

Ten percent of the fishermen catch 90 percent of the fish!

That seems unfair, doesn't it?

What do these ten percenters know or do that the rest of don't? Amazingly, many of the reasons for their success are based on preparation and planning. In the following pages we examine the reasons for their success as we present



# SECRETS OF THE EXPERTS

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**On Fighting Fish:** "Tape a world-class sprinter's mouth, close his nostrils and how far do you think he'd run?"

**Listen Up:** When you come across a fishing expert, listen to him. Ask questions and listen. Don't explain the principles of fishing to him. (*"Ahh, Dr. Einstein... let me explain your theory of relativity to you..."*).

**The Mental Side:** "I psyche myself up as though the next cast...or the cast after that will raise a trophy fish..."—STU APTE

**Gear Up:** "Why do some fishermen spend \$2,195 for a trip...and insist on buying 2400-yards of line for \$2.95?"

***AnglingMatters*** Because It Really Does

**I** THINK IT WAS Homer Circle who once claimed that “10 percent of the fishermen catch 90 percent of the fish.” I may not have these percentages exactly right, but no matter, because there’s a lot of truth in that “10/90” statement.

My point is, what do these “10 percenters” do that the rest of us don’t do? Do they rub a magic potion on a lure? Were they all born under a certain astrological sign (Pisces...no doubt)? Probably none of the above. But they do share common denominators, and if we identify, isolate and imitate them, our success ratio should zoom.

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## **GOAL: Let’s Increase our Share!**

Why should only 10 percent of the huge angling fraternity have 90 percent of the fun? Catching fish is more fun than not catching them. Right? Are you with me on this?

These guys—the 10 percenters—are smart cookies. They tip the scales in their favor. Chances are that they are also successful in their professions, win often in poker and had the best looking dates in high school or college.

*So what can the rest of us do to increase our share of the fishing pie?*

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## **RULE # 1: Obtain the Right Tackle**

I know and have even fished with some of *The Big Boys*—those lucky 10 percenters. There’s one common denominator that they all share: The use **the right tackle**, the best that’s available and they can afford. Now this seems so basic that it’s probably insulting many readers’ intelligence. *But I can’t begin to tell you how many anglers spend thousands of dollars on fishing trips and then purchase inferior tackle*

*or a cheap spool of line.*

It’s penny-wise and pound-foolish. The cheapie lines aren’t uniform in tensile test, coil considerably, and even splinter. There’s good reason why Stren, Ande, Berkley and other premium lines cost more. Buy the best line you can because we’re only talking about a few more dollars. The same applies to rods and reels, cheap snap and swivels versus the ball-bearing type, imitation lures instead of the *Real McCoy*. All gear. And it’s not just tackle. Quality Polaroid sunglasses, sun screen, and a wide-brimmed hat are “musts” in certain fishing situations, such as bonefishing. You need the right clothing, too.

A fisherman once told me: “It seems that I go to a fishing place the first time to find out what tackle I need for the second trip.” How true. A lot of camp owners should share the blame on this issue. I’ve read many Canadian brochures and nearly all echo the same theme: “Bring your favorite rod, reel and lures.” That’s it! (All, however, mention to take along your camera and plenty of film, presumably to photograph your catches. But unless you like to photograph sunsets or squirrels, you aren’t going to need that camera much if you don’t have the right gear!)

They should be telling you what you need to know: What lures? What type of line? What rods and reels are the best for these waters?

If it’s not in the literature, ask the camp manager. Or, if you have booked your trip through an outdoor travel agent ask him. If neither can give you relatively concrete info, “fire them.”

Now, no one in the world can tell you exactly what lure or fly will work all the time, but we’re

talking “ballpark” suggestions. If you are fishing for lake trout, you need to know what spoons are best (Dardevle? Len Thompson? What size? What color patterns?).

A “medium-stiff rod” is almost meaningless terminology. But a tackle listing that recommends a St. Croix PC66 MHF or something

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comparable is very helpful. At the minimum, tackle lists ought to describe the rod (e.g., 6½-ft. plug casting that can cast 1/2- to 1-ounce lures).

