

# **BLITZ:** Will you be ready when it happens?

By DJ Muller

You walk down the beach and over the dune, you look to the water and see it in utter chaos. Monster blues have a school of bunker pinned against the sand. You hurry as fast as you can in waders and rain jacket. Reaching into your plug bag you grab a big popper, snap it on, and throw it into the turmoil. The second your poppers hits the water it is immediately knocked into the air followed by a huge explosion. Your heart rate maximizes. The popper lands and again is viciously hit. It disappears below the surface, in an instant your line goes tight and your drag sings, your rods bends hard under the weight of a huge blue. After a lengthy battle you wash up a 15 pounder onto the sand. You can not lift your arms and you could not feel better. "Look at the size of that belly you exclaim!" You unhook the fish and slide it gently back into the water, it is only the beginning of what will be a great day for you.

On your second cast, in your excitement, you forget to open your bail and somewhere in France a beach goer just got hit in the head with your popper. You are instantly thrust into uncontrollable disorganization. You have nothing ready so you tie your next popper, directly on to your line. You cast and are immediately engaged. Again your rod bends down hard under the weight of another monster. Then suddenly, SNAP, the line is bit off by another blue competing for your lure. You reel in your line and reach for another popper, you have no more. Suddenly all your fingers now turn to thumbs and you fumble through your bag searching for a suitable substitute. You have none, Bombers won't cut it here. Your elation turns to panic as those around you continue to battle blue after blue. Sound familiar? Read on.

When the titans of fall coming calling you have to be ready, or a day that you will talk about for years may end up being a day you want to forget for years. It is not everyday that you walk into a blitz of blues or bass, but if you spend a lot of time on the water, it will happen. Preparation is very important in any aspect of life but in surfcasting it is critical. You never know when "it" may happen and by "it" I mean the blitz. The thing every caster longs for. The thing every caster dreams about. The thing every caster remembers on frigid nights in February. The blitz usually takes place in the autumn, but not always. A few years back I got onto the beach before day break, I was fishing with clams. I heard the birds working in the dark, which is something I had never heard before and haven't since. As the light of morning broke I was surprised by an all out bluefish blitz, where as far as I could see, left and right, there were birds and blitzing fish. Fortunately I carry a popper and some metal in my clam bucket and caught blues for an hour and a half straight. Sheer luck? The story is a small example of readiness. If I didn't have those "back-ups" in my bucket I would have had nothing to battle with. So too should you be every ready.

This is how you can be ready to do battle in the white water. Always being ready for the unexpected.

1. Have pre-tied leaders in you plug bag ready to go. Make them 18" long with barrel swivel on one end and snap on the other. I use mono as opposed to fluorocarbon. In the fall I carry something like this: 4-80#, 4-50#, 4-40#. I keep them in a small

- leader wallet in my bag. I use the 80# during blitzes, when both bass and blues are present, around rocky areas, and when I am using predominantly poppers.
2. Have plugs ready for battle. If a blitz condition is a possibility, I make sure to keep a couple old, beat-up poppers in the bag. Sacrifices to the gods. This way when I lose one or two, I won't have an emotional breakdown when they go. Some folks like metal, but I will take the surface action over the numbers every time.
  3. Make your plugs are Striper Safe. Remove excess hooks and lay down all your barbs. This will make for quick release and minimal damage to the fish you catch. If you are planning on releasing fish, please consider and practice this. Also, keep fish in the water if possible. Return fish to the water as quickly as possible. Never step on a fish. Always carry a good pair of needlenose pliers to aid you. These tips will help preserve the fish to fight another day.
  4. Pictures anyone? Carry a disposable camera with you so that you can remember the moment. The cost is minimal for the disposable cameras, but the results will be with you for a very long time. I keep one in a zip-lock bag in the pocket of my waders, ready at a moments notice.
  5. Mental Preparedness. When going into a possible blitz situation, be mentally prepared. Stay calm, don't ever panic, and be polite always, it is fishing, not war. Know what or how many fish you want to keep, release the rest. Do not throw a bunch of fish up on the beach and then say later "Ah I don't think I really want them now." This is a despicable act and extremely wasteful. Know going in what you will keep and have a plan ready to get your fish off the beach. Be prepared for anything, a thirty pounder or a hook in the finger. Anything is possible.
  6. Blitz Etiquette. While in a state of utter bliss and chaos combined, remember to be polite and work together with those around you. Yes, you may have waited a long time for this, and yes perhaps you may deserve it, and yes, this may be your first, but life in the blitz is always better when you help and have help from those beside you. Everyone makes bad casts, and no one can control which way a fish will run. Be patient and wait until the person near you finishes a fight and then get back to it. Use the time to check your leader or re-tie. Never cast over or near someone engaged with a fish, clear the area until it is safe.

When the autumn blitz sessions arrive, have all your equipment checked and ready. Keep an ear open for opportunity and be considerate to those around you when it finally happens. Keep only the fish you will need and release the rest safely and your next blitz will be a truly memorable one for you as a caster.