

A View From The Back: What To Expect - And What's Expected - As A Non-Boater

PART 1

The New York Federation offers non-boaters a trail to fish that treats them as equals to their boat-owning counterparts.

Unlike other trails, there is no part of the Federation that is exclusively reserved for boaters. The State Team, Divisionals, Nationals, and even the Classic are all available to nonboaters in the Federation. This past season three non-boaters qualified for the State Team. Most other draw style trails treat nonboaters as passengers, but the Federation offers nonboaters equal time on the front of the boat and a choice of water for up to half the day, if the nonboater desires either. These attributes of the trail are part of the reason I love to fish with the Federation. Along with these opportunities, however, there are some unwritten rules of etiquette that a nonboater should be aware of.

The responsibilities of a nonboater actually

start long before the tournament. Make an effort to get familiar with the lake, look at maps; get an understanding of the layout of the water. Pick a few likely areas and plan to get out during the practice days and see if these spots will hold some fish.

It is important as a nonboater to try to get out during the practice days. After blowing up my



AN EFFECTIVE NON-BOATER'S ARSENAL

in on the water. If you don't have access to a boat, asking a boater you know, or asking on the Federation message board if someone would like a partner to practice with, will probably get you on the water. Although, if you are practicing with someone else, it is very important to discuss which areas it is okay for you to fish during the tournament. If you decide you want to fish your practice partner's spot during the tournament without discussing it before hand, there's a good chance you'll be on shore for the next

Stratos' out-board a few seasons ago, I've been borrowing my dad's converted Aluminum Run-About (I put a platform in and a Minn Kota trolling motor on the front) to get out and put some quality time

tourney's practice days. In the end, having a few areas that you have confidence in may prove to save a day on the water when your boater's plan falls apart.

At the draw on Saturday, make sure you have a pen and paper to write down the boater's info, like name, phone number, truck make/color, and boat make/color. Also decide on a time and place to meet the next morning. Additionally, you want to ask what the boater's plan for the next day is. Smallmouth?

Largemouth? What type of water (depth, clarity, etc.)? What techniques were working for him? This info will help you decide what lures you will pre-rig the night before. Finally, you want to discuss what the monetary understanding will be. Bass boats burn a lot of gas, as do tow vehicles, so ask your boater what he thinks is fair.

As far as equipment goes, I'll admit to probably carrying too much, but if you can restrict yourself to one bag of tackle and at most 5 rods your boater will be very grateful. I have one bag that has all my tackle, food, and drinks for the day. Also, make sure to bring your own lifejacket. Not all boaters will have a spare on board if you forget yours.

On tournament morning make sure you are on time at the meeting place. If you are capable of backing in a trailer, offer to help out. If you aren't comfortable doing it, let your boater know. Don't be embarrassed into trying to "learn on the fly". On the water, be mindful not to spread out too

much in the boat, at least keep your things in front of your seat. The day will go smoothly if you

"If you are confident in backing up a trailer, helping launch and load the boat will make the day go much smoother."



The Pre-Dawn Tournament Launch Line

treat the boat with respect, being mindful not to damage the gel coat, seats, or windshields. Unless I have a spot that is purely a morning bite, I don't push to go my fish until the boater's areas are given a fair shot. That being said, don't be too coy about fish that you found in practice. There is no worse feeling than leaving a tournament knowing that you didn't give yourself a chance to see if your plan would come together.

Despite this being a draw style tournament where you are competing against the angler in the front of the boat, it is to the advantage of both anglers to work as a team trying to put together two good limits. Viewing the other angler in the boat as direct competition will

only distract you from the task at hand... fishing.

After the tournament, if you are able to back a trailer, offer to get the boater's truck and get in line to retrieve the boat. It is good practice to offer to help cloth off the boat, help put on the boat's cover (if the boater wants to put it on), and make sure you give him the predetermined amount of money for gas.

Hopefully, as the nonboater, you were able to put together a good limit, had a great time, and learned something over the course of the day. See you out on the water! **FL**