I’m compelled to make another piece of constructive criticism: Why in the blazes don’t all the international fishing camps stock the right tackle in the first place? They’ll spend a fortune on the lodge, motors, boats, and other essentials, but many camp owners are reluctant to invest several thousand dollars to stock quality rods and reels, line, terminal gear and the most effective lures and flies. They should realize that by stocking the right tackle, their guests would undoubtedly catch more fish, which means happier customers, referrals and increased future business. What happens if a group’s gear is lost en route and there’s no backup tackle at camp?

Furthermore, the camps can actually make money by renting rods and reels and selling fishing lures. Several U.S. and Canadian camp owners who stock tackle tell me that they make several thousand dollars a season just from selling lures and terminal tackle and renting rods and reels. **Stocking quality tackle at a camp is 2+2=4 type of logic.**

Even if a camp maintains a supply of tackle, bring your own. Find out from the camp owner or booking agent exactly what gear is

recommended, obtain it well in advance and you've already taken a giant step toward success.

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## **RULE #2: Prepare your Tackle in Advance**

*The Big Boys*, those ten percenters, not only bring the right tackle but they also prepare it in advance. When I fished with Winston Moore, for example, I noticed that he had all his fly hooks sharpened, leaders tied and everything ready to go before he arrived at camp. All he had to do was tie a knot and he was ready to fish. No wasted time.

Many of us grab a casting reel that is wound with old line that hasn't been changed for several years. We arrive at the fishing waters, make some casts and wonder why the line is springy like a coil. It makes casting virtually impossible, and if we happen to hook a big fish, chances are the line will part. So now, we must take precious time to change lines (usually during a fish feeding frenzy) only to discover we left the spool of line back at the camp. "Hey, Joe, do you have any extra 12-lb. test line with you? No?" Darn!

We usually plan a major trip well in advance, but some of us begin to put our tackle together only a few days prior to departure (some fishermen do this on the very last day!).

■ **TIP:** *Weeks before you go on your trip, replace all lines on your casting reels and take care of all the details of tackle prep, which includes ordering the suggested lures and flies. Most important: Sharpen every single lure or fly hook that you take along. You can do this while watching TV...chit chatting with your family...whatever. You will then be going on the trip with the knowledge that at least all your*

*hooks will be needle-sharp for that first strike. (And, of course, you'll check and the hook point after every strike! Right?).*

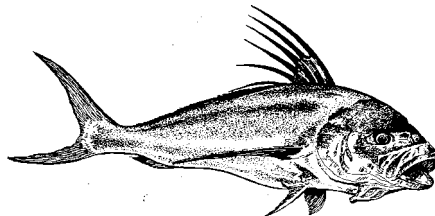
After fishing for so many years, and arranging fishing trips for thousands of anglers, let me tell you something that's unpleasant to report: Fishing is *usually below average*. At many places, most of the fishing time isn't very productive. If we were to classify an average camp's 20-week season, I'm sure we would discover the following breakdown:

### **Productivity During Typical Season**

*Fantastic:* Two Weeks  
*Above-Average:* Three Weeks  
*Average:* Four Weeks  
*Below Average:* Eleven Weeks

While these fishing averages are arbitrary, they serve our purposes well. In other words, the odds of your having fantastic fishing are 1-to-10, but 5½-to-10 for having below average fishing. Not good. However, even during an "average" or "below-average" week, if an angler is fishing hard, he or she usually gets a couple of chances at trophy fish. And if he or she hooks and lands them, a "ho-hum" week can be converted into a very good trip. That's what it takes to make a trip a success—one or two very big fish. My point? We must learn to prepare for and capitalize on those limited opportunities that come up even during poor fishing conditions.

Listen to what Stu Apte, one of the premier 10 percenters, told me long ago: "When I'm seriously fishing, I psyche myself up mentally as though the next cast, or the cast after that will raise a trophy fish—perhaps a world's record. My gear is the best I can put together: knots



well tied, hooks sharpened, lots of things. But it's also the mental part that's important. I'll admit that it's hard to keep up that attitude, but it's important because you don't know when that big fish is going to hit. So you've got to be ready...mentally and tackle-wise."

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## **RULE #3: Sharpen your Casting!**

Unless you are fishing in an area where trolling is the predominant method, casting ability (fly, spinning or plug) becomes a valuable asset. In many types of fishing (e.g., bonefishing, tarpon on the flats) casting is the name of the game. In a few types of fishing, pinpoint accuracy may not be essential and one can get by with a "chuck and luck it," approach.

