

THE THINKING GAME...

BY GARY DOBYNS

A lot of anglers think that the tournament starts when the director calls your boat number and you start fishing. I'm thinking about it at least the week before practice period starts. The "where, what and why" Where have the fish been, what are they doing now and why are they there. "Think" You might think the hardest part is figuring them out, and sometimes it can be, but if you think and pay attention it gets easier.

Many anglers only pay attention to the weather forecast for the tournament days. I pay close attention to the weather during the week prior to the event. Is there a trend? Is there a cooling trend or has it been hot for the last two weeks. A simplistic approach is if we are going to have cloud cover and rain I can usually plan on fishing shallow reaction patterns and if we are faced with high pressure and clearing weather I will usually plan on slowing down and fishing deeper. There are many other things to be aware of prior to the tournament including water releases from the

lakes, tides, moon phase and most importantly the upcoming weather.

One of the biggest mistakes made in pre-fish is beating up on your fish. You don't have to go back and check those fish every day and you shouldn't catch too many of the fish in the area you plan on fishing on tournament day. Increased pressure and continued catching of these fish will often times shut the fish off or move them all together. Only catch enough to establish a pattern with

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the hopes of duplicating it.

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In tournaments, the bass have been heavily fished in practice so the easy, aggressive fish have already taken a beating and are not going to bite. Successful tournament anglers have to stay focused throughout the whole competition day. You never know when you'll get that critical bite.

Everyone deals with staying focused a little bit differently. For myself, I'm always thinking about where I will go next and what I will do next. "Always thinking" This is how I stay focused or in the game throughout the day. Bass fishing is, I believe, is a thinking and reacting sport. Bass are always changing and if you get stuck on yesterday's bite and don't adjust to the new conditions, you're going to take a steady beating.

