fish's ability to grow and spawn efficiently, even though it is one of our more tolerant Australian natives. The species can tolerate acidic water conditions to a pH of 4.0 and water temperatures between 12 and 34°C.

That said, with favourable environmental conditions, our pristine northern waterways produce some outstanding wild fish. Broad shoulders and a powerful tail, built like a little football, weighing up to five kilograms and growing to a maximum length of around 55cm in the wild, along with some true stonkers caught in a few impoundments.





Although most specimen reach 25 to 30cm, in pristine conditions or with lack of accessibility from fishing pressure 35-45cm fish are easily achievable and are not uncommon. Coloration differences are also outstanding, with light brown sooties in the shallows or sandy areas through to the jet black models found in deeper holes and the timber. Coloration also changes once landed, but it's amazing the coloration variation from different depths and regions.



Slowly but surely the mighty sooty grunter is gaining more notoriety as a sweetwater gangster, with super-hard hook-ups and strikes, blistering runs, often back over sharp rock ledges or into the timber Meccano set they call home. I chase heaps of bass, but a sooty is a seriously underrated species of sportfish that will pull an Aussie bass backward and is definitely one of my highlights when travelling north.



How does all of the above help as an angler? Like any species, the more you know and learn about the targeted species, i.e. feeding patterns, locations, bite times etc. the better chance you have of successfully targeting them. Sooties feed mainly on invertebrates, especially freshwater shrimp, and small gudgeons and rainbow fish. Although this can vary when river flows and water levels fall, their diet then will include water weeds and falling figs, Pandanus nuts and anything unlucky enough to enter the water column. So to be successful we need to match the hatch so to speak.



Lures

A great sportfish, with a never say die attitude, makes for an ideal species to target. They have an aggressive nature and readiness to strike artificials, instantly engulfing surface poppers, hard bodies, soft plastics and spinnerbaits at will. The black bream is a favourite with our indigenous Australians and outback folk, with the fish's taste being superior to most other freshwater species.

By far the most effective sub surface presentation has been soft plastics and the ZMan 3" Minnowz / TT 1/8oz HeadlockZ HD combo in a 3/0 is dynamite. It can be fished in most scenarios; fast flow, the deeper holes and snags, with the advantage of floating across the shallows or dropping slowing through the strike zone.

My go-to is the Houdini or Pinfish colour, with Pearl, Motor Oil and Space Guppy always in my kit. The ZMan 2.5" GrubZ in Watermelon, Black and Motor Oil always seem to tag along too and are dangerous as on a hard sooty bite.

If you are partial to spinnerbaits or ChatterBaits, which I mainly fish in the deeper holes or pools below some fast flow, TT Vortex spinnerbaits, with their stinger hook account for their fair share and do snare the larger fish at times. In terms of weight 1/4 and 3/8oz are my preferred, with the purples, black red, blacks, brown most effective in the darker or tannin water and also any fluoro green colours ideal in the clearer, normally faster water or around pressure rocks.



Like any species on the day it's good to mix it up, but the standard slow roll is a good start until you read the water. Being an opportunistic feeder casting accuracy is paramount, along with knowing where to cast and how to read the water and surroundings.

Remember, what's above the ground normally continues below the waterline. Especially as a lot of the time you will be on foot or dragging a canoe or kayak so you won't have the luxury of a sounder.

As mentioned earlier casting accuracy is make or break, with pinpoint accuracy in the timber crucial, similar to when chasing barra and jacks.

The fast flow reminds me of trout fishing or chasing JPs, with an emphasis on reading the water and the rocks below for eddies, ledges and pressure points, where the sooties sit, conserving their energy and waiting to ambush an easy meal.



Another bonus in sooty country, when fishing the western catchments, is by-catch. Besides the norm, like catties and 'toga, unfortunately introduced tilapia are also infiltrating our native waterways and if caught must be disposed of above the high water mark. They must be buried as being mouth brooders, birds and even recent rain can even help spread the pest further afield.

Other by-catch includes a few species of grunter, endemic to particular streams within a catchment area. The spotted grunter and small headed grunter, or pot bellies as locals call them, are both great fighters... as good as a sooty and a little bonus that you can tick off your bucket list.