Most of the time a fisherman must deliver a lure or fly accurately in most angling situations. As an example, if you are fishing Venezuela's Rio Chico, the tarpon are hanging out in the shadows of the mangroves at midday. Deliver a lure to the "dark waters," and you may be rewarded by a strike. Miss it by six feet and you will probably watch your fly or plug swim back to the boat uninterrupted.

If your lure or fly twirls around shoreline brush or trees repeatedly, your guide becomes discouraged. No dummy, he'll probably keep the boat far enough from shore so that even when you put a lot of *oomph* in your casts, the lure lands safely on water, yards away from the shoreline. Result? Not as many strikes. If any. *The Big Boys* can deliver their lures effortlessly and accurately—another major reason why they succeed.

No one was born a good caster. *I've never seen a six-month-old baby that had a decent back cast with a tight loop.* Some of us have a little better coordination than

others, true. But some of the best casters—including Lefty Kreh, Steve Rajeff, Joan Wulff—invested countless hours in learning to cast quickly, accurately, and effortlessly. (Okay, sometimes the wind is so strong that even the experts will miss the target occasionally. Lefty Kreh, a magician with a fly rod, was fishing off Andros Island for bonefish. His guide pointed out a big bonefish, perhaps a 100 feet away, but the cross wind was blowing hard. Undaunted, Lefty released a long cast; however, the wind blew it 40 feet off target. Looking at the stone-faced guide, Lefty, who was never short on words, said: “Hey, who the heck do you think I am to make that cast? Lefty Kreh?”)

If we are to succeed, we must devote some time to practice our casting. A back yard, a park, a gymnasium (in the winter) are suitable places, but practicing on water is far superior especially under various wind conditions.

What we have going for us today is the availability of vastly improved tackle. Some of the plug casting reels are almost impossible to backlash. Graphite rods are light, more responsive. Fishing lines are vastly superior to those made decades ago.

If you aren't a good caster, enlist the help of a friend who is. If no one is available, there are many excellent books and plenty of videos that can help you. There must be five hundred fly casting courses held annually across the country. Unfortunately, nearly all of the casting courses focus on fly casting, and the spinning or plug casting neophyte is overlooked. While the best place is a local casting club, there are not as many of these clubs as there used to be.

*(When I learned to fly cast years ago, there was little instruction, and some of it was so erroneous that it proved harmful. For example, one fly*

*casting instruction stated that a handkerchief should be placed between your elbow and body during fly casting. If it fell to the ground, you were doing it all wrong! I didn't learn how to cast from those instructions; but it wasn't a total waste of time because I took off 1½ inches off my waist from continually picking up that handkerchief.)*

I've never seen a six-month old baby that had a decent back cast with a tight loop...no one's born a caster.

Just as a bird hunter is usually unsuccessful if he can't shoot well, so, too, the fisherman hurts his chances if he can't cast accurately and effortlessly. I wish that I could suggest a shorter course to success, but I haven't discovered it. You have to pay your casting dues.

Ironically, I know some fishermen who are very poor casters although they've been fishing for years. They will pass up splendid opportunities to join a local casting club or take a casting course but will invest many hours to improve their golf swing or putting.

If we have acquired the right tackle, prepared it properly prior to departure, and have learned to cast fairly well, now what? Are we ready to join *The Big Boys*? Not quite.

## **RULE #4: Learn All about the Species**

*The Big Boys* have a lot of moxie and fishing smarts. They know that they're not going to catch many trout on dry flies if the river is high, discolored and the water is too cold for hatches. They know a heckuva lot about their favorite

species, and they have years of experience to back it up. Well, you can't buy experience, you earn it, but you can quickly learn a lot about fishing today because of the many excellent fishing magazines, books, schools and video tapes available.

