

Hooked on the THUMP, Advanced Jig Fishing Techniques

By Bernard Williams, Magnolia Crappie Club

Background

Jig fishing is probably the most utilized technique used to catch crappie in the south. I know for a fact that in Mississippi lakes more fisherman use this method than all others combined. The primary reason; this modus operandi produces more stringers of big crappie and fisherman love that "**THUMP**".

I've discussed this process with some of the best jig fisherman in the country and all seem to agree of one major reason they've adapted this technique, "**The Thump**". My focus group included several past and present members of MCC: Shelton Culpepper, vice-president of the MCC and veteran Eagle Lake resident; John Harrison, Grenada Lake Guide and longtime B'n'M Prostaff Member; and Rabbit Rodgers, Ross Barnett Reservoir Guide and past-president of MCC.

These men, in my opinion are the *Godfathers* of jig fishing. They all agree that above all you must have the confidence and concentration first, and then all the little things will fall in place. They know that when they stick their jig down beside a bush or stump and a fish is near, they're gonna be victorious. From their knowledge and acquired skill, they've concluded that no other method allows you to trick that perch into striking a small piece of plastic as rapidly as jig fishing.

Styles – Different Strokes for Different Folks

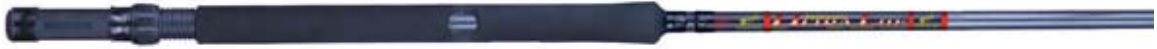
Shelton, John and I prefer the two-pole delivery, while older fishermen such as Rabbit prefer the single pole routine. I've seen Rabbit take one pole and just annihilate us in tournament fishing. It's tough to believe, but Shelton and John can slither up to a brush pile and catch virtually every active fish on the pile.

Shelton fishes standing up, John fishes from the very front of the boat, while Rabbit likes to fish from the front seat of his stick-steering 16' aluminum boat. Each of these guys take care to only fish the productive stumps, brush-piles, and ledges. They've learned from past experiences what to look for when searching a lake. That stump sitting out there by itself, that ledge that's located in a sharp bend in the river channel or that brush pile on the edge of the river or creek.

Equipment

By far this is the least expensive method for catching crappie, all is need is a quality rod, quality line and a good assortment of jigs and jig bodies. The basic setup for this technique can be acquired for less than \$100. You can stretch it out with expensive electronics but they're not a requirement. I will not get into the intimate details of rods, reels, line, or electronics, but I will give you a little advice on my choices.

- Rod – 10' B'n'M Touch System Rod – This rod has a cutout for your index finger to touch the rod blank allowing you to feel the lightest bite.



- Reel – B'n'M Quick Change Reel – This reel allows you to place a 100-yard spool of line.
- Line – Vicious 4#, 6# or 8# Hi-Vis Monofilament Line in



- 100yd pony spools
- Jig Heads – Bobby Garland Mo Glo Jigheads – 1/32nd, 1/16th, or 1/8th – They come with Gamakatsu hooks.
- Tubes – Southern Pro – 2" or 3" Tubes, 2" Crappie Stingers.
- Solid Bodies – Bobby Garland SlabSlayR, Baby Shad, StrollR
- Bait Pump – Softbait Injection System
- Berkley Power Bait Crappie Nibbles.
- Depth Finder – 240 X 240 pixel sonar unit.
- Handheld GPS or Sonar with built-in GPS.
- Variable Speed Trolling Motor.



Locating the Fish – The Approach

When I decide to fish a spot; my fish thought is where will the fish be relative to the structure, ledge or brush pile? I've seen Rabbit motor directly into a bush and back off and pick the fish off the edges. I don't recommend this approach but for finicky fish this occasionally works. John will work his way up to the pile fishing gradually around it, prior to placing his jig into the pile. Shelton will swim his jig around the outside first, and then swim it into the pile starting and stopping it from moment to moment.

In stump flats there are a variety of choices to fish. These guys will try to locate underwater stumps to fish first, and then move to the visible stumps. If they see three or more stumps grouped together, they become the target of choice.

Working docks is one area that Shelton flourishes. His home on Eagle Lake allows him to fish one of the finest Black Crappie lakes in the state of Mississippi. Shelton distinguishes what docks hold fish during times of the year. His approach to docks is straightforward, start on the outer edges and work inward. Fish the cross-members of the docks and then shoot the jig in the direction of the back of the dock.

John fishes Grenada Lake more days than anyone that I know, his approach ranges from wade fishing to working the buck brushes, and the grass to perfection. John told me that when the crappie back up into these bushes during late summer the bite can be awesome. "Drop that jig down around a laid over brush and when it reaches 7' or 8' it feels like a stick of dynamite exploding in your hand". Now that's a real **THUMP**.

As far as a time of year to catch the most, all three guys and I agree pre-spawn is one of the most fruitful. Nevertheless, being skilled veteran jig fishermen, these guys catch crappie all year long. They keep detail notes and refer back as often as needed. They fish many different areas and finding and building their own honey-holes. These guys have a place to fish no matter what the weather throws at them.

Advantages

Jig fishing offers numerous advantages for taking slab crappie, I just mention a few:

- Inexpensive to get started – Your average "Weekend Warrior" can get setup for less than \$75.
- It puts you directly in touch with the fish - No other method puts you this close to the fish.
- Perfect for kids
- No live-bait required
- All active fish can be easily located
- Moving to another spot quickly
- Fish closer to other fisherman – I've seen jig fisherman in the tailraces of spillways so close together they could almost walk from one boat to another.
- Windy – This is a perfect way to fish when it's windy. Since you're holding the pole, you take all the bounce out of the pole tip.

Disadvantages

Some of the disadvantages to this method include:

- Can be tiresome – holding that jig pole several hours can get tiresome if you don't have a quality pole.
- Some days they don't want that plastic – they want live bait
- Hang-ups – Fishing brush piles will cause lots of hung hooks.
- Schooling fish – When fishing schooling fish you may be at a disadvantage with one or two poles versus spider rigging.
- Small Fish – Sometimes jigs tend to catch more of the smaller fish than live bait.
- Broken Poles – I've broke more poles jig fishing than all other methods combined.

Conclusion

I have reviewed some of the tips and techniques of the best jig fisherman in the country and concluded that this method works. It works for the amateur as well as the professional. The key to becoming a better jig fisherman is developing confidence in your technique, having patience while fishing, and trying something new. I like to fish with someone that's better at a specific method than I am in order to learn something. Last but not least, try this method. Once you feel that THUMP you will forever be hooked. See ya on the lake.