

Brooks Fishing Club-Fresh Water Fishing Clinic

Larry Winston - Moderator

February 15, 2022

**The bass I'm holding was just under 7 lbs,
it was about 27 inches long and it ate a top water
plug in shallow water, last June at the large pond
at Bentley Village in Naples.**

**I returned it to the pond and
have been looking for it since.**

Who is up next???



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There should be plenty of time to ask and answer questions that you might have during the discussions and I'd like you to save most of them for the end as many of them will be answered as we go thru the presentation. Just jot them down as they occur to you and I'll ask for them near the end of the presentation.

What are we fishing for here at the Brooks?

- 1- Mostly Largemouth Bass and Golden Mayan Cichlids. Occasionally a Tarpon, Snook, Alligator Gar, or Catfish will be landed. There are probably some of each of them are in every pond and creek on the properties!
- 2- How do I catch them? That is the subject of the Clinic....

Specifically we are going to cover the following subjects in the time allotted with special emphasis on a few of them:

- What Tackle to use-rods, reels, lines and leaders.
- How to find info on how to tie reliable but simple knots-line to leader and leader to hook or lures.
- What are the lures we use for each species and how do we fish them.
- Where to fish for each species-how they relate to weather-when to go fishing.
- How to fight the fish and land them.
- How to handle the fish, unhook them and release them.
- What other gear do you need to be successful.

Surprise!!!!

TERMINAL TACKLE-Rods, reels and lines

Let's start with the "terminal tackle" you should be thinking about using-

- a- Almost all of you will be most comfortable with a spinning rod in your hands.
- b- I continue to recommend 6 ½ or 7 foot, medium strength, fast action rods with a size 3 (3-30-300-3000) spinning reel spooled to the top for more casting distance, with 10 or 12 lb. test braided line such as Power Pro or Berkley. The color is not important but the lighter colors like yellow and white are much easier to see which helps follow the lure's location in the murky waters we have on the ponds. Connected to the end of that you will need about 24 inches of a clear leader (either fluorocarbon or

monofilament) in the 20 lb. test area. Using anything lighter will cause you to lose more lures that hang up in the weeds and more hooked fish when you try to dis-entangle them when they dive into the rocks, reeds and moss along the shores. Using anything much heavier may cause the fish to see it and shy away.

You can buy some pretty good combination rod/reel sets at Bass Pro made by Penn, Daiwa or Quantum in the plus or minus side of \$100. every day and cheaper on sale. Bass Pro usually will spool a free or discounted line on your new reel for you if you buy a combo. Another great place to buy fishing gear is from Discount Tackle at WWW.Discounttackle.com as prices are at least 15% lower there than at BPS. Do not skimp on the terminal tackle as your success depends on it. I would suggest that you don't go to the 4 series reels and the medium heavy rods for just fresh water as they are generally too heavy for most of the fish you will catch. It is a lot of fun to catch even smaller fish lighter rods and on the 3 series reels and if a larger fish hits, these rods all have lots of backbone to get them in. Save those heavier rods and reels for saltwater use!

Knots: After you get your rod, reel and line together, the first task is to tie a leader to the line using a knot that will hold that surprise tarpon or 7 lb bass! Rather than take you thru the process right now, I'll refer you to the following two illustrations, one for tying the leader to the line and the second for tying the leader to the lure. They do not involve rocket science but do require a few minutes of practice for you to become an "expert"! They can be found online as follows:

Line to Leader: Double UniKnot:

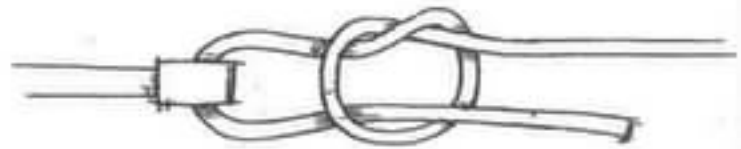
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk_VUb-dOQo

Leader to lures or hooks-Non slip loop knot:

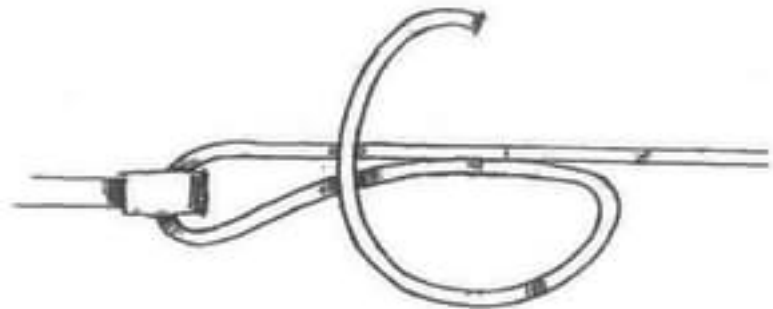
https://www.netknots.com/fishing_knots/non-slip-loop-knot

Try to tie each knot about five times and you will soon see how easy they are to tie and how strong they are. Make sure to trim any excess leader or line off close to the knot so it will not let weeds catch on them if they are smoothed off.

No-slip Loop Knot



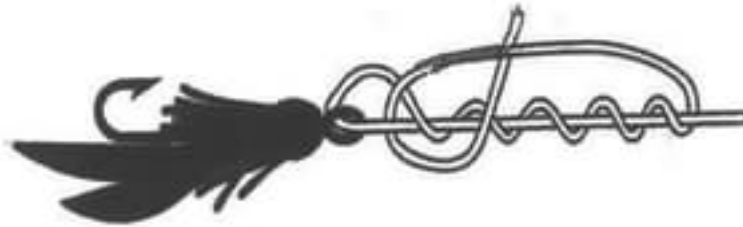
Uni Knot



Improved Clinch Knot



Use this knot to attach line to your hook or fl
Thread 6 inches of line through the eye.



Wrap the 6 inch section five times around the
standing part of the line. Pass the end back
through the small loop and the eye and then
through the large loop.



Tighten the line and carefully trim the excess
line from the knot.

Lures-Lets discuss the lures that you might want to have in your tackle bag when you head out to the ponds to fish. The following photo is a catalog of what I take out when I go. I don't know what the fish are feeding on or if they are in the shallows or deeper but the odds are good that by switching among these lures I will soon find out! There is a mixture of topwater, swimming flashy lures along with a display of several soft baits like worms, lizards or flukes and all of them work well-SOMETIMES!

CRANK BAITS: Let's spend a few minutes discussing the way you might want to fish these lures starting with the "hard" lures pictured. The three on the left are all in the "Crank Bait" category which are fished by throwing them out and cranking them back using a steady retrieve or stopping it occasionally to let the plug sink a bit (Super Spot) or float to the top (like the Rapala or Square Bill). Bass will hit the lures when they are being cranked, sinking or starting up and the Mayans like the Spot and the Square Bill when it is moving along at a good rate of speed. The Rapala should really be fished by cranking or jerking it along about 6 feet and stopping it for a few seconds and doing it again. Bass will come a long distance to hit the Rapala but the hooks are very small so fighting the fish requires some finesse!

SPINNER BAITS: The Spinner bait in the center is really a cast and crank lure and attracts very large fish. Some fish I've caught on this lure are so strong that they actually break the spinners loose or twist the whole rig up badly so that it takes 10 minutes to straighten it out. You can cast these things a mile and two of the fish that I have entered to win the largest bass of the year trophies have been on the spinner bait pictured and it is the only model that I carry. Note the extra hook that is attached to the big hook. That hook is VERY important if you use the lure as many of the hits you will get are fish striking the skirt of the lure and if you have no hook there you can't hook them. If you buy this lure make sure to buy a trailer hook package for about \$1.50 and fasten one hook to the lure by running the hook thru the eye of the extra hook and anchoring it by skewering a piece of the small rubber tube on the main hook trapping the extra hook. Otherwise it will just fall off the big hook.

TOP WATER BAITS: The Rebel Pop-R popper and the BooYah Pad Crasher Frog are my co-favorite topwater lures. The Frog is terrific because you can cast it anywhere without hooking gobs of weeds and bushes and it attracts violent hits from bass of all sizes in 6 inches of water to 6 feet. When you first put it on it will be a little difficult to cast until some water enters into the frog's body and it gains some weight. Then it really casts and I work it either with a long, steady retrieve made up of a steady popping motion imitating a frog swimming. I usually stop it once or twice on the retrieve so the big boys can come up and stare at it a bit and give it just a little tug to get it started-Many HUGE hits come when it starts to

move away from the bass after one of these pauses! The second retrieve I make is to cast it as far as I can and reel it back making three or four little jumps interrupted by a tiny stop and then restarting the small jumps. If you are getting hits on the frog and not hooking up, on the next hit, do not jerk the bait to try to set the hook right away but wait until you feel the fish on the line and then hook him. Another good idea is to cut the rubber skirt legs in half so they don't trail as much as the uncut ones do. That will help get the lure in the fishes mouth and help reduced missed fish.