■ **TIP:** *Let's assume that you're going on a bonefishing trip. Read all you can on the subject, and you might want to rent or buy a relevant video tape. Your best bet is to take some notes on index cards.*

You'd be surprised how much information you can put on a couple of cards. Example:

### **BELIZE BONEFISH**

*Cast at least five feet ahead and ten feet beyond the spotted fish (Preferably to the feeding end of the fish). **Best spinning lure:** brown Wiggle Jig. **Best flies:** Crazy Charlies, Bonefish Special, Agent Bonefish on No. 6, unweighted. When setting hook with a fly rod, smoothly tighten up by stripping in line with left hand until you feel the fish, and if it's on, pull sharply with the left hand and simultaneously raise the right (rod) hand. Missing lots of fish? Offset the hook at the bend to one side with pliers. Six- to eight-pound spinning lines fine. **Fly rod tippets:** eight pounds. Use longer fly rods in windy weather. **Important:** Sharpen hook after each fish. Check line or tippets for chafing if mangroves are present. During the stalk and presentation, crouch down as low as possible to avoid throwing a silhouette.*

In this one long paragraph, there's a heckuva lot of helpful information, and by reviewing a few articles and books and summarizing them to a few



notes, you'll develop a valuable index card loaded with salient points.

There are lots of superb fishing seminars, such as those offered by *Salt Water Sportsman* magazine; outdoor sport shows are "musts." And you'll meet some of *The Big Boys* of fishing there, too. Can't beat that with a hammer.

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## **RULE #5:** **Improve your** **Fish-Fighting** **Skill**

Skill in fighting a fish is another common denominator among *The Big Boys*, although their approach and philosophy may vary slightly. Stu Apte likes to pressure his fish almost to the breaking point of his line. He is a master at gauging how much pressure he can apply. He believes in fighting a fish as hard as his tackle will allow in order to land and release it as fast as possible. Fish that are released quickly have a greater chance for survival.

There are no set rules for fighting a fish (from strike to landing), but there are some observations I've made while fishing with some of the "10 percenters." Hook-setting consists of short jabs rather than the roundhouse two-arm overhead pull. **Remember: all you have to do is move the hook a distance from its point to just beyond the barb.** This is less than a ½ inch! But if you have ten feet of loose line on the water, you aren't going to remove that slack even with your best two-handed home run swing. *The Big Boys* usually have strict control over slack line, whatever the fishing situation.

■ **TIP:** *A lure should travel in a relatively straight trajectory on the cast, not 30 feet up in the air before it*

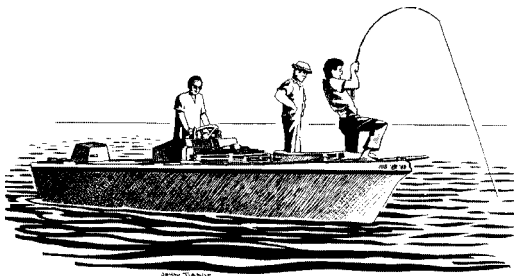
*lands (which would balloon the line and produce almost 40 feet of slack line). Many strikes, especially when fishing for bass, pike and snook, can occur just after the lure hits the water. By retrieving any slack line after the cast as quickly as possible, The Big Boys are always in touch with the fly or lure. If a strike occurs, they unleash*

Books, magazines, videos, seminars--  
there's no excuse for the serious angler not  
knowing a lot about his favorite species.

*a series of jabs... BAM ... BAM ... BAM! They especially like to set hook when the fish is initially swimming away with the fly or lure. The worst situation is when a fish takes a lure or fly and swims quickly toward the angler.*

How to actually fight a fish is learned through experience, but there are few short cuts. The best advice is to listen to any fishing experts. Bob Griffin, the owner of now-shuttered Club Pacifico de Panama, landed his first sailfish ever on six-pound test line! I was with him when this happened. What's more, he did it in less than ten minutes. How did he do it?

"I listened to the experts...their



theories...on tackle...fighting fish...and panicking the fish...and it worked," he modestly explained.

"First, *The Big Boys*--and we had many of them at camp--explained the importance of assembling the correct gear and learning and

tying the right knots. Setting hook. Many things. Six-pound test line? It's amazing how few anglers apply that much pressure. Don't believe me? Next time you have a rod set up, try to lift a five-pound weight with a steady pull. Not many people apply that amount of pressure all the time during a fight. What's also important is to apply the pressure smoothly, constantly...not in jerks. This I learned from the experts and it makes sense," Griffin demonstrated his point well.

■ **TIP:** *When you come across a fishing expert, listen to what he has to say. Ask questions and listen. Don't explain the principles of fishing to him. ("Ahh, Dr. Einstein...let me explain your theory of relativity to you...").*

*The Big Boys* can reel fast and smoothly. Most of us cannot sustain fast reeling action for more than a few minutes. Don't believe me? Try it.

