

## “HOOKING TALE”



28 pound tail-hooked Carp, a personal record

Lest the reader misinterpret the subject matter of **this story.....**, it is about **fishing, and making lemonade when you are presented sour lemons.** On **April 27, 2012, Jim VanAsselt and I set out to fish perch in Lake Michigan out of Holland.** The **weather report** was clear skies and **likely light winds,** with about 50 degrees as the high temperature. **Jim is one of the best perch fishermen I know** and I was **hoping to pick his brain** about perch as well as show him some spots I had found out in the Big Lake. When we came out the channel, we were **faced with 2+ foot waves that were beginning to whitecap,** not good or safe conditions to fish perch, and we **decided to look for perch in the channel and Lake Macatawa.**

**We looked over and fished around 20 known structures in Lake Macatawa.** Most areas showed **fish on the graph,** although they were usually **deeper than 20 feet** and the **shallows did not produce** anything. This seemed indicative of the **cold-front conditions** we faced. Only a **few fish were caught in the deeper water,** including a carp, a drum, a channel catfish, and a few white bass. **Jim fishes perch mostly with live bait** and he brought along some **minnows,** which ended up **catching all the white bass and the catfish.** I prefer to fish

**for perch with bladebaits** (Buck Perry states it is **not what you prefer, but what is the best tool for the job**), which **caught the carp and drum**.

Observing Jim fish was quite informative for one not schooled in **panfishing**. He uses a **2 hook perch rig** and **hooks the minnows through the eyes** for greater toughness. He lowers the rig **to the bottom** and frequently jumps the rod about 6 inches to get the minnows to flash and attract fish. He uses a good sized weight (**1/2-3/4 oz.**) on the bottom of the rig for faster action. When using **2 rods**, he may **hold them both or set one down and cast the other**. When setting a rod down, he keeps the line tight with no slack by bringing the weight just a few inches off the bottom. This allows one to see any bites by watching the rod tip. **After 3-5 minutes trying bait on an anchored spot and no results, Jim moves on**. Either the fish are active enough for bait or not, and **many more spots can be covered** in this manner.

You might ask: **“Where does the lemonade come in this story?”** This lemonade turned out to be **semi-sweet and somewhat dubious**, but I **caught a personal-record sized carp at 28 pounds**, and she was **accidentally tail-hooked!** Tail-hooking a fish results in a **fight that can be twice as powerful and lengthy** as one that is hooked in the mouth, and a large carp can be a struggle as it is. Needless to say, this was **one of the best and longest battles I have ever had with any fish**. We were fishing in the channel and were **fortunate that few other boats were there**, as the fish went from one side to the other to try and get away. Jim commented that we were lucky to be anchored, as the current and fish would have taken us out into the Lake Michigan waves if we had not been. I was **using a stiff baitcasting rod and reel with 20 pound Power-Pro line and could keep good pressure on the fish, but it didn’t seem to matter at first**. Jim even went back to fishing his live bait for a while. **Eventually, the fish tired and we landed it**. At that point, the **fish was not the only tired one in the boat!**

**No perch were caught, but the best was made of the fishing situation. Much was learned and an exciting time was had** because we didn’t give up, **but adapted to the situation and persisted in our efforts**.

Chase Klinesteker