

Angler: Reece Thomas
Species: Yellowbelly (Golden Perch)
Lure: TT Lures Switchblade 3/8oz
Colour: Aussie Green & Gold



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SYDNEY HARBOUR JEWFISH



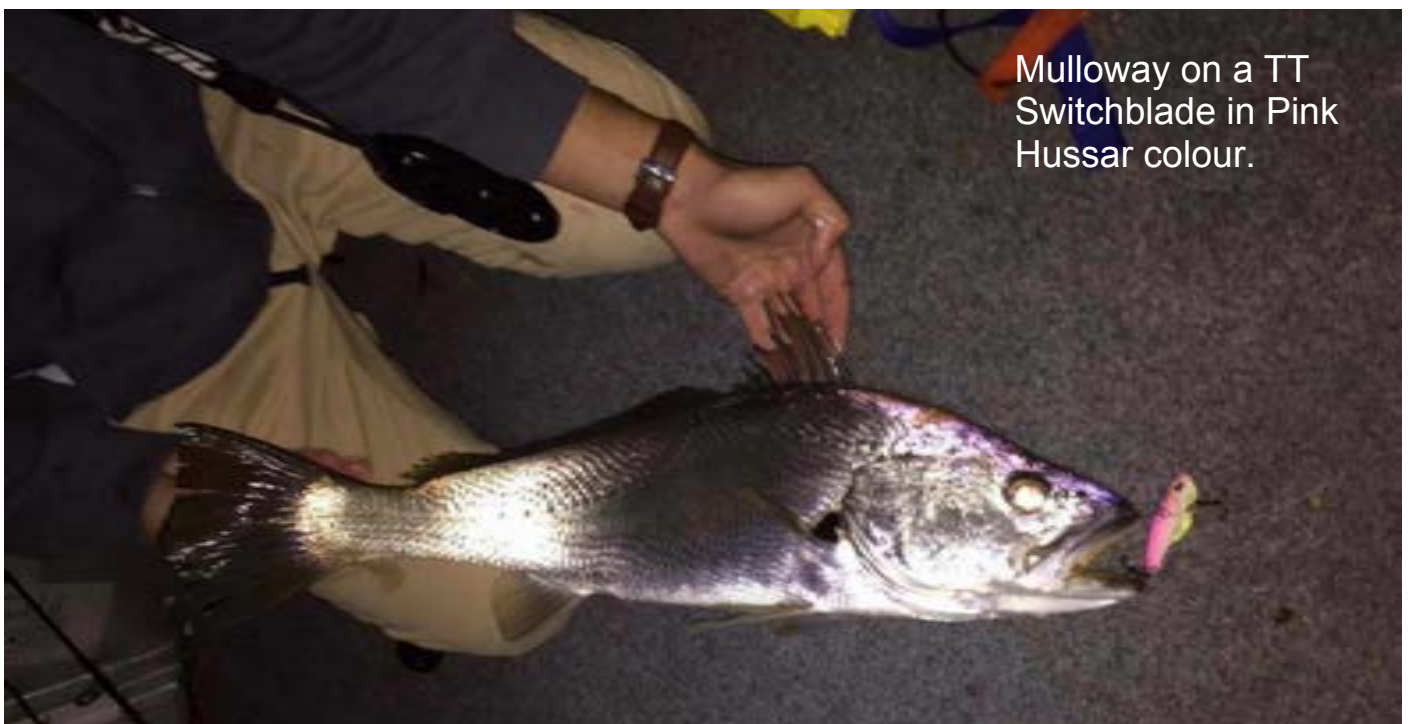
By Cameron Cronin

Cameron Cronin outlines what works for him chasing mulloway in his part of Australia, discussing techniques that could be applied in other waters around the country. Fish on!

For many anglers that are fortunate enough call the bustling metropolis surrounding Sydney Harbour home, catching mulloway (jewfish) on artificials with any degree of consistency is little more than a pipe dream. Admittedly, if you were to wind back the clock to the start of my harbour jewfish escapades, a little over 4 years ago, I most definitely belonged to that same category of anglers. With a little persistence though and access to the correct lures and techniques, I was soon pleasantly surprised to discover just how consistent Sydney Harbour can be as a mulloway fishery. In this article I hope to share a few of the tactics and techniques that I believe to be instrumental when it comes to consistently locating and catching the jewfish (mulloway) that call Sydney harbour home.

As not to upset the slightly secretive bunch who partake in this form of fishing (myself included) I won't be mentioning any specific locations as such, although armed with the right knowledge, and a will to devote some time to exploring, it can be astounding just how prevalent and widespread this species really is.

Firstly for the purpose of simplicity, it's worth noting that in this article, I'll mainly be referring to boat or kayak fishing, not land based fishing (which is an entire other story in itself!). With that in mind, we can start to break down some of the locations where we are most likely to find mulloway, and the most effective lures and techniques to target them in that specific scenario.



Mulloway on a TT Switchblade in Pink Hussar colour.

Cameron with a nice mulloway on a TT Switchblade in Purple Minnow colour.



Reef and wrecks

Being such a busy waterway, it's hardly surprising that the seabed of Sydney Harbour is littered with artificial wrecks formed by sunken ships and other manmade products such as cars, pylons and even shopping trolleys. Whilst being an unfortunate reminder of the ongoing urbanisation surrounding the harbour foreshore, the good news is that all this artificial structure forms the perfect environment for mulloway to both shelter in and feed, while complementing the fairly limited natural reef already available.