So next time you're heading north or planning an adventure, get onto Google Earth and plan a sooty mission, you won't be disappointed catching this great fish in amazing country.

How Goods Australia
Robbie Wells



Follow Robbie and Sue's adventures on their 'Sun2Sea UV Protection' FB page.

SOJOURN FOR SOOTIES



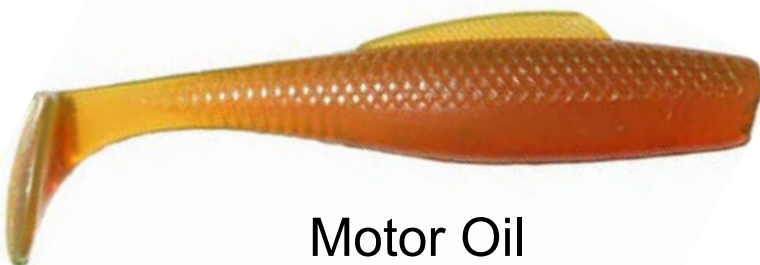
Soft Plastics 101 - What about UV?

In recent times anglers have started to talk more about how lures react under UV light... even going as far as carrying a UV torch into tackle stores to shine on the lures to see how they react. The belief is that fish see UV light, while humans do not, so if a lure 'lights up' more under UV light, then it is more visible to the fish in the water. We are of the opinion that it is more important that your plastic matches the species you are targeting, location you're fishing and the technique you are using, but ZMan do offer a selection of colours that respond well to UV light.

If you are convinced that UV light is a factor then check out how the colour Motor Oil responds to a UV torch. This colour surely has one of the most extreme reactions to UV light, turning from a transparent amber to a bright green when under the UV torch. This could possibly be the reason that it is one of the most popular colours in the ZMan range.

Other colours that respond well to UV light include Watermelon Red, Houdini, New Penny, Baby Bass, California Craw, Gugeon, all of the fluoro colours, including Electric Chicken, Chartreuse Glow, Pink Glow, Neon Pink and Chartreuse Sparkle, as well as all of the glow colours, including Glow, Redbone Glow, Nuked Chicken Glow, Nuked Pilchard Glow and Coconut Ice Glow. So if UV is an important factor in your fishing, you have plenty of colours to choose from!

At times anglers prefer to move away from the UV colours for a more subtle presentation, especially in clear water on bright days and when the fish are spooked and hard to tempt.



Motor Oil



Motor Oil (Under UV Light)

Fish's eyes differ from ours in that some species are believed to detect UV light and how it reflects from objects, in turn enhancing their vision when it comes to feeding. Shine a UV torch on your ZMan soft plastics and you will see how some react to UV light more than others... is this why they are such effective colours?

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, a person is silhouetted on a dock, looking out at a boat in the distance. The boat has several lights on, and their reflection is visible on the water. The background shows a line of trees silhouetted against the bright sky.

BREaMin' NELSON, VICTORIA

BY LUKE SMITH

On the 20th and 21st of June the Glenelg river and Victorian township of Nelson played host to the fourth round of the Vic Bream Tournaments. Nelson is located in Victoria's southwest and the river begins and ends in Victoria, with a small portion being in South Australia. It is a large system in length but the majority of the river is less than 200m wide. This is one of the harder events as catching a ten fish bag can prove challenging, as bigger fish can be well spread. I had the privilege of fishing the weekend with Aaron Taylor in his late father's Legend Alpha 211. This was fantastic and scary at the same time as we had a very stable fishing platform that could move extremely fast in both ski runs, but travelling at 120kmph across wake is not for the faint hearted.

Prefish:

Our original game plan didn't eventuate as the river mouth let go three days prior to the event. The river had a slight current but the water level had dropped considerably, making the plans of fishing the flats at the system's mouth quite tricky. Add to this 25 kayaks fishing this area, with the Hobie comp on at the same time and it was certainly going to be a tricky place to fish. It was for this reason that we chose to fish up river on some reed lined banks that were seeing far less pressure.

