

HESS LAKE REPORT, TWO SCHOOLS OF BASS, 7/11/99



Don with two 5-pound plus largemouth from Hess Lake

I recently had a very **thrilling fishing** experience with **Don Stephens on Hess Lake**. It was also somewhat frustrating. **I learned a lot** on this trip. Hopefully, others can learn from this fishing report also.

1. WEATHER AND WATER

WATER COLOR: 2 to 3 foot visibility

DATE, SEASON, AND TIME: July 11, 1999. Fish in **summer** schooling pattern. Fished 9AM to 3PM.

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Sunny with snowball clouds and a slight haze. Wind 0 to 5 mph. Beginning the **third day after a cold front**.

2. MAPPING AND INTERPRETATION

LOCATION: A Grand Rapids-Muskegon area lake

LAKE TYPE: Natural

STRUCTURES FISHED: **Bars and breaklines.** Schools of fish were encountered on **2 different structures at different times** (10 AM and 2 PM). In between, 2 other structures were fished with only one small fish caught.

INTERPRETATION: Structures on this lake had been **previously mapped and linesights established.** **8** Individual **structures** had been drawn on paper previously and were reviewed. **Each structure was numbered** on the lake map.

3. PRESENTATION

TROLLING OR CASTING: Fish were **caught both trolling and casting Spoonplugs.** Although jump lures (jump spoons and SJ Spoonplugs) were used a fair amount, **only one fish was caught with a jump lure.**

DEPTH: **9 to 12 feet**

SPEED: **Slow on the troll** bouncing bottom worked best, although I did not try the faster speeds much due to the success trolling slow. I forgot to speed up as the lure ran free. **On the cast, a medium cranking speed** was best.

LURE TYPE: **Bottom bouncing, free running** (Spoonplugs)

FISH CAUGHT: **16 bass were boated, the largest 5 ½ lbs and 21 inches.** **18 bass were lost,** several in the 4-5 lb range right at the boat. **Most fish boated were in the 15 to 18 inch range** (2 to 3 1/2 lbs).

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS:

--**When action slowed** on the first structure casting Spoonplugs, **jump spoons were used.** **2 hits (and missed hooksets)** on them made me think about speed control. I immediately **went back to casting Spoonplugs and began hooking fish again.**

On the second structure, fish could only be caught on the troll. Casting Spoonplugs and jump lures did not produce. This could have been due to the structure variance, bottom makeup, or my limited experience.

--One structure was fished at first with no results. **Out of 5 structures fished, 2 produced.** This may have been due to structure variance, not fishing structures thoroughly enough, time of fish activity, etc.

--The **number of fish lost was very frustrating.** 18 fish were **lost, many before they even surfaced.** I thought about **why** I was losing so many fish. Three things crossed my mind: 1) **hooks not sharp** enough, 2) not keeping the fishes' head down or **not keeping steady pressure** when bringing in the fish, 3) not a good enough **initial hook set.** None seemed to be definite causes.

Later it dawned on me that I did not increase my speed when I should have. Buck sez: "We should answer all successes and failures in terms of depth and speed". Likely, it was as simple as that.

--Although I am not against keeping some fish, especially the larger ones in their "reproductive twilight", **all the fish caught were released.**

--This fishing report hopefully will give fishermen the motivation to **practice mapping and interpretation** to learn the structures on their own lakes. This is the major area where **we can always get better** and better at our fishing. The fastest way to improve mapping and interpretation skills is to **spend time on the water** with trained instructors and then practice on your own.

Chase Klinesteker