



Salut les pêcheurs aux bars!

In article one I delved into the casting tools, the primary spinning/multiplier outfits that I use when fishing for sea bass on light tackle in Brittany's inshore waters. For article two I introduced some lures, rigs, and techniques which I had either discovered or developed from my time in the States or, more recently, picked up from my French fishing mates.

To complete this current triptych of articles I want to continue with this theme and offer a couple more lures, rigs and techniques – which may seem unorthodox to the uninitiated – to add more weapons to your lure-fishing arsenal.

French 'Clackers'

When I was a kid growing up in the 70s, some genius of a toy manufacturer came up with 'Clackers', more commonly called 'acrylic balls of death'. As some of you may recall, these balls were connected to a robust piece of string from which dangled a couple of supersized marbles. Once you had the correct purchase on the string centre and your balls were dangling properly — stay with me here! — you would start jerking up and down like a deranged bell ringer at increasing velocity until both balls crashed while making a lovely clacking sound. This contact, at times, was accompanied by the ejection of irregular shards of clear shrapnel that would fly into any available orifice in your head! Only Johnny Switchblade play-action punk and Bag O'Glass were more dangerous, but that's debatable.

Sorry for the digression. Although this toy was an unmitigated disaster for the company which created it, clackers did demonstrate beautifully how two objects could move in harmony on one connected line, even if only for a short period before injury struck.

This year at the Salon Européen des Pêches en Mer (big fishing show for European sea anglers) in Nantes, Brittany, clackers made their unheralded comeback; not the spheres of demise mind you, but in lure form. Demonstrators who looked like clones of American black bass anglers with shirts looking more like badge-filled patchwork quilts representing all known angling companies, were casting double-lure rigs inside large Plexiglas tanks. Finally, after making my way through the mesmerised crowds, I too became momentarily captivated by the tandem-lure action. The French call this lure rig a 'Montage Double LS' (LS for *leurre souple* = 'soft lure' or rubbers for the anglophones amongst us).

Tying the Clacker Rig

Find two soft lures which you want to use. For the uninitiated, it may be easier if both lures were of the same size, had the same weight, and didn't have wiggly, 'swimmy' tails. Attach one lure to your mainline (unless you want to use a different breaking strength). Nip the line above the first lure leaving around 40cm of tag. Tie a swivel of choice to the line above lure one leaving around 25cm after tying it to the swivel. Set it aside. Now attach the

HYBRIDISE YOUR LURE FISHING PART 3

Catch more bass, as pro guide **Sam Davis** reveals more of the latest deadly lure techniques from the continent.



mainline to lure two then leave enough line to create a 20cm length after tying the swivel to this line. You should now have a two lure rigs with one slightly longer than the other. Take the swivel of the shorter lure two and slide it up the mainline then tie the mainline to the swivel of longer lure one. Voila, you now have a bona fide clacker rig.

Casting and Fishing the Clacker Rig

When casting the Clacker rig I tend to gently lob an underhand cast to my target. This means that instead of starting with the rod in an over-the-shoulder position and casting forward, I start from a low side position where the rod tip is situated near the water's surface and directed away from my hip

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as if one was hitchhiking. When executing the cast, I draw the rod forward and up via a gentle yet accelerating sweep, thus ending the casting stroke with the rod pointed directly at my target. The underhand cast has the advantage

of firing lures just above water level, jig-head(s) first, thereby decreasing the chance of tangles between the lures which WILL happen sometimes. Once the cast is mastered you will be able to use this rig to entice fish into a greedy state to strike.

