

Banging For Fall LARGEMOUTHS

In this year's Bassmaster Classic, Kevin Vandam walked away the winner by concentrating his efforts on a small area within 50 yards of three other top competitors. He won by throwing a square-billed KVD/Strike King 1.5 and 2.5 crankbait in chartreuse with a black back. The other guys were throwing cranks too. How did he outdistance them by ten pounds at the final weigh-in? The main reason was his approach - banging and twitchin' it whenever it hit anything - rocks, wood or grass.

Fall is the perfect time for banging your artificial off anything submerged. I have found over the years that as the water temps begin to fall, bass still zero in on cover. But, until the water really starts to chill, they can be less aggressive, and this is where banging it on anything comes into play.

I rely on a variety of lures in the fall, with each offering a different look that a bass cannot refuse. For starters, I will always have a 3/8-ounce blue Strike King jig with Zoom blue trailer. I will throw this anywhere, and in the thickest cover I can find. After it falls, I'll give it a flick or two with the rod tip. If there are no takers, I will do my best to bang it off the reeds, pads or wood. In fact, I have yo-yoed a jig and smacked it under a limb several times before a bass finally couldn't stand it and whacked it.

My next offering would be a crankbait. I'll use two different cranks - a Strike King Pro Model that runs 14 feet and several Bomber square-bills. I'll stick with green and chartreuse hues on the color end. On Long Island, we have a lot of weeds and shallow lakes, but that does not mean you cannot use a crank - even a deep-running one. I try to fish it close, with short casts and only work it for a few seconds. Find a log or blow-down, toss the crank in, and then bang it off the timber as many times as possible.

The last is a white Booyah spinnerbait in 3/8-ounce with a trailer hook. I add a small plastic trailer at times in green, but for the most part, I fish it naked. The same applies with the spinnerbait as the crank and jig - you have to bang

it off something. The nice part about the spinnerbait is that it will bang off a lot of underwater "junk" without getting hung-up. When retrieving, as it hits a lily pad or log, twitch it quickly with your wrist, imparting a quick jerk on the bait. This, in my opinion, imitates a wounded baitfish, struggling in the water.

With every lure, there is a piece of gear that goes hand-in-hand. Whether it is the line, rod or reel, you have to be comfortable, and it has to be up to the task.

For line, I prefer two types, depending on the lure. For working a jig, I'll either use 20-pound Fluorocarbon by Sufix or 30-pound Sufix 832 braid. It all depends where I am fishing. If there are heavy pads or cottontails, I'll opt for the braid. For more open water and just timber, I'll use the mono. On the crankbaits, I prefer Sufix Deep-Cranking mono in 12- and 17-pound-test. Here again, line weight will be adjusted depending on the amount of cover. For the spinnerbait, I use 14-pound Sufix fluorocarbon. I like the fluorocarbon as it is a bit stiffer, it has great sensitivity, and allows me to subtly bump objects, but still feel a bite.

Most bass anglers have their own comfort level when it comes to rod and reel outfits. For some, it comes down to the manufacturer. I would suggest rods rated for 12- to 17- and 15- to 25-pound-test. The heavier rod is for the jig, while the lighter one is

for crankbaits and spinnerbaits. For reels, I like a hi-speed retrieve on the crank, so I'll opt for 7:1-1, while a 6:3-1 retrieve works fine for jigs and spinnerbaits. I use the Daiwa Zillion and Advantage in 6:3-1, Abu Garcia Revo SX in 7:1-1, and the Shimano Castaic or Zillion on the jig rod.

As the season in the Northeast begins to wind down, I can offer one more tip. When you feel the rap of a bass, don't treat it lightly - hit it hard and start taking up line immediately. Bass will head for cover fast when hooked, so the quicker you take up line the better.

Now is the time to bang a lure off a stump, drag a jig through some tails or slap a spinnerbait through the lilies, so head out now, and catch 'em up. 🐟



This chunky largemouth grabbed a Strike King Pro deep diving jig after banging it off some standing timber.