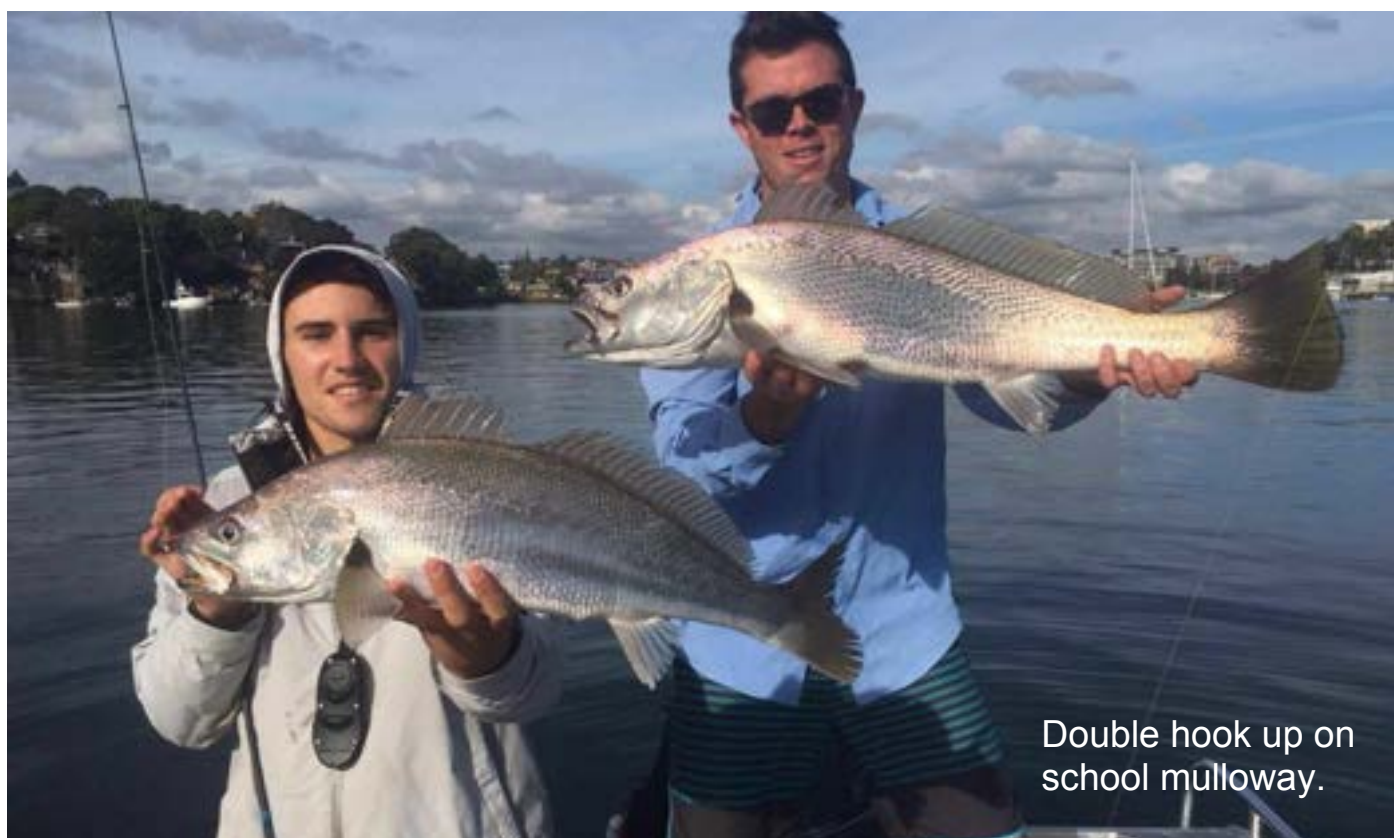
The bulk of this type of structure is usually found in the main body of Port Jackson in fairly deep water, often exceeding 20 metres. There are many large shipwrecks in this section, which are personally my main port of call. They can easily be located with the use of a depth sounder and GPS co-ordinates from online dive sites.

Due to the general depth and open, windswept nature of Port Jackson, I find fast sinking lures such as the 1/2oz TT Lures Switchblade and micro jigs like the TT Lures Vector to be most effective, with a slow lift and drop jigging directly under the boat being the most effective way to fish these locations.

Gear wise ! like to err on the heavier side of things, while fishing in such close proximity to such heavy structure, with 20-30lb braid and 30lb fluorocarbon leader being ample for most jewfish likely to be encountered, whilst still giving you a chance at stopping some off the sizable kingfish that frequent the reefs and wrecks of Sydney Harbour.

This lower section of the harbour seems to fish best in early autumn and spring, with jewfish schools reaching extremely large concentrations at times, especially after the freshwater from a heavy downpour concentrates upriver mulloway schools around deepwater wrecks in the more oceanic body of Port Jackson. These large concentrations, combined with deep water, makes it very easy to locate mulloway schools with the aid of the depth sounder, without the risk of spooking the fish. This allows for lures to be dropped down vertically for often instantaneous hook-ups.

Personally I prefer to fish this type of structure around the change of tide, although good results can also be had by fishing the down current side of the wreck or reef on a running tide, with the structure forming a current break that mulloway use to shelter from the brunt of the tide. It is also worth mentioning that when fishing reef or wrecks in Port Jackson on a weekend, it's probably better to restrict your fishing time to an early morning as this area can become extremely busy and rough from heavy boat traffic, making for a frustrating and potentially dangerous day on the water.



Switchblades are ideal for targeting schooled fish in deep water.



Vertical structure (rock walls, bridges, pylons, etc.)

Primarily located in the middle to upper reaches of tributaries such as the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers, as well as Middle Harbour, vertical structure is an abundant form of mulloway habitat, thus making it sometimes difficult to pick out the most effective location to fish this structure. However, with a few key factors in mind finding the right vertical structure becomes quite a simple matter.

Generally when it comes to mulloway around rock walls, it's best to focus around those that drop very suddenly off into deeper water. As a general rule, in my experiences in the harbour, it's often a case of the steeper the better, with all of the more consistent banks I fish being almost vertical in nature, hence their inclusion in this category. More often than not these rock walls occur on the deep outside bands of rivers, where sweeping currents have carved away at the rock over the millennia to create an ideal position for mulloway to both shelter from the tide and ambush passing prey.

On a similar token the same areas of Sydney Harbour also boast a plethora of manmade vertical structure in the form of bridge and marina pylons, both of which are excellent producers of mulloway in their own right. When selecting manmade vertical structure, the most effective areas are usually situated in areas of higher current flow and relatively deeper water, with a good starting example being the ever-popular marina and boat moorings surrounding Gladesville Bridge in the Parramatta River.

Tide wise this type of structure is generally fished around the tide change, where the current hits most directly. Although, when the tide picks up, there are plenty of good fish to be caught by locating and targeting the "eddies" or areas of slack water formed by the tide deflecting off the structure, which commonly occurs on the down current side of pylons or rocky points.

Mulloway often cling tightly to vertical structure, especially during periods of heavy flow, so accurate casts within a metre of the target are the key, coupled with heavier gear of at least 20lb braid and 30lb leader to extract the often larger than average fish that are caught in these locations.

In order to minimise lost lures I prefer to utilise soft plastic lures, with my personal favourites being the ZMan 4" and 5" Scented PaddlerZ, rigged on a 1/4 - 3/8oz weighted TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads to ensure a relatively slow decent along the face of the rocks.

In order to fish this type of location most effectively, the use of an electric motor is most recommended. This enables a controlled and quiet drift along your chosen structure and the ability to hold position against the tide and pepper a location with casts.



ZMan Scented PaddlerZ are one of Cameron's go-to plastics.

Open water (cockle beds / gravel beds, changes in bottom composition and deep holes)

Perhaps the most consistent locations to catch mulloway in Sydney harbour, open water fishing for jewfish can initially be both a daunting and time consuming prospect. Again it can begin to feel a little like chasing a needle in a haystack without the appropriate knowledge and equipment.



A sounder makes locating fish and bait easier.

First things first, in order to maximise your success and minimise time spent fishing dead water it's best to fit your vessel up with a quality sounder and GPS system. When I fish open water I use the inbuilt depth chart overlays, available through Navionics compatible units, to position the boat over suitable underwater terrain and the trail left by the GPS unit to track where I have drifted. Meanwhile, I scan the sounder screen for appropriate bottom compositions as well as bait and mulloway schools, which if interesting, are promptly "marked" in the GPS for further investigation next drift.

In the way of bottom composition, I find two of the most effective areas to be changes in sediment type, such as mud to sand, which is indicated by a colour change of the bottom in the sounder reading, or more so an area of deep water cockle beds. Although difficult to identify on the sounder, cockles often show up as a slightly bumpy and more solid colour bottom reading, and are often hooked on trebled lures like blades dragged across the bottom.

