

Open Beach Strategies: Points, Humps, and Coves

By DJ Muller

I was leafing through my journal last week and checking out how many bass I caught in December last year after the main body of fish had moved through, the number 121 came up. While looking through some of my notes I reflected back on the technique I used to catch a large majority of those fish. Granted about 60 were caught in a great three day blitz of bass on herring at Island Beach State Park, but the rest were hung by reading the open beach, and working rips that were created along the beach and by working the points, humps, and coves that were there. I picked away with anywhere from one or two fish, to sometimes over 10 bass per outing. Most of the bass were small mind you.

Points and Humps.

Now I'm not sure the word "hump" is an official word or term or not, but this is literally what they were, humps of sand. Most of these "sand humps" were located just off the tips or "points" of sand that protruded out into the water further than the rest of the beach. Realize also that some humps are not right off of points, they can be found anywhere along the beach. This structure was created over the months of November and December by the calm waters and absences of any major storms. Northeasters, or hurricanes, flatten the shoreline, wiping out a lot of good and necessary structure. The longer we go without a major blow, the better the beach gets in regards to structure. Structure holds fish, both bait and predator. The calm currents and westerly winds cause the beach to become pointed and cut up. A good way to visualize it would be by taking the letter "C" and laying several of them down, and end to end. You then have the points and coves established. For every two points, there has to be a cove.

As I just stated, many of these points had lumps of sand or small sand bars are just off the beach, approximately 20-30 yards from the shoreline. In between the beach and the humps should be fairly deep water. As the tidal currents pull through this so called sluiceway, the bass will stack up waiting for bait to get swept through this funnel of water. This is where most of my success came. As I look at the beach this season, I see that the humps are beginning to show once again. A little different of course, as every year is, but I have had success already and the main body of bass have not yet showed up in force as of my writing this piece.

Riding the Beach.

Though I caught a lot of these fish in IBSP, it is not the only place that worked. I just find the advantage of a beach buggy, by covering a lot of water while looking for good water, is super productive. To find good water, I ride along the beach looking for these humps that are marked by white water. The white water indicates shallow water, such as a bar or hump. The whitewater is usually isolated to a small area because all around the hump is deep water. Finding these little productive spots is not a hard thing to do if you know what to look for. A tell-tale sign is a point. By looking down the shoreline you can see the points, they stick out into the water. Most points have the little humps just off them. You want to see the hump AND you want to see deep water in between the hump and the beach, this is vitally important!. Some times there is no deep water in between. You want to see water literally pulling through the slough. If the tide gets too low, there will not be

enough water between the hump and the beach and then all bets are off. If you have all the variables I mentioned, you know have the situation that will produce bass for you.

Finding the Bass.

Once you find a spot that looks good, you then need to find out where the bass are set up. Sometimes I find them right in the deep, fast water directly in front of the hump, some times on top of the hump, sometimes I find them on the side of the hump that the water is approaching on, or sometimes it is on the other side of which the water is exiting the sluiceway. I make casts at all angles and spots until I get a fish or a hit. Once I do I concentrate on that area, this is the vicinity in which the bass are holding.

Coves.

Now that the points are covered, I can not neglect to make mention of the cove action. The coves always have deep, dark, water. Although I concentrate on the humps, I never overlook the coves. When fishing the rough, moving water on a point, I always make sure I walk down the beach a bit to where the water runs deep and calm after coming through the sluiceway. I often find a bass or two in this deep structure-less water. The reason why the bass would be there is less obvious than why they would be in the trough, maybe rest in the slower water, maybe in transit, but all the same the bass can be found there at times.

Lure Selection.

The next important thing that you need to determine is what the bass are taking. I switch lures around until I find one that appeals to them. I do most of my damage on small 4" Tsunami's shads, in pearl and I do fairly well with the small plastic swimmers like the 4 1/2" Rebel Minnow, or the 4 1/2" Yozuri, Crystal Minnow, in natural colors or white. Any small lures I am sure would work fine too. Some days the bass take just shads and some days they take only swimmers, and some days they take the variety pack. It is important to keep changing lures until you find one that works.

Also remember to give the bass different looks. Don't throw the same lure over and over, change it every once in a while and see what happens.

Equipment.

Late in the season I like to go down to my small set up. A 7' St. Croix rod and a small 4000 sized Shimano reel. The casts that I make are short, the fish I am catching are small so it is great fun and I feel every bit of action from the hit, to the fight, to the landing.

Go.

No bird action is necessary, nor is a buggy in necessary to find fish on the open beach, just an eye for good looking structure in the form of points, humps, and coves. Make your own fishing opportunities and don't let someone else's bent rod determine your fishing spot. By following these easy tips, you create your own fun, and you will usually be alone. See you on the beach.