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Inside Scoop

Answers From Experts Inside The Industry

Choose A Rod That Fits Your Fishing Style

THE QUESTION:

How do you select the right rod for the situation at hand?

THE ANSWER:

When choosing a rod, anglers need to know how they like to fish and what they will be doing with the rod. I've found it's easier to break it down into the basic mechanics of the application rather than the technique. To help with this process, rate the following factors in order of importance — distance, power/hookset, accuracy and overall weight.

Before we go any farther, there are several aspects of fishing rods that need to be identified. For instance, actions vary greatly between the two basic spectrums of fast and slow. Basically, the slower the rod, the more of a bend you will see from the tip to the butt in an even, uniform bend (commonly referred to as parabolic).

In a nutshell, the more control you want with pinpoint casting, quicker pressure and harder hooksets, the faster you want your rod to be. When distance, more forgiving pressure and slowing your reaction time to the strike is important, you should lean toward the slow-action rods.

Rod length also plays an important role. The longer the rod, the greater the hooksetting power and casting distance will be.

The other two immediate concerns for choosing a rod action and type are the guides and rod material. Guides not only increase the weight of the rod, but they also keep the line along the bend of the rod for maximum sensitivity, power and control. Well-placed guides greatly enhance the action of a rod, while poorly spaced guides can ruin the action. It's preferable to have more guides, as long as they are quality, lightweight guides that don't stiffen the blank or weigh the rod down.

When you pick up a high-quality graphite rod, you can easily tell it is lightweight and sensitive. This means the material is most likely a high intermediate modulus (IM) graphite. IM-6, IM-7 and IM-8 are the most popular. As the IM number goes up, so does the lightness and sensitivity.

Graphite rods typically are at the fast end of the spectrum of action speed. The slower the action you're looking for, the more fiberglass you'll want blended in with the graphite.

With these issues in mind, you're now ready to choose a rod. The two biggest factors in regard to distance are length and parabolic action. A longer, more parabolic rod allows you to generate more tip speed, load the rod up and launch the bait farther.

Power/hooksetting is greatest at the fast end of the spectrum and with a longer rod because the additional length helps take up line faster and with a greater arc on the sweep of the hookset.

Accuracy goes the other direction with a shorter rod and faster action allowing you to control the bait better and pinpoint your casting.

Overall weight considerations should be dictated by how much casting you'll be doing. More fiberglass might make for the perfect parabolic cranking rod, but if the overall weight is too much, it will likely find a permanent space in your rod locker.

Rather than saying you're looking for a worm rod, a spinnerbait rod or a cranking rod, ask yourself about the type of fishing you plan to do with it. Is distance or accuracy most important? This will dictate the length of the rod as well as the material. Graphite will be lighter, faster and more accurate. As you go into more of a blend, the action will slow, and distance will increase.

Keep in mind that power isn't always better. If you are using baits with light hooks, a more parabolic action will put more fish in the boat. Single-hook baits like spinnerbaits, worms and jigs usually require a harder hookset, so a lighter, longer rod will provide more power.

Remember, there is no perfect rod for every condition or even for a specific technique. However, if you consider the specifics of your own fishing style and rate the most important things you want that rod to do, you'll be much more able to evaluate the choices and find the perfect rod for the way you want to fish.

— Mark Davis is the director of advertising and public relations for Shakespeare Fishing Tackle, Pflueger Fishing Tackle, All Star Rods, Cajun Line and XTOOLS.

If you have a question for an industry insider, you can submit it at ebassin.com or via mail to: Inside Scoop, 7580 E. 151st Street, Bixby, OK 74008.

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