

## **Crossing Paths: When Man Meets Monster**

**By DJ Muller**

I read “The Trophy Striper” by Frank Daignault. In one chapter he said that many big fish are lost because the fisherperson involved was in some way unprepared. The two glaring reasons were either too light a line, or equipment failure, which includes old line. They came to the dance but forgot to get dressed first. It cracks me up too, the super cyber-striper sites are filled with fisherpersons that long and agonize for that “50,” yet they go to the waters edge in search of old pajama’s grossly unprepared for the time if and when old Nellie takes the offering dead east. One of the beautiful things about surfcasting is the perpetual possibility that at any time during the season, you can be paid a visit by what bathers would call a monster...surfcasters, a trophy. It was a number of years back when an unknowing tourist walked into a tackle shop in Point Pleasant Beach and said, “I want to catch a striper. How do you catch one?” I’m sure an under paid, unmotivated bait peddler said something like “use a rod like this one, a reel like that one, put a sinker on and throw a clam out on a hook and you will get one.” I would have paid good money to see the old boys face when the tourist showed back up at the store shortly after 12 noon on that mid-August day, dragging a 50 pounder behind him, saying, “Boy that was easy!” I’m sure the bait boy tossed his bunker biscuits that day! The moral of the tale is you never know when your chance will come. But, it will in fact come and it is up to you to be ready for the opportunity or to join bait-boy tossing biscuits.

### **Two Paths Crossing.**

As I seek out trophy-size bass, truly big fish, I realized two things. One is that the fish has a path or a route upon which it is traveling. Two, is I have a route upon which I am traveling. What I want to do is to make those two different paths, the one that the fish is on and mine, cross. You make this connection happen by, one, knowing where the big fish are and how they are traveling near you or your area, and by knowing what they are feeding on. Secondly, you present to them an enticing offering in hopes that the fish will take it. Should the two paths connect it would be heavenly to have the fish accommodate you. Remember the percentages, the longer you have your presentation out there in the great fishes path, the better your chances are of having a hopefully hungry fish, take your bait or lure.

### **Being Ready.**

Being ready covers a lot of areas. Let’s first mention equipment. If you want to have an honest shot a fish that goes let’s say from the mid-30’s up, you have to have the correct equipment in your hand when the time comes. Last year at what I call the Friday Massacre in Bradley Beach, a huge school of bunker sat just off a jetty tip for over an hour as big bass took turns crashing it. I counted at one point 16 guys on the jetty, later when things really heated up, 26 people on one jetty! Now if you think I was going to go out on that jetty, you have got to be crazy. As the time moved so did the bunker school, it moved off the jetty tip and started heading south along the beach, bass still crashing it. As the school moved off and in front of us standing on the beach beside the jetty, a couple of the guys right near me and myself where able to throw big Gibbs pencils a hundred yards plus to the school beyond the waves and drawing strikes from big fish. Those of us that had the correct equipment for the job, each landed fish in the upper 20’s to close to 40

pounds. Others on hand were throwing small bait like rubber shads and small poppers but were unable to even come close to the school.

Reminder: Two paths had crossed! Because I had the right equipment and the right presentation, I was able to land a fish of substance while others moaned in frustration. Which one will you be? You want a forty or fifty pound class fish, correct? Well then don't pack a B-B gun to shot a bear, use sense!

### **Your Equipment.**

When I baitfish with bunker chunks I use two eleven foot rods with reels that holds 325 yards of braid. Now bring on the big boys (or girls)! When I throw big artificals to big fish, I use a ten foot, top quality rod, like a Lamiglas, that is rated for at least 4 ounces. I use a reel fully spooled with 50 pound braid. These two set-ups, give me enough strength to throw bunker or lures long distances to fish off the beach.

### **Eliminate Mole Hills.**

It was said that it is not the mountains that man trips over, it is the mole hills. Though that is intended as wisdom for daily living, it also holds true when trophies swim close by.

When big fish are close and I am trying to catch one, I do not ever get lazy. I constantly check my line for nicks, I constantly check my leaders, I re-tie all my knots every hour or so, I buy top quality hooks, I keep fresh line on my reels, I cover every detail of things that can go wrong or fail for me when my opportunity finally presents itself. I eliminate mole hills. I don't know when the path of a big fish and my path will cross again! So I want to be sure that if some thing does go wrong when I have a lunker on the business end, that it is not my responsibility. The loss of a big has to be from an act of the fish, or an act of God, this is my only acceptable excuse and the standard that I set for myself.

### **Don't Get Crazy.**

Please don't carry around big equipment while making your daily or weekly fishing excursions, I do not mean to cause you undue pain, and I am not going to pay your chiropractor bill. What I mean is carry the correct equipment at the right time or at least keep it near-by. Find out where the big fish are, then put aside your eight or nine foot plugging stick, put away your clamming stick, and make the most of your opportunity. Give yourself the chance to succeed.

If you want a 40 or 50 pound fish, get your equipment ready and then be there for the "path crossing." It will be either one of your greatest days that you will want to remember forever, or it may be a day that you may want to forget forever. There is no feeling more sinking than watching a great fish that you just fought for 15 minutes swim away from you after your line breaks or knot slips. I've been there and it hurts! See you on the path.