The Pop-R is a simple (but top-notch) bait to fish and I use the same retrieves that I use on the frog. Both of those retrieves work well and big fish like this lure too. If it is windy and there is some minor wave action, you can get the fish's attention by making larger "pops" on the surface. Remember that this lure has two larger treble hooks so you cannot toss it too close to the vegetation as it will hook up and you may lose your lure.

SOFT PLASTIC LURES

Take a look at the black senko worm in the bottom right of the photo and notice that the worm is attached to the hook in a weedless fashion. That means that the hook point is buried into the top of the worm so it slides thru the weeds and moss and does not pick up weeds as it goes. This weedless hooking procedure is critical for success on our ponds as they are all soft bottomed and have several types of weeds and reeds that shelter the fish. Rigging the worm and the lizard (and the zoom fluke above it in the photo) is the only way to go to keep the lure clear of weeds and still be able to hook the fish when it picks up the bait.

Worms- There are no less than a 100 million plastic worms in the tackle boxes of Florida Bass Fishermen- All kinds of fish really love the worms in whatever configuration they can find and our local fish are no exception.

I personally only use the Yamamoto Senko type of stick worms like the one in the photo as they are easy to cast, sink well and are loaded with scent. I hook them exactly like the photo indicates and am meticulous in setting the hook directly in the center of the worm so it stays straight and does not twist or fall awkwardly down to the bottom or spin when retrieved. Senkos cost about \$8.50 for a bag of 10 worms.

I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that most plastic worm fisherman use longer worms of all kinds with a small bullet head weight in front of the hook and they are terrific fish catchers too. Use a 2/0 offset worm hook and a 1/8th or 1/4 ounce bullet sinker unless you are fishing deeper water where you may want to get the bait deeper sooner. In that case a slightly heavier weight will do the job better.

BEST SAMPLE OF LURES TO USE!!



Rapala 2 3/4 inch
Floating Minnow-gold



Rebel Pop R
2 1/2 inches
Silver black or Silver blue



Cotton Cordell
Super Spot



Zoom Fluke-Pearl Color
5 inches - Hook 3/0 with
1/8 oz. weight



BooYah - 3/8 oz.
Spinner Bait-double blades.
Both blades are Willow in gold
-skirt is chartreuse and white



BooYah Pad Crasher Frog
2 1/4 inch size
Leopard or Bull frog paint



Zoom 6 inch Super Salt Plus
Lizard-Color Watermelon Seed
3/0 hook with 1/8 oz tungsten
or lead weight



Strike King
KVD Square Bill
w/rattle



Yamamoto Senko Worm
Black or pick a dark color
3/0 hook-no weight necessary

The Lizard is an especially effective lure when the bass are spawning and protecting their nests from intruders-especially lizards. This illustration shows a 6" lizard with a large hook and a tiny tungsten or lead sinker to get it to the bottom near a nest. The way to fish this one is to throw the lure near any "beds" you see, or clear sandy spots in the mud bottom and move it along slowly in small hops. If a bass is on or near the nests the smaller male bass will probably "glom it!" and after you release that fish, the large female, who is hiding out of sight, will take over the nest protection and eat the lizard the next time it gets near. By the way, the perfectly round, upside down conical nests that will soon dot the edge of our ponds are dug by the Talapia so don't waste time on them. Bass nests are not regular in shape and not as deep into the sand and are usually in slightly deeper water and near "cover" like weeds or downed trees., etc.

"GO TO TRIP SAVERS" : The best attractor lure of them all, for both fresh and salt waters is the Zoom Super Fluke on a 3/0 weighted hook rigged weedless. This is the lure to use when all else fails. (or sooner) It casts like crazy and you can fish it practically on the shore, on top of weed beds or in deeper water. It should be retrieved in a series of two or three one foot bursts followed by a quick pause after being casted anywhere there is water. Bass love it, tarpon hate it and want to kill it and Mayans want it crippled and are after it. I often get hits just feet off the shore when casting parallel to it and the fish are large!

