

HYBRIDISE YOUR LURE FISHING PART 2

Last month **Sam Davis** looked at the casting tools you need for lure fishing, now he talks about some of the unique lures, rigs, and techniques which will increase your chances of catching bass.

Double Surface Action the French Way

Bucking the tradition to reject foreign words from seeping into their lexicon, young French sea-bass fishermen have happily adopted the words like 'teaser'. *Le montage teaser bar* or 'teaser rig for sea bass' is part of a wave of new rigs being used to catch bass in every *bon coin* (literally 'good corner' or good area to fish). The teaser rig is clever on two fronts as it is simple to tie and aims to arouse aggressive shoal behaviour by stimulating the competitive nature of a bass to chase and capture a small prey item (in this case, the 'teaser') before another fish nabs it. Of course there are times when the larger surface lure is attacked instead of the teaser; however, you have already doubled your odds of hooking up by doubling your lure offering.

French anglers construct a teaser rig by tying a 'dropper' around 30-50 cm above the surface lure. I use a figure-of-eight dropper knot which I learned from Shane Jones, a former Welsh international fly fisherman, however, there are many alternative knots available on many internet fishing knot

sites. Popular teaser lures used by Breton lure anglers include the tadpole-like Megabass Hazedong, Ragot's *le raglou* (a small sand eel imitation), and assorted saltwater flies.

'THE TEASER RIG AIMS TO AROUSE AGGRESSIVE SHOAL BEHAVIOUR BY STIMULATING THE COMPETITIVE NATURE OF A BASS.'

If you are deft at the walk-the-dog retrieve with a surface lure, then fishing the teaser will be a doddle. If you are a beginner lure fisherman, I would suggest that you start off by fishing slowly and with a monofilament

mainline. The extra stretch from the mono will allow for a more pronounced dog-walking movement to attract bass and other species.

Many times during the retrieve the teaser will dart back and forth in the opposite direction to the surface lure. When retrieved near a shoal of feeding bass you may see them fighting each other to get to the teaser first, or even better, see two different aggressive fish take both your teaser and surface lure at the same time!

When fishing for pollack and other deepwater sea fish, I create an alternative teaser rig by replacing the surface lure with a trolling or jigging spoon and the teaser with a simple plastic eel.

Double Surface Action from the Rear 'New Zealand' Style

There is no doubt about the efficacy of the teaser rig, which many French anglers use to good effect. However, when lure fishing shorelines from a

dinghy for shy bass, I have found that fish normally dart out from shoreline rocks and vegetation, swim towards the boat, then as quickly as they came, would snap-turn behind the surface lure and flee before laying eyes on the French teaser. When bass are taking this 'directional approach' or displaying a less-than-aggressive 'mood', I have turned the odds in my favour by using a teaser rig which simply turns the French teaser rig on its head by attaching the teaser to the rear of the surface lure.

I got my inspiration for creating the reverse teaser rig from my time fly fishing large dry flies (in reservoirs) and parachute nymphs (in rivers) below which would hang, via a short length of tippet, a very small Pheasant Tail or Hare's Ear nymph. This two-fly set up is called fishing 'New Zealand style'. In essence, my surface lure equates to a large dry fly as an indicator, but with the added aural benefit of being an agitator. To reduce problems associated with tangling during casting, my teasers have consisted of self-tied,

un-weighted or lightly weighted saltwater shrimp flies akin to my *Bretonne Crevette*. Lately, however, I have found a great small plastic lure called a Flashtrix which emulates perfectly many small bait fish that bass and other sea fish love to hunt.

With a little care and patience, tying the reverse teaser should not be difficult. Don't make the mistake of using floppy monofilament. This will only tangle during casting or retrieval leading to what I call 'rig rage' or worse. Start off with a length of hard monofilament such as Mason clear hard type nylon (20 lb). This stiff line is used in the fly fishing industry as weed guards for black bass and pike flies. Attach the Mason nylon to the rear treble of the surface lure – you can remove then re-attach the hook if this proves an easier option – with a snell knot. Wrap the turns of monofilament around a large needle or small nail (as is used for the nail knot in fly fishing) so you can re-thread the line back through to finish the snell. I normally snip the tip of the nylon into a point to make re-threading easier. Make sure that the main line is directed away from the rear of the lure while the tag line (bitter end) is pointing towards the front of the lure. Once you have cinched the knot down tightly, tie your teaser lure or fly to the line so that when finished you have a teaser length around 30 cm.

Fish the reverse teaser rig the same as you would the French teaser, however, during retrieval stop the lure dead at times to allow the teaser to sway and drop down below the level of the surface lure. This should increase the chances of a shy fish taking your offering.

Sink or Swim:

Soft Plastic Jerk Baits Add a New Dimension to Both
For the past couple of years, the R&D types in the tackle industry have gone 'tail crazy', with all major international manufacturers scrambling to create swimming lures or 'shads' with novel swimming actions. Phrases like spade-tail, beaver-tail, ripple-tail, rooster-tail and gator-tail have entered amusingly

'I HAVE TURNED THE ODDS IN MY FAVOUR BY USING A TEASER RIG WHICH SIMPLY TURNS THE FRENCH TEASER RIG ON ITS HEAD.'

into French angling conversations. And don't forget about glitter. If you want tails with a bit of bling, you can easily buy many artificial lures with more glitter than a tranny's dress.