These areas are mulloway gold mines when situated in close proximity to deep water holes, and are commonly found throughout the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers. Similarly in the lower reaches of the harbour as well as in Middle Harbour, gravel beds take over, which are similarly identified and fished to cockles.

While fishing in the deepest hole you can find is a common mindset when it comes to mulloway fishing, and is without a doubt very effective at times, I find most of my open water jewfish coming from the shallower water surrounding these areas. This is especially so during the slacker periods of the tides where fish venture away from the shelter of deeper water to hunt in the surrounding area.

One thing I love about fishing these areas is the vast numbers of school size mulloway that congregate in open water and can easily be targeted on the lightest of gear with minimal danger of loss. Double figure sessions being far from uncommon. Although I like to use 6-10lb braid on these fish, I'll usually stick to a leader of at least 14lb to minimise annoying bite offs from croc sized flathead, which form a regular open water bycatch, along with silver trevally, bream and whiting.

Lure wise, my go-to presentation is without a doubt the ZMan 4" Scented PaddlerZ, rigged on a 1/2oz 4/0H TT Lures Tournament Series jighead (I prefer to use Tournament Series on light gear due to their finer hook gauge, with a tiny dab of super glue to lock the ZMan plastic in place), although in water over 15m deep I'll make the change to a 1/2oz TT Switchblade to ensure I keep direct contact with the bottom.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that although these areas are great fun on smaller fish, it's relatively rare to hook anything over 90cm in open water in the harbour, so if you're in search of that metre plus fish, you're better off focusing your efforts on the previously mentioned structure types.



A few jewies and some quality by-catch.



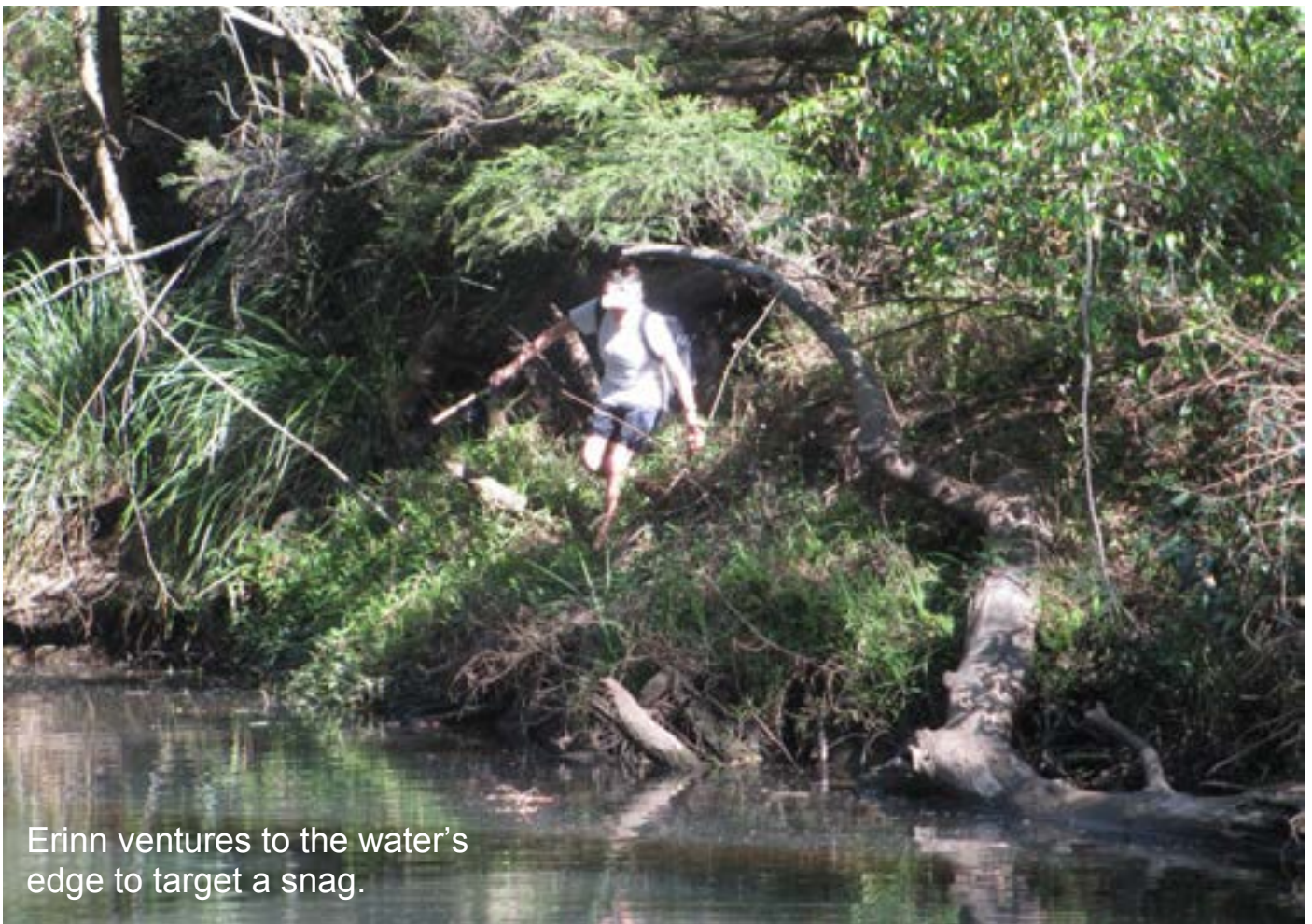
By Dave Brace



**BASS
ADDICTION**

Having targeted Australian bass upon the opening of each season since a youngster, the 2016 season was no different. There is a passion only Australian bass anglers appreciate and comprehend when targeting these fish, an addiction that stems from fishing wild rivers and creeks. Unmistakably there is also the euphoria that surrounds their hard hitting strikes and dirty fighting antics among tight structure.

The attraction and splendour about this style of fishing is that it is very basic and yet extremely rewarding. Many anglers prefer to explore small tributaries where these fish reside via kayaking the upper reaches within the freshwater, however it is something else to push further up these creeks into the real skinny water. This is where the angler's ability in terms of catching and subduing these iconic fish is truly tested. It is one thing to lure these fish to strike, but it is another to extract these belligerent brutes from the dense structure. Beneath the surface lies a labyrinth of intertwined fallen trees where they wait in an ambush mode, ready to feed on any morsels being pushed downstream with the current. Targeting these fish land based comes with its challenges, when fighting bass, so positioning yourself within the creek to optimise your catch rates is paramount. Precision casting is also imperative as there is not much room for error when landing lures within strike zones.



Erinn ventures to the water's edge to target a snag.



Surface presentations like the TT BuzzlockZ can be deadly.

Choosing a balmy afternoon, upon the season opening in early September, visions of insects filled pockets of sky between the shade of the trees as we arrived at our destination. I was joined by Erinn Ball, another Tackle Tactics team member, whereby we formed a partnership to methodically fish and target a local waterway at our door step, north of Brisbane. Erinn decided to fish the topwater first, casting the new TT Lures BuzzlockZ which was rigged with a ZMan 3" MinnowZ. Receiving several strikes in consecutive casts, from a particular snag at the head waters of a large pool, she soon discovered that the fish were timid in hitting a surface presentation.



Anticipation builds, waiting for the BOOF!