■ **TIP:** *Several weeks before you go on an extensive fishing trip, practice reeling at home each night. You'll build up wrist and finger endurance. If you can reel say five minutes at a fast pace, or three minutes at a super-fast pace, non-stop, you'll do fine. Three minutes is a long time!*

Now most fish, especially freshwater species, that we come across aren't going to require this type of reeling endurance, but fish like tarpon, big bonefish, wahoo and billfish do!

Endurance is vital, particularly with big fish in long battles. Most of us may fight a fish for five to ten minutes fairly well and then what happens? We get tired. So we release the pressure and shake the numbness out of our reeling hand. Meanwhile, *TGBF* ("The Great Big Fish") also "cools" it. It is able to replenish its

On Fighting Fish: Tape a world-class sprinter's mouth, close his nostrils and how far do you think he'd run?

oxygen, too. Now we're ready for Round Two, but so is TGBF. The same thing happens repeatedly. Long, weary battles. ("Hey, your fish is starting to feed again?" is a standard Keys guide's quip when a sport isn't applying a lot of pressure.)

The Big Boys know how to deliver that quick knockout punch. Think of it this way. Take the world's fastest sprinter, tape his mouth shut, close his nostrils and how far do you think he'd be able to run? It works the same way with fish. I have no proof, but it seems logical to me that a fish tearing off has to keep its mouth shut (otherwise it would drown). It replenishes its oxygen when it slows down and can work its gills. When the fish slows down, that's when the angler must apply even more pressure...to panic the fish. I may be wrong but it makes sense to me.

Most game fish probably gain their freedom during their jumps, especially if these leaps take place fairly close to the boat. When a big fish leaps out of the water and begins its violent head-shaking, two things can happen if there's a tight line: (1) the line may break if it's relatively light or if the knots are poorly tied; (2) the hook may pull out (or break, or bend) unless it is solidly anchored in the fish's mouth. The closer the fish leaps to the boat and the tighter the line, the greater the probability that the lure will be ejected. If a fish is jumping a considerable amount of distance away from the boat, chances are that there is sufficient slack line between you and the fish (and a considerable amount of line stretch), so the problem is reduced.

■ **TIP:** Tarpon fishermen, in particu-

lar, talk about "bowing to the fish" when the silver king leaps. What they hope to accomplish is to quickly reduce all tension on the line. There are several ways of doing this: (1) Some anglers

quickly lower, extend and point the rod tip to the fish, thus creating instant slack; (2) others do the same but also bow to the fish by leaning over (to provide additional slack); or (3) some fishermen do this plus crouch down quickly almost sitting on their heels (much like a baseball catcher's stance, except the right foot is in front of the left).

Now just as the fish begins to fall back to the water, the opposite motions take place, because now what you want to do is eliminate all slack in the line instantly.

The rule of thumb is: fish in the air, give it all the slack you can; fish in the water, remove all slack. Use whatever method you prefer that accomplishes this goal quickly.

Many of *The Big Boys* do not keep the rod straight up (perpendicular) while fighting a fish. Instead, they change rod angles constantly, often pressuring the fish by holding the rod horizontally with both hands. A running fish can easily withstand overhead pressure, but when it's applied from one side or the other, it will probably swim in that direction. By making the fish change directions often, it becomes confused, and like a confused boxer in the ring, it will soon hit the canvas. *The Big Boys* believe in fighting a fish hard and fast and then quickly releasing it with a minimum amount of harm.

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## RULE #6: Take Along Plenty of PFA

We all know how important confidence is in business, in athletics or in any other pursuit;

it's invaluable in fishing, too.

Look at the great NFL football players; they have confidence, and how! Didn't Joe Namath "personally guarantee" that the New York Jets would beat the highly favored Baltimore Colts in that historic Super Bowl?

All of *The Big Boys* have one thing in common: **Positive Fishing Approach** or **PFA**. Whether they are wading a stream or a flat, or fishing from a boat, you can almost sense the confidence oozing out of their pores. Stu Apte said earlier: "I make every cast as though a huge fish is going to hit..."

Many of us, when we're tagged onto a big fish, almost immediately shift into a negative mode. "Uh oh, he's going for that brush, and I'm going to lose it..." Or..."The hook will tear out..." Or "My line will break." You know what I mean. And, often that's exactly what happens.