Our day was quite slow on the bream front, with only two legal fish being landed, both off one bank that was experiencing a lot of boat pressure. The further we ventured up river, the more and more estuary perch we caught. At times it was a perch a cast, with one lucky streak stretching to 8 fish from 8 casts. To land 3 or 4 perch in as many casts was becoming a common theme and whilst it was super fun, it was becoming frustrating as bream were the goal. It didn't matter whether we had ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ or Grubz on, the perch just kept on smashing them!

Bring it on!



A magic time of day on the river.



Day 1

It was a super cold start to the day, as it always is during winter in Nelson and due to restricted light our start and finish times were set back half an hour for safety reasons. We kicked off in 29th starting position and began the slow, speed restricted journey up river. The whole system is speed restricted, with 4, 5, 8 and 10 knot limits set throughout. The river has two ski runs and these are the only two small stretches of water that wide open throttle is allowed. It is the one area that overtaking is permitted and everyone flexes their muscle to gain extra positions. As we slowly ventured up river it was interesting to see where everyone was stopping to try their luck and it was also apparent that there was no real pattern, seeming as if everyone was trying somewhere different.

We stopped the outboard and deployed the electric after a forty minute trip up river. We had marked up fish on side scan, sitting just out from a sloping mud bank and this was to be spot number one. Three casts in and I was on, working a Motor Oil GrubZ on a 1/16oz TT Head Hunter jighead along the bottom in about eight feet of water. After a quick tussle I was less than impressed to see a perch break the surface. It was quickly released unharmed and I fired another cast along the drop off. When the lure rested on the bottom I brought it to life with a sideways twitch of the rod tip and then let it fall unimpeded again. I felt the tell-tale pluck in the line, struck, and then shortly after yet another perch was flapping around on the casting deck. Flicking the GrubZ out again, this time slightly wider than the previous two casts, the lure had barely hit the bottom before it was eaten again. I was just about to suggest a move to Aaron to get away from the perch school we had stumbled upon, as a darker bronze coloured fish flashed past the boat and bream was the call. The fish accounted well for itself and I had it on its side beaten... but as I guided it towards the net the lip hooked fish kicked and won its freedom.



This was absolutely demoralising as it is always good to boat your first legal and get off the dreaded donut. It hurts more when the fish was high thirties in length. After this we figured the spot warranted a bit more prospecting. A few casts and a few perch later we had our first legal bream, whilst it wasn't big, it was size none the less.

We continued working this bank for a further half hour and managed our second legal before

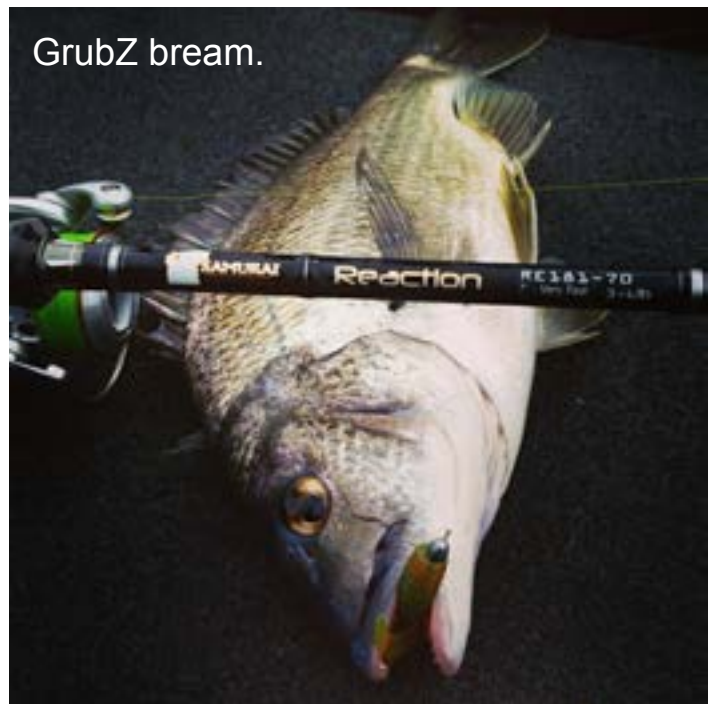
making a short shift to the next reed lined bank on the inside of a corner. We were choosing these banks in particular as the Glenelg River is twenty foot plus deep in the middle and when up river most banks are cliff lined and drop off quickly. However, when on the inside of a corner as you head up river, the banks generally taper off slowly. This was our chosen type of structure for the weekend as it suited our preferred methods of working GrubZ and Slim SwimZ along the bottom. It was also a bonus to see fish constantly holding in seven to ten feet of water along these banks on the HDS DownScan.