The ZMan 3" MinnowZ is a go-to for bass.



I on the other hand was casting a ZMan ChatterBait, which was also rigged with a 3" MinnowZ in the colour of Bad Shad. Casting adjacent to the same timber as Erinn and allowing the lure to sink slightly, prior to a slow rolling retrieval pattern, I was also receiving timid strikes. Within the first ten minutes of fishing this particular skinny water section of the river, we covered all levels of the water column. From experience with the sun still high in the sky a decision was made to change lure presentations, downsizing our lures to options with more subtle action.

Erinn opted to use a 3" MinnowZ in the colour of Opening Night, which was rigged weedless on a TTLures SnakelockZ Finesse jighead, while I was more adventurous opting to tie on a 4" StreakZ Curly TailZ rigged on a 3/0 HeadlockZ jighead. The hook on the HeadlockZ is more exposed than a weedless presentation and I was hopeful of a better hook up rate as the bass had been apprehensive in striking our artificial baits. The downside of fishing this style of presentation within this type of structure is that the lure has potentially more chance of being fouled and or snagged on submerged structure. This occurred on several occasions and I found myself swimming to retrieve my lure more than once. This however is the trade-off that I was more than happy to risk and one which proved a rewarding gamble.

Casting our lures at length up a narrow corridor between the overhanging foliage of the riparian zone, it was Erinn who landed the first fish, followed by myself momentarily afterwards. Both bass were of a significant length for wild bass endemic to this region. Being involved in managing fish stocks within two of my local fisheries, the size of the bass that we had just caught and released was very encouraging for the well being of future fish stocks in this particular system.

It wasn't long before a pattern emerged and the fish became less timid and more frequent in hitting our lures. We decided to change and mix up our lure presentations, with varying colours and profiles between curly and paddle tailed lures, with remarkable results. Colours such as Motor Oil, Houdini and the newer ZMan Green Lantern colour in the 3" MinnowZ range all being productive.



Having a ball and landing some nice bass.



Pushing upstream and exhausting all options in every small pool we fished, we came to a gnarly tree, half submerged which just screamed fish. Upon casting my lure at this particular snag I received several short strikes, which is sometimes common. One thing that I have learned over the years when targeting these fish is that when this occurs try varying the lure, either colour and or profile. Immediately I encouraged Erinn to fish in my pocket, casting the same line and length, using a different lure to my presentation. On cue, briefly after her soft plastic hit the water, a feisty bass smashed the lure close to the surface. Witnessing the fish strike, my head soon turned sideways to get a glimpse of her rod buckling over and line being stripped through the water as the fish took up the slack line. No wonder this style of bass fishing is so addictive, it doesn't get much better than that when targeting these wild fish in skinny water country.

After subduing an adequate number of fish for the session using a variety of soft plastic presentations, I couldn't resist retying the ZMan ChatterBait on my short leader, still rigged with a 3" MinnowZ trailer which I smeared liberally with some Pro-Cure Mullet flavoured Super Gel scent for an extra attractant. Within moments consecutive bass were caught and released, which completed my session on a high.



Dave with a ZMan ChatterBait bass.

Released at AFTA 2016 was ZMan's EZ ShrimpZ and Erinn couldn't resist casting this lure presentation adjacent to a large fallen tree which was well submerged. This particular lure didn't disappoint as Erinn hauled several bass from this individual snag. We lost count of the bass we caught within a three hour period and were also elated at the calibre of fish landed, reflecting on the fishing as we walked out of the river... the sun beginning to set on what had been an extremely productive session.



Erinn with one on the ZMan EZ ShrimpZ in Fried Chicken colour, rigged weedless for snag fishing on a TT Lures SnakelockZ jighead.



The Houdini coloured ZMan 3" MinnowZ is one of Dave's favourites.

BRACEY'S TOP 5 TIPS

SKINNY WATER BASS



1

If possible walk or paddle your kayak upstream in the direction opposite to the water flow. Make long casts and retrieve your lure presentation back with the current concentrating your efforts in fishing the tail and the head of the water holes you come across. Cast past any snags or rock formations which lay in the middle of the water body your fishing being sure to keep your lure in the strike zone as long as possible by pausing your presentation occasionally. TT Lures range of Vortex and Striker spinnerbaits are ideal for this type of fishing.

Some of the best times to be fishing in the upper reaches of freshwater creeks and rivers chasing these fish are around dawn and dusk when there is low light, especially when the barometric pressure is rising. Fishing at night is also very productive however logistically walking the banks and navigating through the riparian zone can be difficult. During these low light periods surface lures such as the ZMan 4" Hard Leg FrogZ are a very productive presentation.

2



Concentrate in casting lures close to undercut rocky ledges, overhanging branches of trees and shrubs with dense foliage and native grasses, especially where there is a back flow of the water current, commonly called an 'Eddie'. Where there is more structure to target, casting spinnerbaits and soft plastics rigged weedless can be a more effective presentation which allows the lure to swim deeper among the labyrinth of timber lying below the water surface.

3



When targeting fish within dense aquatic weed, rigging a #3 Jig Spinner to a HeadlockZ jig head creates an extremely effective weed guard, preventing the hook being fouled by the vegetation. The flash and vibration of the blade on the Jig Spinner is also a fantastic attractant for the fish to hone in on among this type of structure.

4



5

Mix up lure presentations to ascertain what the fish are taking a liking to, from a more natural look with a subtle vibration, such as the ZMan 2.5" or a 3.5" GrubZ, to a lure that pronounces its whereabouts within the water column due to its aggressive vibrating attributes such as a TT Lures Switchblade. Another option is to attach a soft plastic trailer to a Chatterbait or Spinnerbait which in turn enhances the size of the lures profile.

Cheers, Bracey

BRACEY'S TOP 5 TIPS
SKINNY WATER BASS



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MONCROSS SWITZERLAND

SIGHT CASTING CANAL BREAM



BY WILL SMEDLEY

Will talks techniques for targeting bream around the Gold Coast canal systems and myriad of pontoons that call these canals home. The techniques that work for Will can also be applied to bream in other systems, especially when feeding around similar structure.

The Gold Coast canals are renowned for their great bream fishing options, from cranks to surface lures and blades there are endless ways to successfully target these fish. As we move into the warmer months I will share my favourite techniques for targeting bream.

As the start of spring warms the Gold Coast canals, bream become more active around the pontoons and canal fronts. Jelly prawns are a favourite food source for feeding bream. Jelly prawns are a rapid growing prawn that can go from egg to adult in under a year. They spawn once every few months but spawning can vary in different environments and canal systems.

In the southern Gold Coast canals you can see a boom in jelly prawn populations around the start and midway through spring and this is the perfect time to start fishing small prawn imitations such as ZMan 2" GrubZ in colours like Hardy Head, Bubble Gum and Glow Bone. This soft plastic and these colour combinations are definitely as close to a jelly prawn imitation as you can get.

The ZMan GrubZ on a TT Hidden Weight System jighead has proven a winner for Will.



Bream are readily available and good fun on light gear.



When rigging your 2" GrubZ with the suitable jighead it is hard to go past the TT lures 1/28oz 2H Hidden Weight System jighead as this will give your plastic the suspended look, exactly like a jelly prawn hovering next to a pontoon or structure.

