

# 10 Things To Know About Being A Co-Angler

Bass tournaments are one of the most exciting experiences available to fishermen. The feeling of raw horsepower at blast-off, the thrills of landing a lunker; and the excitement of the weigh-in line is enough to quickly hook even the most even-keeled angler.

Entering tournaments as a co-angler is also a great way for novice anglers to learn additional skills and techniques quickly and at a reasonable price. Compared to the cost of a guide trip, an angler can usually enter several tournaments as a co-angler and gain similar exposure to top-end techniques (and a chance to win some money.)

Before you enter a tournament as a co-angler, check out the following list of 10 ways to prepare:

## 1. Do your homework

Although your boater will control where specifically on the lake you fish, putting some thought into the tournament prior to blast-off will pay major dividends even when stuck in the back of the boat. Learn as much as you can about the tournament waters before you even show up. Study fishing reports online, ask friends, and visit local tackle shops when you arrive. If it's a spring time event, find out if the bass are spawning. If it's summer, find out if the bass are mostly on shad or bluegills. Prepare mentally to look for and focus on these critical factors once you get out on the water.

## 2. Practice if possible

If you get a chance, get out on the water prior to the tournament. Whether you've got a boat, or you go with friends – there's nothing that can prepare you for an upcoming tournament like actually fishing. While practicing, don't focus too hard on specific spots, as you probably won't be going back to them in the tournament, but rather on what patterns, colors, and depths are most effective.

## 3. Develop a game plan

Chat with your boater before the tournament if possible, and ask him (or her) what their game plan is for the day; then plan out yours accordingly. If the plan is to fish grass lines, think about the things you can do from the back of the boat to fish both effectively and efficiently. Consider using presentations that compliment what your boater is doing, rather than competing.

## 4. Prepare your gear

Once you've got a game plan, prepare your gear accordingly. Narrow it down to 4 or 5 rods with presentations you're confident in and leave the rest behind. Bring rain gear, some extra clothes, and enough drinks and snacks to last the day. Although tempting, bringing excess tackle (particularly stuff you don't have a ton of confidence in) is just going to make you lose focus. Use what you know, and know what you use.

## 5. Be flexible

It's fishing, so there's a good chance your boater's plan will falter at some point in the day. If that's the case, don't fret because changes almost always provide a back-seater some additional opportunity. It's common to draw a boater that has at least two or three different patterns going at once, so be flexible and adjust to any midday changes.

## 6. Don't get frustrated

Frustration by the co-angler is the number one thing that contributes to a less than positive experience. For the most part though, it's completely avoidable. Don't think about what the boater should be doing; what he's not doing right, or where he should be going. Instead, focus entirely on what YOU are doing. The boat's going to go where it's going to go, and you can catch fish no matter where it is if you focus on fishing the water and cover in front of you.

If your boater is doing something you can't compete with like bed fishing, try fan casting a wacky rig or dragging a Carolina rig out deep, it's very seldom that all the bass in one lake are up spawning at the same time. If he's skipping docks, try throwing at any cover between them, and pay attention to the pilings he misses and hit them with a jig or plastic. Without exception, there is always something a co-angler can do to catch fish, and getting frustrated isn't going to put anything in the boat.

## 7. Share information

Some of the best tournament days on the water happen when a boater and co-angler work and act as a team. Part of that is sharing information. If you're in the back of the boat and catch a couple dragging a shakey head, tell the boater what you're doing, and odds are he'll back off to join you on the deeper break. If he's completely clueless, sharing all information will better help you develop a plan that will fill both your livewells.

## 8. Be courteous

Remember the golden rule! Being polite and courteous to your boater and his equipment will result in a much more positive day on the water than banging around in his boat, sloshing dip-n-dye on the carpet, leaving muddy footprints, or trash in his cooler. Ask before smoking, treat his gear like you would yours, and don't get upset if he has different standards than you do. Bottom line is: his boat, his rules.

## 9. Advocate for yourself

As important as being courteous is, it is equally important to advocate for yourself. If there's something you feel strongly about, feel free to bring it up. Conflict can often be avoided best by just having a simple discussion. If you're too close to the bank and you don't think it would change what your boater is doing, let him know you'd like to back up a bit. If you're fishing a series of points and the boat is always nosed in, ask him to slide around them from the side so you can get a cast.

## 10. Have fun being a co-angler!

The number one goal of any tournament experience should be to have fun. If you're a hyper-competitive type who likes to control every aspect of your fishing, being a co-angler's probably not for you. If you're interested in having a good day on the water and learning how another angler approaches different situations and scenarios? It's probably just the thing.