*The Big Boys* think differently: "Baby, you're a great fish. I respect your size and power. But I'm going to land you and then release you."

So what can the typical fisherman (who may lack the years of experience that creates confidence) do? If you follow the suggestions offered here, you can develop it. By having the right tackle, by preparing it beforehand, by learning to sharpen hooks and tying the proper knots, by learning all you can about a particular species and fishing methods, you will succeed more and more. These successes and the knowledge that you are doing what you should will stoke up your confidence level even higher. What was that old song, "Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative?"

To review some of the above:

- Practice your casting before you go on a trip.
- Find out what tackle is recommended and get the best you can afford, well ahead of your trip.

- Prepare your tackle as much as possible before you go on trip.
- Learn to tie the most effective knots properly. The knot is usually the weakest link between you and the fish. You only need to know about five or six knots, but learn to tie them well and quickly.
- Sharpen your hooks before you go on a trip (at least they will be sharp at the outset). After you land a fish, check the hook point for sharpness.
- Learn all you can about the gamefish you're seeking, bone up on fishing methods. Write the salient points on index cards and take them with you for constant review.
- Understand the principles of hook setting (all you have to do is move that hook point about a half inch).
- Understand the principles of fighting a fish. Remember: Up in the air, loose line; in the water, tight line.
- By honing your skills and always being prepared, you will increase your basic confidence level. Work on your Positive Fishing Approach, and you'll your fishing self-esteem and success with every fishing excursion.

"Okay," you rightfully and patiently ask, "is that all I need to know to catch a lot more fish?" Basically, yes, but there are a few more items. Let's go over some of them.

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## WEATHER: That Pesky Gremlin

If there's one element that can goof up a promising fishing trip it's weather. I mean, even *The Big Boys* can't do much about it. If the weather is against you, chances are your results will range from "awfully poor to "fair." If a cold

front cools off the bonefish flats, these fish will stay in deeper water. If there's a tremendous amount of wind blowing, you're not going to see many tarpon on the flats: even if you do, you probably won't be able to deliver that precise cast. If the water is extremely low on your favorite Atlantic salmon river, most salmon will probably wait beyond the river mouth until the water levels rise.

Simply put, that's one area that you can't control. What do you do? You make the best of it. If you are on a bonefishing trip, and there are simply no bones on the flats, fish for other species. You might try reef fishing or some deep jigging, or maybe there's a mangrove lagoon where there are some small tarpon.

But what you can't do is become totally discouraged. That's when you have to commit yourself to a PFA (Positive Fishing Approach). Besides, conditions and fishing can sometimes improve swiftly.

Let me illustrate: Years ago, Dr. R. Koucky and I flew to Argentina to fish for the fabled dorado. When we arrived, the outfitter told us that he had cabled us not to come because the river was unfishable (the cable arrived at my office weeks **after** I resumed!). The outfitter suggested that we go to Buenos Aires. But no, we wanted to fish, no matter what. True, that first day was not good, although we caught some of other lesser species. But each day improved and you know what? We had one of the greatest dorado fishing trips ever--we each landed several dorado in the mid-thirty-pound class!

Of course, there are many examples I can offer where the weather and water conditions were totally against the anglers, and their results were terrible, but we're trying to build up PFA here. Right?

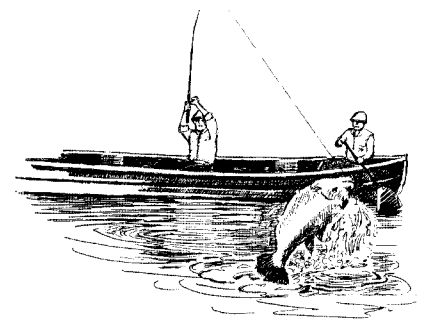
The bottom line is that you book your trip and take your chances on the weather. That's the simple and plain truth.

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## GUIDES: The Most Maligned Souls

The fishing guide is probably the most maligned human being along the chain of fishing personnel. Oddly enough, when fishing is good we tend to take the credit; it's obvious, that we're great fishermen. But when fishing is poor, most of us are reluctant to take the blame. We lay it on the guide, the poor soul.

