



The School of Fish

by Duane Ryks

Preparing for the Upcoming Season –Part 1 of 2

Spring fever is real. For those of us that do most of our fishing on “soft” water, springtime and open water can’t seem to come soon enough. While we are “patiently” waiting and yearning there are some important things we can do to pass the time.

One of the most obvious is to check our fishing tackle. I start by checking over my rods and reels. Look closely at the line guides on your rods. Small cracks in the guides can destroy your line in one outing. Run a cotton swab around in the guide. If any fibers hang up, it is a sure sign of a problem. If you find any nicks or cracks make sure that you change the line on your reel since it probably has been damaged. Check the windings around the line guides. If they are loose it could cause you problems the first time you hook a decent fish. There are a number of good rod builders in our area that can repair them for you. I suggest Mike Oleson, 320-354-4646. He does excellent work at affordable rates.

Next, I check my reels. The best preventive maintenance is lubrication. Be very careful if you remove the side plates on your reels. The screws are often very small. I use a spray paint can cap to hold them while I work. Most reels need very little lubricant. I use light gun oil for small moving parts like the bail, and petroleum jelly for the gears. Check all the screws and tighten them down. I have a box of reels missing screws. Check to see if the bail is working properly. If the spring is not broken, but the bail doesn’t close properly every time, I find just a little gentle bending will make it close better.

Line is the vital link between you and that trophy of a lifetime. Most good anglers I know change their line frequently. I may change line three or four times a season,

but especially before tournaments. Compared to all the other items we use, line is cheap. A spool of line may cost less than a day’s worth of minnows. If a curl has set in the line when it comes off the spool, it has probably been sun-damaged (UV rays) and needs to be changed. I buy fresh line each year and discard line left over from previous years. Pay attention here! The line on the department store’s display may be older than what you have on your reel. Purchase your line from sporting goods stores that have a lot of traffic. Chances are they will have fresh line. If you want to be sure, ask the stock person. I make myself familiar with the current box design and know if I am



Check the hooks on all your lures. A dull hook could cost you the fish of a lifetime. Replacement hooks are cheaper than buying new lures.

getting new line. Depending on my reel’s spool size, I may simply strip off about 50 yards and then splice on new line. Most of the time, unless I’m trolling, that is probably all the line that ever leaves the spool.

The tackle box comes next. I check lures for rusted or dull hooks. They can either be sharpened or replaced. I usually go with the latter. Hooks are relatively cheap compared to new lures. Cut off old knots on the lure eyelets. Soft plastics (especially Berkley Gulp!) can dry out if left in an open

bag. I have been able to revitalize some dried out baits by putting them in with fresh baits.

Check your supply of weights, swivels, snaps, etc. I cut the hooks off all unused live bait rigs and tie new ones. (See line issues above.) It helps pass the time if nothing else.

For those of us that fish bass, check your blades and skirts on spinnerbaits. The skirts and blades can be replaced at a fraction of the cost of new lures.

Now it's time to check the boat. That will have to be the subject of another article.

