

HYBRIDISE YOUR LURE FISHING PART 1

Brittany-based bass guide **Sam Davis** reveals how the French go about their lure fishing and the lessons we can learn from them. Part One looks at the tackle required.

A Lure Angler is Born

It all started at the age of 15 when my friend, Larry Pelt, a mad-keen lure angler, called me up to fish Rapala Shad Raps and Culprit worms for autumn black bass that had started to shoal in a disused sandpit. I had soon crossed into a brave new world where a young South Carolina boy could chuck and retrieve fancy artificial objects to seduce fish. No more digging bait, keeping crickets alive in the garage or recoiling from my mother's shrieks after finding yet another bucket encrusted with the dead bodies of something that I had forgotten to take fishing with me.

That was 36 years ago. Since then I have clocked countless hours lure fishing the waters of various countries, having tried all manner of angling ranging from fly to big game. But lure fishing is special because it still takes me back to a happy childhood full of fishing memories in 'Redneck land'.

I now live and work in Brittany, France, as a professional lure and fly fishing guide, primarily for sea bass. How I got here would be the subject of yet another series of articles, perhaps a book or two, so I will spare you War and Peace for now. The aim of this article is to simply share with you some nuggets of knowledge gathered from my time on the water trying to persuade fresh and saltwater fish that biting an artificial made of plastic, metal or wood was a reasonable substitute to something 'sushi-based'.

Besides catching or watching people catch fish, like a child, I get excited after having purchased, or been given, a new lure that offers something

unique to my fishing. Creating new fishing rigs and techniques, or modifying – what I call 'hybridising' – soft and hard lures also gives me a buzz, as this allows me to fish them in totally new ways and in new places.

When I arrived in France, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that lure fishing was and continues to be this country's largest angling activity with lure fishing for sea bass (*pêche aux bars*) the fastest growing arm of

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leisure angling in both Brittany and France as a whole. Luckily for me this statistic also means that France offers its anglers a huge range of artificial lures, especially soft artificial baits, from which to choose. In addition to accepting all manner of angling products from around the world, French lure fishermen (*les pêcheurs aux leurres*) have also adopted the spirit of the American black-bass angler by running catch-and-release tournaments for

many predator species. French anglers are now hybridising their own lures and rigs for their own unique fishing ends. However, before we explore some of the rigs and techniques associated with lure fishing, I need to lay some groundwork concerning spinning and multiplier fishing outfits.

Standard Lure Spinning Outfit

For shore or inshore dinghy fishing for sea bass, if you want to cast lure weights of 30g or less, pretty much any casting situation can be tamed with a spinning outfit consisting of a fairly stiff 9-10 ft (2.7-3 m) middle-to-tip action rod with good corrosion-resistant guides (for example Fuji SICs) and a slightly oversized lined tip ring – this allows anglers of varying casting experience to cast braid more easily, as a small or oddly-angled tip ring can foul the braid mainline during casting. Couple this with a compact spinning reel with a decent ratio of retrieve like the Daiwa Exceler 4000E. I prefer the more compact reels, as I am better able to control my casts by feathering the spool with my index finger. For my mainline, I have shifted over almost exclusively to braid – normally Decathlon Geologic X-tress-C Fluo yellow or Power Pro moss green – with diameters between 0.14 and 0.18mm depending on what's available in my tackle box at the time.

I connect the braid mainline, via a well-lubricated surgeon's or four-turn water knot, to a three metre section (or longer depending on the length of the rod) of 0.40mm diameter Platil clear 'ghost' fluorocarbon – for those who want to stick with monofilament, Berkeley Trilene Big Game in green is excellent – which will be used as my shock leader. If you plan on

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tying directly to your lures, lengthen your shock leader by a couple of feet minimum to take into account gradual line loss from lure changes. If you are freshwater predator fishing, just add a suitable length of your favourite pike leader, such as tie-able wire, wire coated Dyneema, Dacron and so on, to the fluorocarbon or monofilament leader of your choice.

Standard Lure Multiplier Baitcasting Outfits

When fishing from a dinghy for sea bass, I normally keep a minimum of two multiplier baitcasting outfits on standby. Both outfits are rated for lure weights from 15-30 g. I use a stiff-tipped 7ft (2.1m) Shimano Bantam graphite crankin' stick for surface-lure fishing, deep cranking, sub-surface jerking, or sink-and-draw jigging. When the fish are near the bottom and drop shotting – of which more in a future article – would prove a more productive method, I often use a soft-tipped Shakespeare Ugly Stik (7ft/2.1m). Both rods are mounted with an Abu 5600C multiplier reel with level wind and large thumb bar, packed with braid and an appropriate fluorocarbon shock leader. I should note that where the fixed spool offers extra distance, for me, using a multiplier outfit offers the advantage of added lure control, which is centred on your wrist and fingers during the retrieve. These or similar multiplier outfits are also ideal when lure fishing for freshwater predator species.

Heavy Lure Multiplier Baitcasting Outfit

When I'm fishing heavier casting spoons (40-60g) like a Mistral or P-Boy, or need to distance cast large surface lures like Super Spooks, or my favourite vintage surface lure, the Storm Thundermac, for big sea bass in the waves or rocks you need more leverage during the cast. This is accomplished by employing a stiff 8-9ft (2.4-2.7m) predator rod to which I mount an Abu 6500C4 multiplier for greater line capacity. Unlike my other spinning and multiplier set ups, I use a slightly thicker braid (0.18-0.20mm) which is connected to a fluorocarbon leader.

Whether fishing with a spinning or multiplier outfit, if I anticipate changing lures frequently during a session and decide not to tie directly to

my lures, I will do two things: firstly, tie a cleverly-designed snap known as a Bill Norman Speed Clip to my leader, which allows for a strong line-to-lure connection and quick lure disengagement, and secondly, make sure that my lures have an appropriately-sized split ring, depending on lure size, attached to their noses. This allows for increased lure movement which can be further increased by adding tying a loop knot such as the Rapala knot, to the split ring.

That about covers it for the tackle. In my next article I'll reveal some of the rigs we use and how to fish them.