When walking these canals land based it is important to take a stealthy approach and this also applies to the gear you're using. Long leaders are a must when fishing these canals as clear water can make bream a very tricky and hard species not to spook. Around 2m of 4lb fluorocarbon is a good starting point to reduce spooking the bream you are targeting.

Polarised sunglasses will help with spotting the bream hanging around structure or even just those sitting on the sand flats. When walking to the structures or sand flat you want to fish, a lot of small things can come into play. Firstly when you approach your spot make sure your shadow is not cast across the water. It might sound excessive but it definitely will spook fish.



Breamin' By-catch.



When you cast, make sure you cast past the bream and bring the lure slowly across their faces. Casting directly on top of them will again spook the fish. When you have made your cast retrieve your lure to imitate a prawn. Slowly winding, with small twitches of the rod tip, will make your GrubZ look like a fleeing shrimp and if done correctly bream should attack your lure, hooking themselves.

If you find the bream are not aggressive and don't want to eat your lure on the move, small hops of your rod tip and long pauses on the bottom, a technique otherwise known as dead sticking, is a great way to get a passive fish to bite. It is very important to take notes of reactions and behavioural patterns of the bream, so that you can adjust your retrieves and techniques to improve your catch.

Finesse and stealth are two keys when hunting canal bream.



SCHOOLED BASS **TACTICS**



By Reece Thomas

The Australian bass is renowned as a prized sportfish for many anglers targeting the freshwater. One thing that personally appeals to me when fishing for Australian Bass is the numerous fishing styles and lures that can be used when fishing for them.

Bass will happily accept many different styles and lure techniques, from the traditional spinnerbait, hard bodied crankbaits and surface presentations, to vibes, jigs and fly. This brings me to my favourite techniques for targeting schooling bass in the freshwater impoundments, micro jigging and blading.

Sean Canavan with a 50cm bass on the jig.



Reece with a brace of quality bass.



The TT Lures Vector Jig getting it done.



Jigging

At certain times within the year bass will school up in impoundments which makes for some great fishing when these schools are actively feeding. A lot of my fishing is land based or from kayak or boat, which I have fitted with a sounder that includes side and down imaging sonar to make it easy to locate schools of fish and pinpoint their location. The areas where I start to find fish schooling varies, however following old creek beds or targeting points that have steep ledges is a good start, looking for water from 6 to 20m deep.

Once fish are located on the sounder I will deploy a TT Lures Vector Jig of either 15 or 25 grams, depending on water depth and wind strength. The 15 gram Vector has proven to fish well in most situations and I only find myself tying on a 25g Vector when there is depths greater than 12m or strong winds causing a faster drift.

Micro jigging has boomed considerably in the last five years and the development of specialised tackle has grown alongside this, from rods to jigs and assist hooks. When Tackle Tactics released the TT Vector Jig to the market I was keen to try this on the local bass, of which I had been achieving good results on micro jigs at the time. The shape and design of the Vector gives it an appealing 'Flutter' on the sink, which means more time in front of a school of fish.



Quality bass on the Vector Jig.

The technique to fish these jigs is to simply drop or cast into the direction of a school of fish and keep a close eye on the line as the lure falls to the bottom as it can be common to get a hit from a bass on the initial sink and upon closing the bail arm find your rod loaded!

Keeping an eye on the sounder and how the bass are schooling will give you an idea of what depth to work your jig at. There has been times where the schools have been thick and working the jig at a moderate pace through the water column, with small, sharp lifts of the rod, making the lure rise a foot or so then sink slowly before being repeated, has accounted for many fish. However some schools can be harder to tempt or shut down. I remember sitting on one school of fish and throwing just about every lure at them to no avail. I could see these fish sitting tight to the bottom, tied on a 15g Vector and worked this on the bottom with small, slow lifts of the jig, keeping it in front of them as long as possible until I could trigger a reaction bite.

The stand out colours in the Vector range have been Pink UV, Pink Hussar and Dorado. I choose to fish these over a slow action spin or micro jig rod, with a jig rating of up to 40g, matched up to a 2500 sized spin reel, spooled with braided line in the 6-8lb rating and 10-12lb fluorocarbon leaders.



Getting jiggy on a bass school.

Blading

Switchblades are a metal vibration lure that has accounted for many species and is right at home fishing for these schooled bass. The 1/4oz, 3/8oz and 1/2oz blades, in numerous colours, are plentiful in my bass tackle trays. These lures can be cast a considerable distance, which makes them perfect for covering water when land based or they can be fished on deep schools out of a boat or kayak. Long lifts of the rod allow the blade to rise off the bottom and through a school of fish with a strong vibration, enticing hits from aggressive bass. These blades have up to four tow point holes where you can attach your snap clip or line, changing the action slightly with each placement. Adding Pro Cure scent to these switchblades has helped to convert hits into hook-ups.



Switchblades are dynamite on schooled bass. Reece with a well conditioned fish.



Switchblades are also an effective land based option, allowing long casts when prospecting areas.

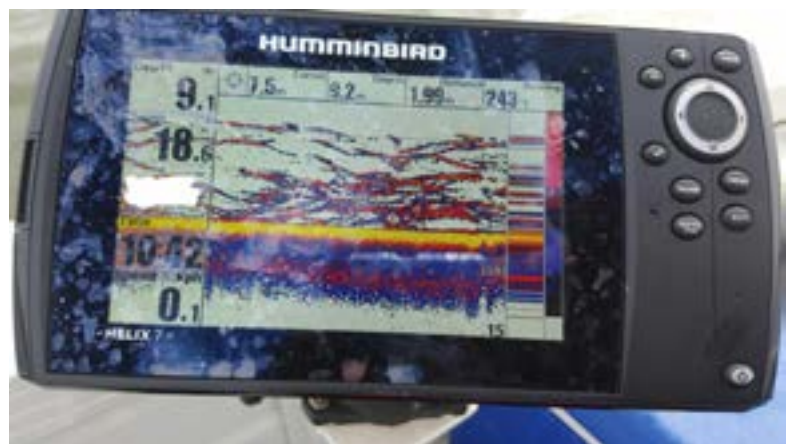


Reece with a cracker
land based on a TT
Switchblade.



Tail Spinners

TT Lures Flash Point tail spinners are another lure that performs well in freshwater Impoundments. Having briefly fished a few other tail spinners before the release of the Flash Point I grabbed a few and headed to my local that afternoon. I was impressed with the colour range that the crew at Tackle Tactics had designed and the way the tail spinner actually vibrated as well as performing like a traditional tail spinner. The 14g and 20g weights are more than heavy enough to deploy a good cast walking the banks of the dam.



When the sounder lights up like this it's fish on!





A quality land based bass on a TT Flash Point tail spinner.

I use these in a very similar way to how I would work a Switchblade, with long lifts of the rod, keeping in contact with the line on the fall while waiting for a strike. It didn't take long before I had landed a few bass and topped the afternoon session off with a nice 50cm bass. I also incorporate these tail spinners into my kayak and boat fishing kit, using the same technique and have successfully caught fish trolling the tail spinner whilst covering ground sounding for bass.

