

Anchoring? Are you serious?? Part 1

By Rich Stadler

That is the usual response I get when telling people how productive anchoring has been for me. It seems to me that as time goes on, anchoring is slowly becoming a thing of the past. More focus is being put on mobility so fishermen are hanging up their anchors. I have fished with several tournament fishermen that do not even carry anchors in their boat. That is like going skydiving and not bringing your parachute. Here are a couple scenarios where anchoring is a must:

The first scenario is fishing small isolated spots with a moderate to heavy wind. Spots that are lets say less then 100 feet in diameter. These spots can include rock piles, weed cups or points, submerged trees or small deep holes. I like to focus on the wind blown side of these so using a trolling motor becomes very difficult. On my home waters, I have a bunch of these types of spots. Most of them are located in shallow water. Some of them are made up of one single rock but that is all it takes to hold a couple really big fish. Because these spots are so small, hardly anybody knows they are there. Even if they drove over them their locator would not pick them up unless they were going at trolling speeds. Fish use these spots to ambush prey. Keeping that in mind, structure that is taller then it is wide is preferred. As a fish becomes larger, it becomes more territorial. They like to make several small spots like these their home. They also don't like smaller more aggressive fish there which makes these big fish only spots. Stealth is the key. These big fish are not stupid and spook easily especially in shallow water. Once properly set-up, it only takes a few minutes to fish the spot then pick up the anchor and move to the next one.

The next scenario is when the wind is too strong to maintain good boat control even on a larger spot. These spots include humps, drop-offs, weed edges, stump fields and transitions. Under normal wind I would use the bowmount to fish these. Because you still need a high degree of accuracy when fishing them it becomes next to impossible to be precise when the wind is too strong. Take transitions for example; they are usually just a few feet wide. If your presentation is not in that area, you are not getting bit. Now try to hold in that zone using a bowmount or even back trolling in 3 footers. Instead of making life difficult, simply drop an anchor to keep you precise even in the roughest of conditions.

I know what you are thinking, "How many times will I have to pull the anchor to work along a drop-off or transition??" There are a few tricks that we will cover later that enable you to cover a lot of water without pulling the anchor. First let's cover the different methods of anchoring:

(1) One anchor off the bow eye- This is the method I see being used the most by anglers. I believe this is because it allows you to hold in big waves and only use one anchor. The downside is you are stuck fishing out of the back of the boat. Another

drawback is retrieving your anchor since the rope is through the bow eye. It can be very dangerous leaning over the bow in rough water. For this reason I have come up with a new product called a Drop-n-Stay Deuce. It attaches to both bow cleats and has its own cleat in the middle. You simply attach your anchor rope to this cleat and now you never have to reach over the front of the boat. This product also has a tremendous amount of stretch which works as a shock absorber allowing your anchors to hold over twice as well even in extreme conditions. See www.drop-n-stay.com for more details.

(2) One anchor off the bow cleat- I use this method a lot. This method is very useful when fishing ledges and edges. Let's say you are fishing the canes on the Winnebago system and the wind is blowing at a 45 degree angle to the cane edge. With this method of anchoring, your boat stays parallel with the cane edge which opens up your fishing zone. Instead of having to fish a smaller area straight out the back of the boat like in method one, you can fish the entire length of the boat. This method also gives you very little boat movement which is very important. Another advantage of this method is you are only using one anchor and that is nice especially when you are by yourself.

(3) One anchor off the side of the boat- You can use the Drop-n-Stay Deuce for this style as well. Because of its stretch, it is now possible to use this style of anchoring even when it is rough! I use this method when the wind is blowing directly at the structure I want to fish. Notice how once again the entire length of the boat parallels the cane edge. Boat movement is minimal as long as the wind is coming from a constant direction. Any little change in wind direction will give you substantial boat movement. Again, one anchor which makes this a favorable method when fishing alone.

(4) One anchor off the bow and one off the aft- This is the method I use the most especially when it is really rough. The anchors hold very well and you have the length of the boat to fish from. Using two anchors allows you to cover lots of water. Let's say you have out roughly 100ft of rope to each anchor. You have fished an area and now you want to shift your boat position. Simply let out four feet of rope on one anchor only. This will push the boat in the opposite direction about 20ft. If you let the rope out in the front, the boat will move backwards and letting rope out the back will push the boat forwards.

When deciding which of these methods to use, figure out which one is going to get your boat parallel with the structure you want to fish. Next, decide which one will keep your boat still once anchored. Let's say you are anchored using method number one. You decide to throw out a slip bobber out the back of the boat to a small submerged stump. The wind catches the bow and blows the boat off to one side. Now your bobber has been pulled off the stump by the boat. Now the boat swings back the other way and you have 15ft of slack line. Remember, fish are using this area to ambush prey so precision is the key. Having your bobbers dragged of the spot by your boat is anything but precise.

There are many different types of anchors on the market today and they all have their strong points. I still believe the most versatile anchor is the Navy Anchor. I use the

27lb'ers no matter what size boat I am in. Couple these with 150ft of ½" diameter nylon rope for maximum versatility.

Remember, precision is the key. You can imagine that the shorter the anchor rope is the easier it is to anchor precisely. Problem with that is your anchors loose holding power for two reasons. One, your anchor rope has stretch and the less rope, the less stretch. Two, your anchor rope is steeper with less line out which will not allow the anchor to dig in. There are a couple things you can do to remedy this. Some people like to put a few feet of chain between the anchor and the rope. This works somewhat well but has some disadvantages. First, it adds a lot of weight to an already heavy anchor. Second, the chain produces a lot of noise. Third, it can do damage to the side of your boat if you are not careful. Another option is to add a shock absorber like the Drop-n-Stay. This new product will virtually eliminate the shock to your anchor which allows them to hold extremely well even with a short amount of rope out. You can see a video of the Drop-n-Stay in action at www.drop-n-stay.com

In the second part of this article I will describe in more detail on how I set-up on these types of spots as well as how I fish them. Until then, give some of these methods a try.