Over the next hour we battled through the plethora of small perch and managed to bag our fifth bream by 9.30am, giving us quite a few hours to search for upgrades, which proved to be a hard task. Unfortunately we only managed to get one small upgrade, but it was still an improvement. All our legal fish came on the exact same Motor Oil ZMan 2.5" GrubZ and 1/16oz TT jighead combo. At the end of the day the jighead was battle scarred with teeth marks all over it but the plastic was still perfectly intact and that is one benefit of fishing ZMan soft plastics.



Our five fish bag weighed in at 2.65kg and whilst they weren't big fish there was five of them, which is what counts in the Glenelg. This bag placed us in 12th position overnight, which was within striking distance of the leaders who had managed 3.56kg. After talking to my mates it became apparent that many teams had great success on Motor Oil GrubZ in the 2.5" size, but really this came as no great surprise as they are a very consistent performer in the Glenelg River. Aaron and I then decided to

mix it up tomorrow, just to show the fish something different. I chose to rig my rods with a Bloodworm GrubZ on a 1/12oz head, a Greasy Prawn Slim SwimZ on a 1/12oz, a ZMan 4" Finesse ShadZ in Watermelon Red and the trusty old Motor Oil GrubZ that caught our first day's fish.



Day 2

Our game plan had not changed from the previous day and we again ventured up river to try and bag another five fish and again the perch were thick early on and at some stages it was a real battle to get your lure to the bottom without being engulfed on the drop. Unlike the previous day our first couple of banks didn't produce any bream and it was not until I swapped to a Greasy Prawn coloured Slim SwimZ at our third spot that a

legal bream was boated.

It was only just size but it got the ball rolling and before long we had a small bag by 10am. In search of an upgrade we decided to venture further up river in the hope of fishing banks that had not seen any pressure for the weekend. Unfortunately this move didn't pay off as we only managed to catch more perch and bigger perch.



Whilst we weren't fishing for them, it was great to see many different ZMan plastics, including the Finesse ShadZ, ZMan 3.75" StreakZ, ZMan 3.5" GrubZ and the ZMan 2" CrusteaZ all getting eaten by perch. Some certainly were preferred by the EP's but as long as they were all rigged light, they were eaten at some stage. The Motor Oil colour was by far a standout, however Bloodworm was a not too distant second.

On making the hour long trip back to the finishing point we decided to try one last bank as a Hail Mary. It was very ambitious as thirty plus boats were in a single file line slowly making their way past us and this was certainly roughing the area up. Persistence paid off though and amongst the chop created by all the boats I came tight on a good fish, slowly hopping a Slim SwimZ in Motor Oil along the bottom. After a very spirited fight and a few nervous moments with the boat rocking around, we managed to slip the net under the fish. Thankfully it was a fish we needed to upgrade a little scrapper.

Our day two bag of 5 fish weighed in at 2.61kg and gave us a 10 fish bag of 5.26kgs. Based on previous results I was confident of a top 10 finish. With this bag we would have been top 5 last year but I knew there were a few good bags caught by others. When our team name, A&L Legend was announced as 9th place winners we were ecstatic. It was a great result for our efforts and Aaron's first ever Vic Bream comp, but it was even better to send the legend off on a good note.

Well done to all the place getters and especially the local south west boys who represented well.



The boys will take a top 10 finish any day of the week.