WHEN, WHERE, HOW,

I am sure that you are interested in different techniques and how and where to fish these lures on your ponds. Actually, the best time to go fishing is **WHEN YOU CAN!**

Is fishing the best early in the day or better in the afternoons? Are worms more effective or are motion lures better? Should the lures be cranked fast or casually retrieved? Do fish bite better on windy days or dead calm ones? The answer to each of those questions is YES. I rely on a method of fishing that I learned when I was an Artillery Officer in the Army and was trying to hit a target. What I did is have the battery shoot a few rounds over the target and the shoot some short and a few left and a few right until something blows up. When that happens you suddenly know where the action is!

I am not a patient person and so I am not a big fan of worm fishing. However, from the time I got back down here in October, until the end of November, the big catches were all on black worms casted underhand to make a small splash about 5 feet off the shore near weeds.

As the pond water levels dropped another foot or so I went out later in the day and started using surface lures again and near dusk, the action was wild on the frog and the Pop-R with an occasional nice fish on a spinner bait.

One beautiful, calm afternoon prior to the current cold snap I could do nothing on any of the other baits so I went to the little Rapala in the photo and landed 5 fish, all about 2 lbs. (males on the nests?) in an hour between 3 and 4 pm, casting along the banks of the pond not more than 5-6 feet from the weeds or bank. The point is to be flexible and keep trying new lures until you "break the code" and they hit one of your lures.

TACTICS: WHERE CAN I FISH ON THE PONDS?

I can only tell you where you might try on ShadowWood or the Commons Club Pond as I don't have access to any of the other Brooks properties. In addition, I usually fish via my bicycle so I pretty much stick to the part of ShadowWood that is west of Three Oaks Parkway. So I'll tell you about where I fish on the west side. The first rule is you should not fish on anyone's private property before asking permission from the landowner for yourself and any guests you might have visiting. Street parking is a problem so a bike is the solution!

My ShadowWood fishing starts at the front gate with the two ponds on either side of the approach to the gate. If you make the first right turn thru the gate and the first left on to Tamarind Trace you can fish the water at the very end of the road by the turn around. Or, back on Oakwilde, you can fish on the pond that is visible on your left after you clear the front gate. This is followed by two ponds accessible from Pine Hollow Drive at the back of Cedar Glen Neighborhood. Next, you can turn left onto Knollview and go about ¾ mile to where the bike path crosses the road and fish the pond on the left side of the road or the main waterway that meanders along the bike path on the right going to the bridge between holes 2-3 on the North course. Finally, you can fish the end of the pond at the place where Knollview turns to the right or continue on to the entrance of the Reserve where you can fish the end of the ponds on each side of the road.

SO WHERE ON THE PONDS SHOULD I START FISHING?

Bass are very sensitive creatures and respond to various stimuli causing them to take off if they feel threatened or surprised. My advice is to sneak up to the edge of any pond you want to fish and stop to make the first cast from about 10 yards away from the water's edge. If you go blundering up to the edge before casting, the odds are any fish within 20 feet on either side of you will go shooting away as they will feel the vibrations your footsteps will make as you near them. Once spooked, it will be several minutes before they calm down so if

you spook any, you might as well move quietly further down the bank and try the next spot. I usually start with a worm favoring the Senko "casting stick" worms with no weight on them as they cast well, sink quickly and are full of scent which attracts the bass and I make lure changes only when I am pretty sure that the lure I had been using wasn't getting any action.

HOW DO I HOOK, FIGHT, LAND AND RELEASE THE FISH THAT ATTACK MY LURES?

Bass are amazing creatures in that they are very aggressive when they want to eat something, fight way above their weight class when they are hooked, go crazy as they get pulled near the bank for landing, wiggle and lurch a lot while being unhooked and play possum when they are laying on the grass and suddenly, when they are returned to the water they speed away. During all of these phases, the odds are good that something can or will go wrong so I can only make suggestions as to how to reduce the odds of a disaster, of any size, occurring. So let's take them one at a time.

Hooking the Fish If you are using any of the soft plastics we mentioned before, setting the hook for all of them is the same. When you feel the worm or lizard being picked up by the bass or the fluke being hammered remember that to hook the fish you are going to have to really set the single hook hard to get the hook out of the weedless configuration and into the fish's jaw. Old timers say that you have to pretend to "rip their lips off" and that is pretty true for the strength of the hook set but results in a good hookup and little damage to the fish.

Using the spinner bait or swimming plugs, there will be little doubt when you get a hit. The lure will just stop or be totally yanked by the bass attack and because there are multiple hooks involved, just yanking the lure about a foot will set the hook(s) and not pull the lure out of the fish's mouth.