I hope this article has encouraged you to try some of these lures and techniques next time you're fishing for bass in your local Impoundment.
Reece Thomas



Yellowbelly respond to many techniques that are also effective on bass.

NEW GEAR



EZ ShrimpZ 3.5" - Rigged (2pk)

The ultimate 10X Tough ElaZtech, realistic prawn / shrimp imitation, ready to fish straight out of the packet! Designed with a segmented body and thin legs and antennae for added realism and lifelike movement, the Rigged EZ ShrimpZ features a heavy-duty, weighted Mustad UltraPoint hook that fits snugly into the moulded body cavity, ensuring it stays secure on aggressive retrieves and strike after strike. The rigged EZ ShrimpZ comes out of the pack at 1/4oz and features a unique weight system with segments marked in the weight that allow the weight to be snipped shorter to make the presentation lighter as required. Everything eats a prawn and it's hard to beat the natural fall, realism, durability and action of ZMan's EZ ShrimpZ. Fish on!



EZ ShrimpZ 3.5" - Unrigged (4pk)

Unrigged EZ ShrimpZ bodies act as replacements for rigged versions or rig them stand alone on your favourite TT Lures HeadlockZ, DemonZ, ChinlockZ or SnakelockZ jighead. Realistic appearance, fall and action, and you can even add a squirt of Pro-Cure Super Gel scent to the body cavity for added attraction.



STAYING ON TOP

SURFACE FISHING

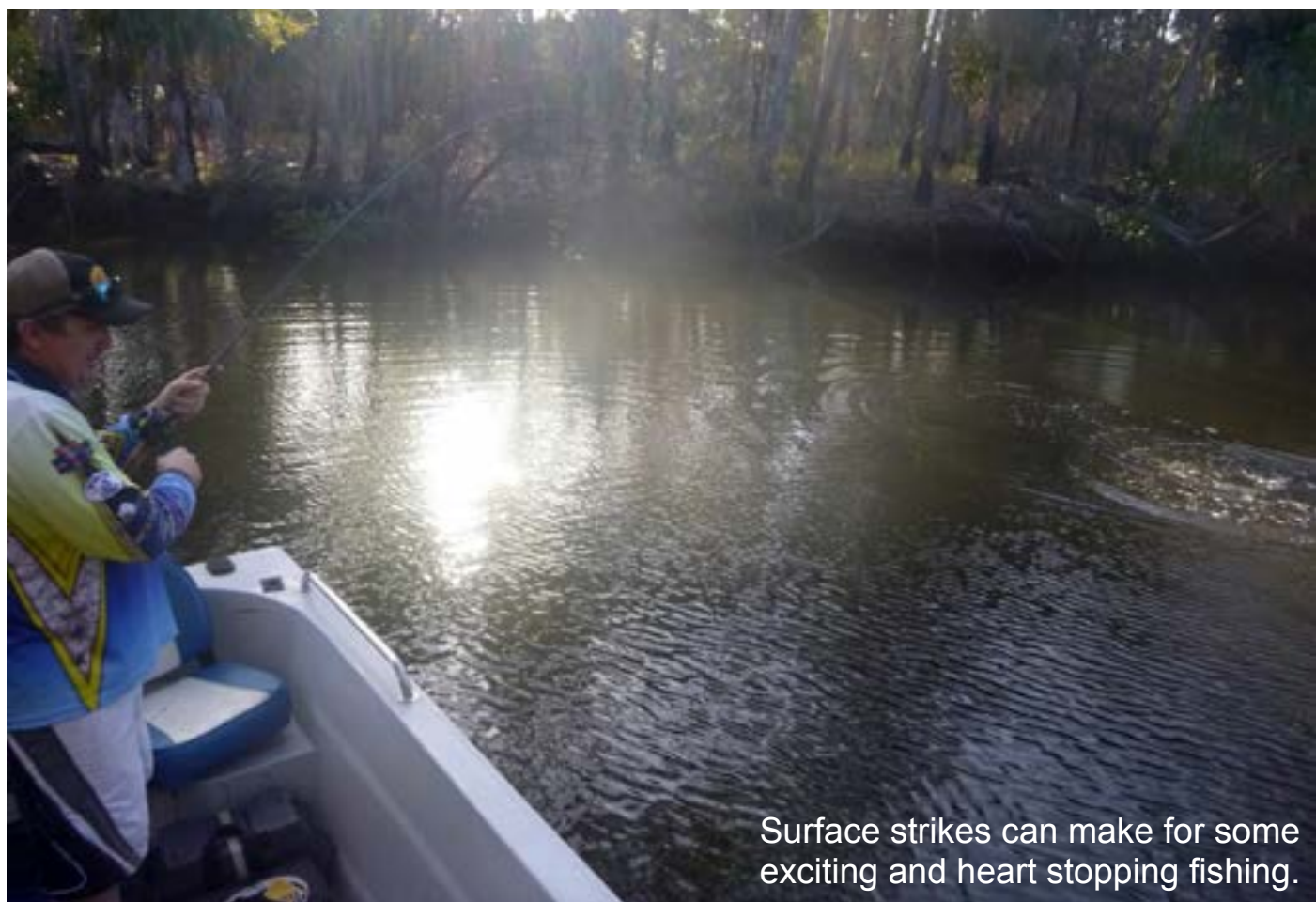


By Paul Chew

Squinting in the pre-dawn glow, I slowly make out the lily edge, rod loading as I launch the little ZMan 4” Pop ShadZ far over the back, landing with a plop in a narrow laneway through the pads. I wait until the ripples subside, then as they disappear completely I slowly take up the slack in the braid and gently give the line a twitch, watching as the little lure disappears in a flurry of foam.

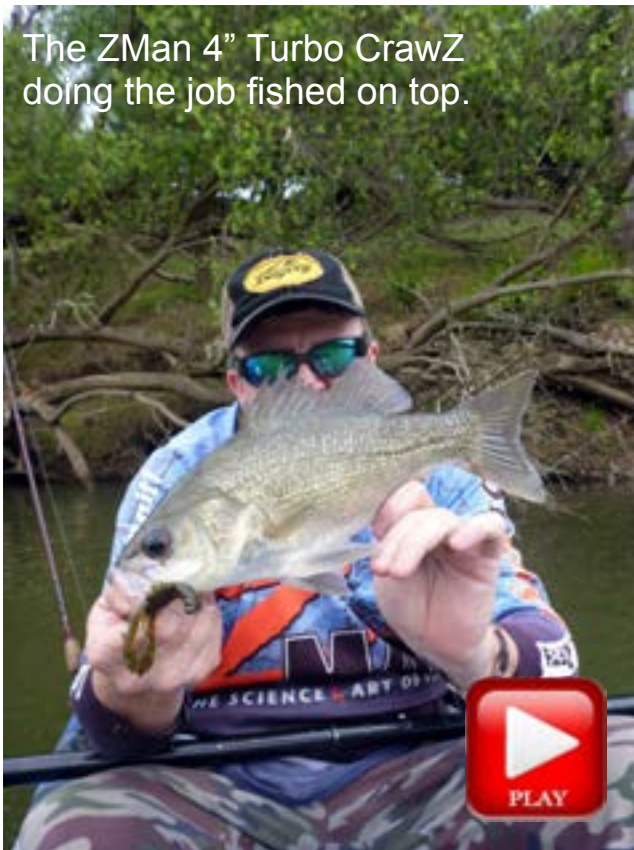
It doesn't matter how many times I see this, the anticipation is there every cast, imagining the fish, senses tingling as it feels something break the water's surface nearby, eyes looking upward as it takes position under this potential meal, pectoral fins gently wafting back and forth, tension building... 'it looks like something I could eat', not moving, might be a stick, wait... twitch.. Bang! Gotcha! This is livin'...