ONWARDS & UPWARDS

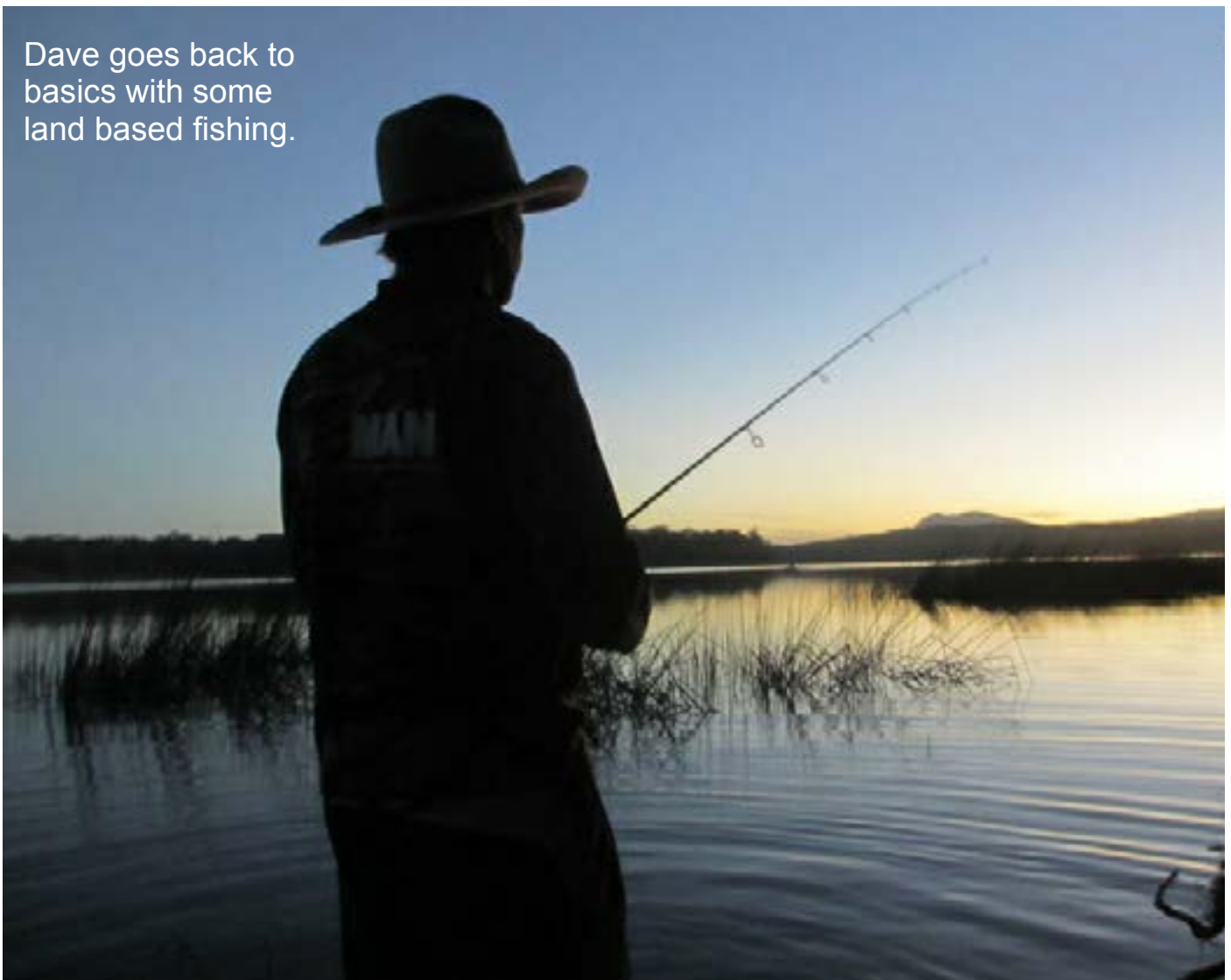
DAVE BRACE



We often forget why we actually go fishing... for some it's just to forget the pressures of life, work commitments and to leave that daily grind behind, while for other anglers it is the thrill of the hunt that excites them when targeting a specific species. However, more often than not if you ask an avid angler, it is usually a combination of both. Anglers who participate in tournaments enjoy that competitive nature of the sport, with some who thrive under pressure. Every angler has different goals and aspirations they'd like to achieve. What motivates me as an angler is definitely the competitive pressure that I put on myself to succeed. The thrill of the hunt, honing my techniques and skills, and learning from my mistakes is also what drives me to be more determined to catch fish.