Using topwater lures (the most fun there is) you will actually see the fish hit the lure in a savage fashion as they know they have to either get the whole lure in their mouth or stun it with the first attack. Using a plug with two trebles usually will allow the fish to hook itself so just put steady pressure on the line as the fish tries to turn away with its prize in his mouth. The Frog, however is a little different and requires nerves of steel to maintain a high hit to hook-up ratio. The frog is lighter than other lures and soft too so it is often totally engulfed by the bass on the first shot but not always. Some times the force of the bass hitting the lure sends the frog flying or it is knocked aside and if you try to really set the hook too early you often get the plug airborne and heading right at you!

My advice is to wait a second a moment and see if you feel any weight on the line and if so, try to "rip her lips off" to get the hooks really set.

Fighting the Fish- Now that you are hooked up to the fish make sure that your rod tip never goes any higher than 60 or 70%. If you get your rod tip up too high, the fish will control the fight as he will be fighting the soft tip of the rod only and not the strong backbone that you need to land it. I typically have my rod tip way down and to one side trying to dictate the direction of the fight. In seconds you will know if you have a really large fish on or a smaller one because the large ones will not jump immediately and the smaller ones will. If the fish is a big one it will make a strong first run and then jump after a minute or two. You really don't want that to happen as they shake their heads with real power and that is when the lures become flying objects heading toward you! If I have a really large one on I have my rod tip only inches off the water so they don't have the leverage to jump but eventually they do, but not as high. Think about keeping the rod tip down a bit and the pressure on to get them to the bank.

Landing the Fish- Once the fish is tired and heading in you'll have to try to find a weed and rush free area to land it. Pull the fish toward the spot you picked and if the fish is small enough, drag it on to the beach about a foot at which time you can pounce on it and do one of the following. If the lure only has one hook on it and you can see it, put your thumb into the fish's mouth, and clamp down on the bottom jaw and the fish will generally give a good shake and then calm down for easy hook removal. If the lure has multiple hooks I use a small jaw gripping tool that is pictured in the gear photo and is a small model of the famous Boga-Grip. When you clamp it on to the fish's lower jaw it keeps you safely away from the plug's hooks and it is the cheapest insurance policy against a treble hook in your hand while unhooking the fish.

Releasing the fish Once the hooks have been removed from the fish you should work quickly to take a photo, measure the fish or both before letting it go. While the fish may have been out of the water for 3-4 minutes it is amazing how quickly they revive and shoot away when released by carefully setting them into the pond (that means don't throw them back) and giving them a little shove toward seaward. They usually are a bit disoriented in the shore moss so make sure the fish clears that before you start casting again-a push from the rod tip usually gets them going.

FISHERMEN'S VITAL SAFETY TIPS:

1-Stay alert as you walk along the ponds. Be aware of your surroundings- If you come across a snake, just move away from it. Water moccasins are hard to identify and are very aggressive and a bite can be very serious. If an alligator becomes interested in the splashes caused by your hooked fish, or you, vacate the area ASAP....Do not throw a captured fish to an alligator or you will end up with a friend for life-they can get damn pesky as the weather warms.

2-Be aware of the sun- use sunblock, wear sun shade (SPF) type garments and polaroid sunglasses are a must to see into the water and to protect your eyes. I wear long sleeve shirts, wide brimmed hats, fishing gloves, face sun masks, and sneakers (not crocs) so that I have a firm platform to stand on when I am on a slippery slope or in mud.

3-Don't eat the fish you catch on the ponds as they are full of chemicals used to keep the golf courses green. The fish I have been catching have all appeared to be in fabulous shape but sometimes looks can deceive you.

4-Make sure to loosen the drag on your reel after each trip so as not to flatten the friction washer that controls the amount of drag.

5-Always bring a camera as you never know what you will see out there. And, without a photo, no one will believe you caught a big fish because they think all fishermen are LIARS- No photo, no fish!!!!



Notes

WHAT OTHER GEAR DO I NEED TO CARRY WITH ME WHEN I FISH THE PONDS



Above is a photo of my little shoulder bag with lures in two plastic boxes, a bag or two of worms, some leader material, a weight scale (Delia), a measuring tape, long nosed pliers, the boga grip knock off and a dehooking device to dislodge deeply taken hooks. Missing is my ever present camera!