Fishing the clacker rig is not difficult as you follow the same actions as if you were jigging a single lure. The trick is not to try to overpower the rig by flicking your wrist too violently, thus forcing the upper lure to spin around the mainline. Remember, it is a dance between the two lures, so a smooth retrieve is recommended. **HINT: Before fishing any lure or lure combination, I find a clear shallow spot of water for lure observation and evaluation.**

Crab Shot

Before I go into this new variant of the drop shot, which consists of a fish-fooling epoxy crab, please allow me to de-mystify this new trend in lure fishing. For the past decade anglers, especially those seeking black bass, have been inundated with articles, and more recently videos, demonstrating how to construct and fish the traditional drop-shot rig. It was made sexy by lure manufactures and the media in 2000 when Woo Daves (seriously), won the coveted Bassmasters Classic in the USA by deftly using a single-hook drop shot, among other lures, to finesse bass to bite.

As little kids fishing with live or dead critters, many of us used drop-shot

rigs (which were known then as bottom, boom, or paternoster rigs) to catch catfish to flatfish. Yes, the humble bottom rig of our youth has invariably met the Madonna makeover! Nevertheless, it is a great rig which catches many species.

Why use artificial crabs when so many other lures work for sea bass? The answer lies not inside the mind of this fishing guide but in the stomachs of countless bass that I, other anglers, and biologists have encountered in their studies. The simple fact is that crabs, especially the common shore crab, make up a large percentage of a bass's diet.

I'll give you an example of how telling this simple fact is. Last autumn I was fishing on a boat just offshore with Vincent, a French fishing mate. We were targeting large shoals of bass chasing even bigger shoals of sardines. During this time bass shadow sardine shoals for weeks to keep close to their swimming pantry, so there is no need to take crabs. Once I spotted a shoal, I fired a caper shad at the lead bass, which hammered my offering immediately. Later, while gutting the fish, I was guessing it would only be full of sardines. Why not, they were plentiful and full of protein. However, this large bass harboured more than sardines in its gut, it was also home to two large, recently-engulfed shore crabs.

'Flippin' and 'Pitchin'

Employing these two old American bass fishing casts will ensure that you get the best out of your crab-shot rig. Both are pendulum casts where the lure is held in the non-rod hand before the forward flick of the rod. There isn't enough room in this article to explain these casts in detail, however, there are many videos on the internet which can help you get it right. The primary difference between 'flippin' and 'pitchin' is with the amount of line you cast. The flip cast only uses the line which is hanging from the rod tip, while you shoot line with the pitch cast for extra distance.

These casts are best used with a multiplier reel to control line speed and distance, thereby dropping the rig in between weed beds and rocks with stealth. Conversely, there are some compact spinning reels on the market

'THE PRIMARY THING TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS AND MY PREVIOUS TWO ARTICLES IS TO CREATE A HYBRIDISING MIND-SET.'

which allow finger control during the cast. Once you cast the crab-shot into the weeds (I use a single crab rig), you simply jiggle the crab while slowly retrieving, thereby allowing the crab to float and flutter, or even better, leave it in place to sway in synch with the tidal current. Many bass will either lip-nip the crab or quickly suck it in. Set the hook with authority and hang on for the fight! I use 0.40mm fluorocarbon for my rigs and vary the crab-to-lead length to suit varying conditions.

So where do I get these epoxy crabs lures to create my own shots? Glad you asked. When I started drop-shotting crabs, I used large, commercially-tied crab flies or commercial imitations – for example Storm swimming crabs – without consistent success. The problem was that I needed a shore crab lure which 'matched-the-hatch' as much as possible because I was fishing them in shallow weedy shorelines in mainly clear water.

The answer came from my collaboration with gifted fly tier, Gavin Hurst, of Carcharodon Angling UK www.carcharodonangling.co.uk/fliemain.htm. After collecting a small army of discarded carapaces from my local beaches and sourcing the right materials, Gavin came up with an impressive array of crabs for me to use. Contact Gavin via the website above if you too want to try his amazing epoxy drop-shot crabs or epoxy crab flies as they are not available from any other source on earth at present.

There is much more for me to share with you lure-fishing wise from the land of Celts and crêpes, but I will leave that for the future. The primary thing to take away from this and my previous two articles is to create a hybridising mind-set with your lures, rigs, and techniques to make your fishing more rewarding and fun. "Bonne pêche" to you all.

