

"SALTWATER SPOONPLUGGING IN SARASOTA BAY"

by Chase Klinesteker



Ladyfish on #500 Spoonplug trolling Sarasota Bay

In **February, 2001**, Sandra and I planned a **weeklong vacation to Sarasota, Florida**. I had hoped to do a day or two of fishing. Seeking information, only one name was listed in the area in the more recent Spoonplugging Directories. **Captain Jack Ryan** is a **fishing guide** in Sarasota Bay and surrounding waters. He explained how he **uses Spoonplugs to troll the open saltwater shallows of the bay**. A morning trip was scheduled over the phone.

After arriving in Sarasota, More definitive plans were set up. "Captain Jack" has a **22 foot fiberglass open skiff with a 150 hp motor** and a center console with canopy. A good sized boat and motor is needed as the **bay is very large**. To find **30-40 foot depths out in the Gulf** of Mexico to fish, boats must **go out 8-10 miles** or more. He **uses many approaches** to fishing, including **live bait, fly fishing, deep openwater trolling, casting the bay structures, and trolling Spoonplugs** in the shallow bay. **Sarasota Bay averages 4-6 feet deep, with 8 feet about max** for most dredged channels. The approaches used are determined by seasonal movements, activity levels of the fish, and customer preferences. **Trolling Spoonplugs in the bay was requested.**

We arrived at **CB's Saltwater Outfitters Marina on Siesta Key** and met **Captain Jack**. He has been **using Spoonplugs for over 30 years** and is **very familiar with Buck Perrys' "Green Book"**. He **gives fishing seminars** and incorporates Spoonplugging principles into them. He has an **excellent reputation** for catching fish with other local guides and is known as **"that fellow who uses Spoonplugs"**. His **vast knowledge** of the seasonal and daily movements of the many species of fishes found in the bay and surrounding waters results from **living in and fishing this area all his life**.

We **began** early by **trolling 500s' on the dredged channel breaklines** of the bay flats. **Large humps and bars were pointed out** that often had less than a foot of water over them. Most broke from about 3 to 5 feet in the channel. His **observation of terrain** included **points, humps, bars, channel marker buoys, current, "smooth water", and the lighter color of shallow flats**. Captain Jack's boat only draws 1 ½ feet of water. Often he would be trolling in 2 feet of water using a shorter line. His thorough knowledge of the shallow structures of the bay was very evident from the fact that we never once "bottomed out". Although his boat will hold 4 or 5 people, **when trolling Spoonplugs, he only uses 2 rods** and has the **customers hold them**. There are scattered areas of moss in the bay, but a lot of the bottom is hard and clean where he tries to **get the lures ticking lightly**. **Water color is mostly clear** in the bay, although the **dredged channels and canals had some halfway decent color** from boat traffic.

Next we trolled down narrow canals with boats and homes on both sides. These averaged 4 feet deep or less and are one of his favorite areas to fish. He would try to **troll as close to the moored boats and docks as possible**. This is **how we picked up most of the fish**. **Snook, jack crevalle, sheepshead, ladyfish, and snapper** were **caught** going about **3-4 mph with a #500 Spoonplug**. **Later** in the morning we went to a couple of **his favorite structures** in the bay and **anchored and cast** them with **topwater, crankbaits, jigs, and live bait**. Of course, the **2 biggest fish** of the morning were **caught by my wife Sandra, an 18 inch jack cravelle and a 4 ½ pound sheepshead!** Those **sheepshead have some set of teeth!** If I had to **"lip"** either a **sheepshead** or northern **pike**, I'd pick the **pike every time!**

When told that **if Mr Perry had to pick only one favorite Spoonplug it would be the #500**, Captain Jack said that **he agrees 100%!!**

Buck Perry talks about fishing **different types of waters and species of fish to increase your Spoonplugging knowledge and success at catching fish**. This trip certainly **opened my eyes** to a **broader fishing world**. To have experienced this fishing situation with such a pleasant and knowledgeable guide as Captain Jack Ryan made it **truly memorable**. (Captain Jack can be reached at: 941-922-7672)