Surface fishing is addictive, of that there is no doubt, and not much gets the heart pumping more than a topwater take from any of the Australian natives. Follow a few simple points and it can be one of the easiest ways to fish. Generally when fishing off the yak I try and stick to single TT ChinlockZ SWS style hook, more from a safety point of view than anything else. There is no more uncomfortable feeling than sitting in your yak while a sooty, barra or bass thrashes around your legs with a couple of trebles attached, unless of course you also end up attached to those trebles!



Surface strikes can make for some exciting and heart stopping fishing.

The ZMan 4" Turbo CrawZ doing the job fished on top.



Mostly I employ two types of strategies when surface fishing, depending on whether the fish are actively hunting on the surface or they are a little more shut down.

While targeting active fish, I'll use something like the ZMan Hard Leg FrogZ, or one of the new BuzzlockZ from TT, rigged with a paddle tail or my new favourite for either circumstance, the Turbo CrawZ. The retrieve for all of these in this situation is simple. Make big long casts and start winding just as the lure hits the water to get the most out of each cast. The strikes when they come will be explosive. You just have to keep your nerve if the fish misses

the hooks and keep on a steady retrieve. More often than not they will come back for more, as seen in the attached video, and as you can see they will chase it right to the yak.

Fishing slower, for fish that aren't quite as switched on, is also pretty easy, with patience being the key. Whatever topwater lure you choose, you need to work it slow. Cast into little back pockets in the weed, hard up against big lay down logs, in lane ways between weed edges and WAIT... always, until all of the ripples have dissipated before moving the lure at all. More often than not the bite will come on the first movement of the lure. I'll often rattle the rod after 30 seconds or so. Not actually moving the lure any distance, just shaking it in the one spot and this is deadly.

As with most fishing, conditions play a part in lure choice when I'm surface fishing. If it is mirror calm I'll choose something with a little finesse, like the Turbo CrawZ or a 5" StreakZ, rigged on a 4/0 TT ChinlockZ and walked on or just under the surface. This is a deadly presentation when targeting impoundment bass and barra.

Turbo CrawZ have a realistic profile and claws that paddle and thump.



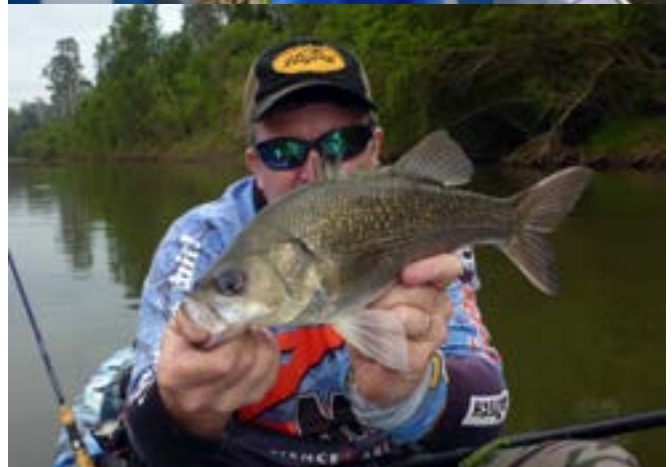
If there is a little breeze, as is often the case if fishing afternoons, something with more splash often gets the bites. The ZMan 4" and 5" Pop ShadZ being the winners in these conditions and more recently the Bagley Rattlin' Finger Mullet has been kicking some goals, with its loud rattle attracting fish regularly. I just fish it in short walks, with a good pause in between, varying the retrieve until I crack a pattern. It's easy, fun and very, very visual.

Prime times for chasing fish are normally from first light until an hour after sunup and from sundown until dark. I have a preference for early mornings as there is a better chance of it being calm, which I find favourable for surface fishing. Fishing these times I find the fish are out and about and it's normally just a matter of working your way along whatever bank or weed edge you have picked and a bite can come from anywhere.

River bass are probably a bit of an exception to this, with surface bites still common at 11am. Just target the shade pockets, leave the lure sit and most times the hit will come as soon as you move the lure. I'm not sure whether it's because the water is warmer later in the morning, or something else, but these fish later in the day hit ridiculously hard and fight well above their weight.



Pop ShadZ Queenfish, tarpon and bass.



People often ask about whether scent is of use when surface fishing and the answer for me is always yes. It's a twofold win for me; firstly it's a confidence thing and secondly, fishing the little shade pockets for bass, I am sure repeated casts spread the scent in the confined space and fires up the fish.



As mentioned above, there is no style of fishing I enjoy more than surface fishing, so grab a few of the lures that work for me and get out and give them a try. There's one tip I almost forgot to mention and that is if you are having trouble with your leader sinking and making it hard to work your lure, wipe the leader with a Vaseline infused rag, it'll help keep it floating.

Summer means early rises, misty mornings, with the yak or boat drifting along slowly, ripples slowly subsiding from your lure, a sip on your coffee... shake the rod... and crash...

Tight lines.

Chewy

The ZMan Pop ShadZ has produced a variety of fish for Paul including mangrove jack (top) and Queenfish (bottom).



MAKING SURFACE EASY



CHEWY'S TOP 5 TIPS SURFACE FISHING

- Fish super slow first up - make sure all ripples have subsided before moving your lure after casting.
- Use stealth to your advantage ~ long casts minimise spooking the fish.
- Persistence is key ~ if an area looks fishy, change presentations until you get a bite, eg. Pop ShadZ (more splash) / Turbo CrawZ (reaction bite).
- Timing is key ~ make the effort to get up early and be on the water by first light.
- Weather is important ~ light North-North East winds are generally my favourite. Nice stable, warm conditions make the fish hungry.

Tight Lines.
Chewy.