No matter what level you find yourself at as an angler, whether you're a beginner or a skilled tournament angler, you'll experience yourself riding that 'roller coaster' ride of fishing highs, like capturing a trophy fish and those terrible lows of consecutive donut sessions at some stage or another. It's when you hit those lows that you start to question yourself, your ability and the techniques you've acquired to target your chosen species.

Dave goes back to basics with some land based fishing.



It's not all about the fish... enjoy the magic locations, adventure and mateship.



Confidence plays a massive role in being a successful angler and being able to back yourself when the chips are down. Staying continually positive is a very important attribute for an angler. Maybe we place too much pressure on ourselves to catch that prize fish and to get those all-important photos for bragging rights to share amongst our mates. However, when you find yourself in the deepest fishing recession it's a real struggle to keep motivated.

Often, when getting into a rut and sometimes being obsessed with catching that significant fish, we forget to appreciate our surroundings and more importantly the company we share whilst fishing. Sometimes the harder we try, the quicker we spiral in a slump and the frustrations of catching fish are escalated to a point whereby fishing becomes no longer a passion. Being in this situation on countless occasions, it's the worst feeling; where do we go from here? How can we turn ourselves around from being a fishing tragic, to once again an angler passionate about the sport we enjoy so much?



Keen anglers have their own way of dealing with the disappointments of being in a fishing depression and at times it's not really the anglers doing, rather outside influences such as environmental and seasonal changes that cause the lack of fish being landed. We as anglers need to take positives from these negative experiences, being sure to learn how to adapt and change when these influences occur. As hard as it is, taking a step back to go forwards and pressing the reset button is also great to regain perspective of why we fish in the first place.

Referring back to basics and targeting a species you are confident in catching is a fantastic way to regain that passion again. These simplistic ways of fishing are tools that can sometimes be utilised to reset and revitalise ourselves. In this situation, more often than not, scaling back to a selection of your most favoured lures, taking a single rod to hit the banks on foot or just sliding the kayak into a nearby creek is a great start in recapturing your self-assurance and the passion for the sport again.

When faced with a run of fishless sessions, Dave goes back to basics on his favourites, cod, bass and golden perch.



Having the determination and the confidence in your ability to succeed is one thing, however having that same confidence in your equipment and more importantly your lure selection is paramount and equally significant.

Personally I prefer to use a variety of ZMan 3" MinnowZ, rigged on TT Lures HeadlockZ jigheads, along with some Pro-Cure Mullet or Garlic Plus Super Gel Scent for extra attractant. This is a promising lure presentation to regain that confidence whilst targeting a whole range of species, whether it be in the sweet or rusty water.

A handful of TT Vortex spinnerbaits are also stowed in the lure tray when targeting a variety of freshwater species, such as Australian bass, Murray cod and golden perch. These are the species that I target and revert back to when I find myself losing confidence in my ability to turn a scale. It only takes one or two fish to reinvigorate your whole mindset and funnily enough, it is when you least expect it, during these downward times, that a fish of a lifetime will present itself attached to the end of your line.



Here is a list of my 'Top 10' tips in no particular order that I tend to follow when my back is against the wall, poised in anticipation, waiting for that trophy fish to unsuspectingly take my lure presentation. To be honest, I have caught myself out on numerous occasions reminding myself of these pointers during hard fought sessions.

No angler is immune to these fishing slumps, clambering out of them is sometimes very frustrating, however one thing is for certain, they won't last forever!

Bracey!

- *Be attentive to your surroundings.*
- *Don't be afraid to fail.*
- *Learn from your mistakes.*
- *Ignore negative thoughts.*
- *Work hard to achieve your goals.*
- *Think outside the square.*
- *Learn to adapt.*
- *Have confidence in your equipment and lure selection.*
- *Believe in yourself.*
- *Trust your ability to succeed.*

Dave is all smiles with a bass on one of his confidence lures, a TT Lures Vortex spinnerbait.



Stay tuned, coming soon...



tribe
FISHING