While I love the variety of swimming lures on offer, when it comes to my own bass angling experience, one fishing fact stands out above the rest – I have hooked more bass 'on the drop' than during any other part of the retrieve sequence. This means that the novice lure angler or veteran need not sweat over what lure is the best tank-tuned Olympic swimmer. You can now relax and focus on a non-wiggly group of soft artificial lures that are also ace divers. They are known as soft 'jerkbaits', lures where the primary action is created by the angler and not moulded in the laboratory.

The majority of jerk baits fall into two different tail designs: straight and split-tailed. To the head of these lures you simply attach an appropriately weighted jig head. I say 'appropriately' because different fishermen swear by different rates of lure descent to elicit a bite from a bass or other predator species. For me, one of the best jighead designs is the simple, unpainted 28g 'ête sabot' (a jighead shaped like a wooden clog). Matched with straight-tailed River2Sea Capersh or split-tailed Lunker City Fin-S, anyone can start jerkbait fishing for bass with confidence as both types of jerkbaits fall through the water column like a dying fish, only quicker. If you find some of these jerkbaits a bit dull, don't fret as you can also buy them with loads of glitter!

Carolina Swimmer Rig:

Taking Shallow-diving Lures to New Depths

In 1982, I created the Carolina swimmer rig one day out of necessity while fishing for black bass in Ashley Harbor Lake in Charleston, South Carolina.



Tête sabot jig head plus complete lure.



Sam demonstrating the ripping technique.



These fish had been shallow, but a weather front had pushed them down past 15ft. To make matters worse, I saw on my depth-finder that they were holding tight to structure, an underwater tree trunk. Frustratingly, I'd forgotten the deep-diving lures and was stuck with a shallow-diving Rebel Minnow. Luckily, I had some sinkers and swivels in the tackle box which I used to make up Carolina rigs for fishing Lake Moultrie. However, this time I attached the Rebel minnow to the rig which would get my crankbait down to the fish. After bumping the trunk with the lure at different depths a few times, I found the right level when I felt my first 'bucket-mouth' strike my minnow.

Although the exact history of the original Carolina rig is shrouded by the mists of time, it was agreed many decades ago that it was created by someone somewhere in my home state of South Carolina for black-bass fishing. Unlike the Carolina swimmer, the Carolina rig was used to keep an un-weighted plastic worm floating above different types of vegetation during

'THERE ARE TWO EXCELLENT RETRIEVE TECHNIQUES YOU CAN USE TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE CAROLINA SWIMMER RIG.'

retrieve, thereby keeping it away from most natural obstructions that would otherwise snag a lure.

The Carolina rig is constructed by sliding a 7-28g bullet or egg sinker up the mainline. To the end of the main line a free-turning barrel swivel would be tied. Sometimes an angler would place a sliding bead between the sinker and barrel swivel to protect the knot. To the bottom loop of the barrel swivel a 0.6-1.2m length of monofilament would be attached via any good knot, such as the improved clinch knot. Before tying, the angler would need to determine how long a section would be required by estimating how much line was needed to clear an obstruction protruding from the bottom during a normal rate of retrieve. To this terminal section you would tie a 'Texas-style' or similarly-shaped bronze hook which could be imbedded into the body of the plastic worm to make it weedless.

The Carolina rig offers a clever way to fish soft lures weightlessly. However, there are many times during the year when your target species, be it black bass, sea bass, perch, pike or zander, are fixated on small prey fish that are situated much too deeply for any conventional swimming lure to venture, unless it had a lip like a pharaoh's beard. Enter the Carolina swimmer. When you replace the un-weighted plastic worm with a fat, short lipped, high vibration, swimming lure that floats, like the Rebel Wee 'R' for freshwater predator fishing, or the Rapala X-rap for bass, you will then be able to place your favourite shallow-water swimming lure deep into the strike zone for deadly results.

Fishing the Carolina Swimmer

There are two excellent retrieve techniques you can use to get the best out of the Carolina swimmer rig. They are known as 'ripping' and 'twitching'. Ripping creates maximum vibration and action. After casting your Carolina-swimmer rig, allow it to sink down to where you think the fish are while keeping your rod pointing towards the lure. Once your crankbait is on depth, with a tight line, lock your arms lightly and quickly turn either to the right or left by simply rotating your hips around 90 degrees. Using your hips to apply turning torque will reduce arm and wrist fatigue. After you do the ripping movement, rotate your hips back to the original position while reeling in the slack line (also known as 'reeling down') till you gain tension again. Fish tend to hit at the beginning of the ripping movement or when your lure goes dead in between rips. If you feel a strong vibration coming from your rod while ripping then you are doing it correctly.

Twitching is a more subtle affair, although no less effective. As with ripping, cast your lure and allow the weight to take the lure to the fish-holding depth. Once your lure reaches the correct depth, use your rod wrist

to twitch your rod sideways while reeling in short, quick, jerky rotations. This retrieve combination will impart very erratic movements into your lure that will attract fish. Furthermore, because the weight of the rig is keeping the lure down in the strike zone, you will have more time to 'ring their dinner bell' between casts.



Sam's Carolina swimmer rig.