The facts are that if the poor guide is going to get the blame, then he ought to get some of the glory. Right? *The Big Boys* under-



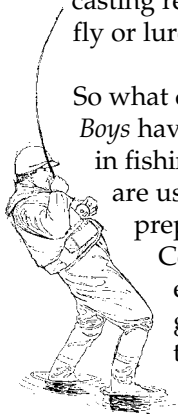
stand this and share the praise. Example: Winston Moore writes, "We caught four tarpon on a fly that day..." By "we" he means the guide and himself (although I can assure you that Winston does his own fishing). He's smart enough to realize that the angler relies heavily on the guide or captain especially if when fishing from a boat.

Are all guides good? No, that's not what I'm saying. If a camp has a team of say twelve guides, two or three will be fantastic, four to six will be average or above average, and the rest will be poor. And I'm probably being a little charitable about all of this.

The problem is more acute if you are fishing a very remote location. And the problem is trebled if the camp is brand new. As far as I know, you aren't going to find a classification, "Guides, Experienced," in the Yellow Pages of Brazil's Emanon River, because there aren't even phones there.

There's romance...there's excitement...there's a rush of adventure in being among the first to fish a brand new area, where few fish, if any, have ever seen a lure. There are guys who just live to fish those areas.

But there's a downstroke to fishing remote areas. The chances are that the guides will be poor at the early stages of the camp's development. The guides are able to get you from Point A to Point B and hopefully back, but won't be able to adjust your new casting reel...or select the right fly or lure.



So what do you do? *The Big Boys* have lots of experience in fishing remote places and are usually very well prepared, tackle wise. Confident anglers eventually deliver good results, and, through observation and demonstration, the guides begin to pick up on at least the principles of sportfishing. They watch the expert tail or lip gaff a fish. They note how carefully the expert extracts the hooks, and how to gently return that fish to the water. It's a slow process but eventually these guides become quite good.

I'm saying that you shouldn't

expect to find skilled, knowledgeable guides in these remote places. Prepare yourself as best as you can, and you'll do fine.

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## THE ANGLING SLUMP: "Wait it Out!"

I've never read much about it (in fact, nothing) in magazines or books, but one of the facts of an angler's career is that periodically he will be in a fishing slump. Come to think of it, I've never asked any of *The Big Boys* if they ever experienced fishing slumps. (I mean, if you are interviewing the world's greatest lovers, do you ask them...you know...ahem...do they ever have *that* problem?).

A fishing slump is no different than a baseball batter's slump. A player is hitting .321 for most of the season. He is leading the team in RBIs and second in homers. It's now the pennant stretch. His team needs him. So what happens? He goes 0 for 23 and then 2 for 43. I mean this guy is so defeated, so devastated that he wonders if he'll ever get a clutch hit again in his life.

The same thing happens to us in fishing. You're going along, trip after trip, and you are doing just fine. You go to an exotic place, perhaps with some friends who happens to be a little competitive and you can't buy a strike. Even if you do, you can't set hook. You try to set hook early. No go. You delay it. You still miss the fish. Even your competitive friends are starting to feel sorry for you. They give you the front of the boat all day. They hold back on casting

into those great spots. They offer you their best lure. You're not only missing fish, but now your casting is alarmingly inaccurate.

You watch how your angling companion is retrieving his lure and you emulate it. He gets the damn strikes but you don't despite the fact that you are doing everything he is. Suddenly you wish you were playing bridge or golf or doing anything else. You want out of this dumb fishing place. Dumb fish. Dumb guide. Dumb sport. "Who ever picked this dumb camp anyway?" you ask, and you remembered it was you.

Hey, relax. Take a deep breath. Look at how pretty those trees are? Lighten up. There's absolutely nothing you can do about a fishing slump except to wait it out. Periodically, I have one of those %&@# angling slumps, and I simply try to grin and bear it, even though it really hurts! Through experience, I know it will pass and suddenly, it seems, I'm back on track.

The trouble with most slumps is that often the "slumpees" get stubborn. They refuse to listen to suggestions. They are going to do it their way.

I've learned one thing about a slump...it's not going to leave until it's good and ready to leave.

**So there you have it: advice based mostly on watching and listening to *The Big Boys*, as well as some personal observations.**

**Was this advice helpful to you?  
Do you have any similar hints?  
Let me know. I'll appreciate it.**

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