JIG HEAD SELECTION



By Dane Radosevic

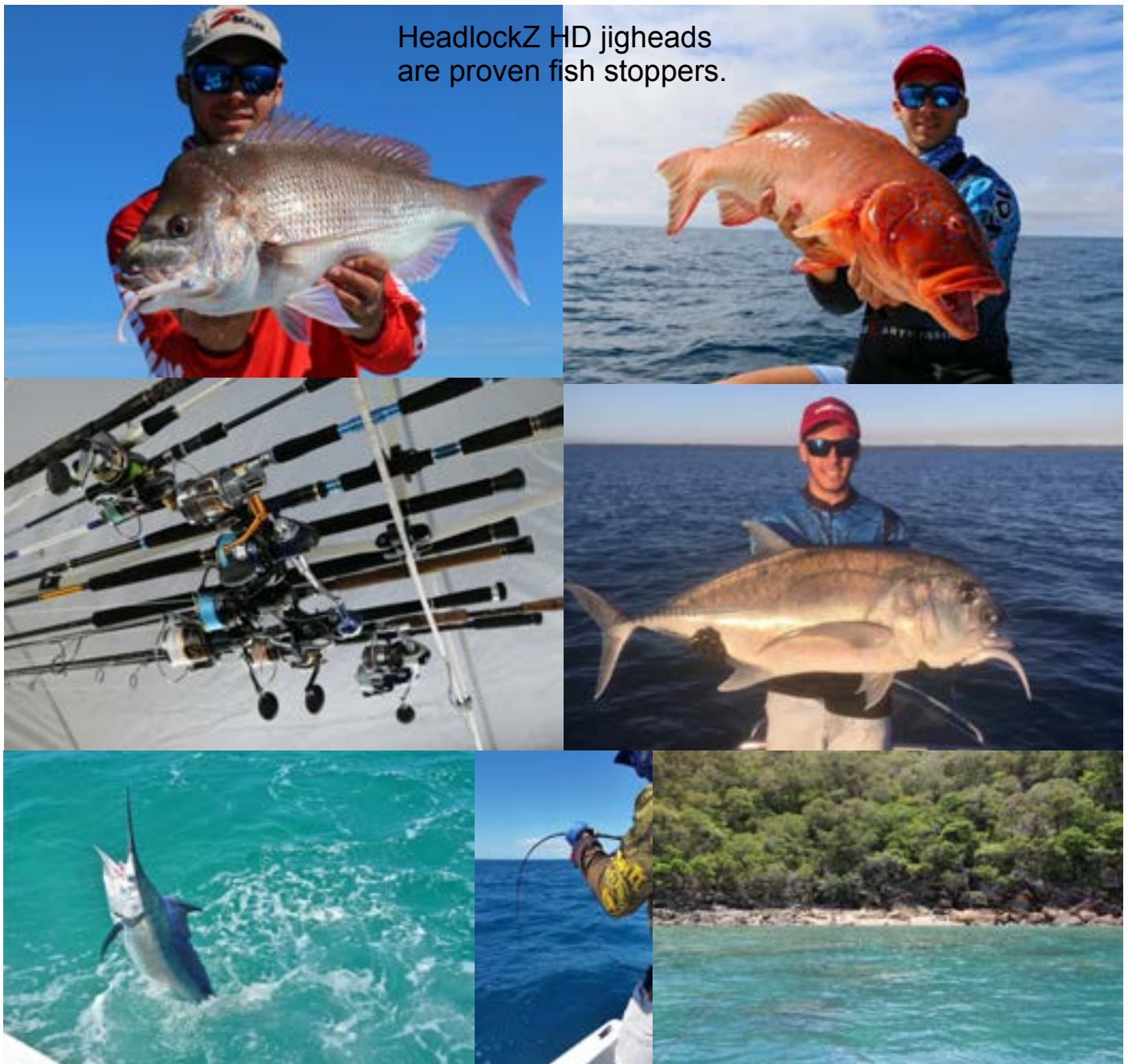
TT Lures HeadlockZ HD jigheads are ideal for putting the brakes on big, cranky fish. Dane with a nice coral trout.



We now live in an era where the tackle we use is advancing at a rapid pace to keep up with the ever changing trends in fishing. Fishing with soft plastics has seen incredible growth over the last decade and leading the way within the tackle industry is TT lures. With their vast range of jig heads anglers can select the appropriate type to suit any application, technique and species.

Gone are the days when there was only one style of jig head to suit all your soft plastic presentations and styles of fishing. Today we are fortunate to have access to a range of jig heads including heavy-duty heads for chasing blue water brutes, finesse heads for targeting the staple bread and butter species, custom painted heads that create a more natural and realistic presentation and a variety of weedless style heads for fishing the most rugged terrain. Purposely choosing the correct jig head is crucial for execution and can be the difference between tempting that fish of a lifetime or a missed opportunity. For that reason it pays to have an array of various styles of jig heads at your disposal and to understand the application of those jig heads in different situations.

When choosing a jig head you need to firstly understand the purpose for its design and tailor your selection for its intended application. The easiest way in determining the correct jig head is by understanding the species you are targeting, the environment you are fishing in and the gear you are using. For example if you were fishing a reef and coral trout are common to the area, medium to heavy gear would be required to prevent them from busting you off in the reef. Therefore you can automatically eliminate the option of the finesse jig head, as you require the ability to set the hook in their bony mouths and stopping power is essential. Knowing this you would opt for a jig head with a heavy duty hook such as the TT HeadlockZ HD which is ideal for that type of application. The sharp heavy wire hook allows for easy penetration whilst preventing the possibility of bending or rolling the hook point in the process and giving you the confidence that the hook won't straighten under load.





Finesse jigheads are often the go-to for bream, flathead, bass, trout and other light line targets.

If we were to change the scenario and target yellowfin bream over shallow sand flats that are moderately open with minimal structure, lighter gear would be necessary and a change of jig head selection would see greater results. The benefits required of the heavy duty hook in the HeadlockZ HD range in the previous scenario would only obstruct the hook up opportunity in this case, costing you fish. Therefore after

assessing the new scenario you would opt for a jig head with a finesse wire hook from the HeadlockZ Finesse range. The benefits of choosing to fish a lighter gauge hook would allow easier hook penetration when using lighter gear and increase the likelihood of pinning the most finicky of feeders.



Dane with a bass on a fine wire jighead.

Dane's favourite finesse plastics option for targeting bass - ZMan 2.5" Slim SwimZ on a TT Lures DemonZ painted jighead.



One jig head that I am most impressed with and I have had great results using is the DemonZ jig head range. This is a custom painted jig head with realistic 3D eyes, featuring a heavier wire hook and when colour coordinated to the correct soft plastic it creates the ultimate natural presentation. I have found the DemonZ heads to be proven performers in clear water or heavily pressured water scenarios. As a tournament angler I am often faced with finicky or shut down fish and to maximise my opportunities I need to be fishing the correct jig head for the situation to attract the strikes and ensure success.

The painted heads are visually appealing which mentally gives me more confidence in the presentation, therefore I know I will fish the lure with greater confidence.



Clear water like that found in Lake Glenbawn demands a realistic presentation.

Stepping away from conventional jig heads we venture into the weedless style, adding another deadly arsenal to the box. This style of head allows you to cast a plastic into places where it was previously impossible to fish with ordinary jig heads. These purpose designed jig heads allow you to present your lure in the strike zone of the nastiest of terrain, allowing you to target fish tight to structure. TT lures have numerous styles of weedless jig head systems available to anglers. My two personal favourites are the ChinlockZ head, which is weightless, and the SnakelockZ head which has a purpose-designed interlocking head, which allows you to quickly and easily change weights. With the increasing popularity of this style of jig head, they are produced in both versions with a HD hook or a Finesse hook, which again allows you to correctly match the jig head to the application.

So next time you go to purchase a packet of TT jig heads, keep in mind the application, technique and species you are going to be using them for as it could make all the difference.

The TT SnakelockZ Finesse jig head allows your lure presentation to be thrown into places previously unreachable.



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**RATTLIN' FINGER
MULLET 09 & 11**



**RUMBLE B
09 & 11**



MONSTER SHAD



**CLICK TO CHECK
OUT THE RANGE**