

CONTROLLED STRUCTURE FISHING ...

NOT Toolie Dippin'

...so says DEE THOMAS and FRANK HAUCK (Santa Clara Bass Classics). They had just finished winning their fifth tournament (Lake Nacimiento-WBFA) out of seven entered in recent months. These two bass pros don't exactly fish in the same manner a lot of bassmen do, and some do not agree with their methods. But the records show they catch a lot of bass and win a lot of tournaments. What has been their secret or methods used to bring about such achievements? "Well it sure as hell ain't 'toolie dippin'" THOMAS was quick to point out. "I know what toolie dippin is - I'm the guy that started it in California back in 1956. What we do is 'controlled structured fishing'...the same as everyone else, only with more control in lure presentation...and if there is a secret..then that's it; 'Lure Presentation.' It's the name of the game." THOMAS continues; "first you have to understand what toolie dippin' is: get a 12 foot rod with or without guides. If you don't have any guides on the rod, you tie the line right on the tip. With guides you thread the line back through and tie it on the butt. The length of the line is usually about the same as the rod. The lure or bait is presented in one manner; vertical - worked straight up and down."

So what is so different about their present methods? HAUCK and THOMAS use a 12 foot Lew's Hawger equipped with an Ambassador 5000-C, spooled with 25 lb Trilene. Or at least that's what they used until WBFA rod restriction limited them to a 7-1/2



DEE THOMAS (left) and FRANK HOUCK (far right) discuss the aspects of "controlled structure" fishing with LARRY APPLIGATE (seated, DAVE COOLIDGE and DAVE MEYERS at Lake Nacimiento.

foot rod length. Upon learning their equipment was considered illegal in this contest...the two fishermen simply rounded up a saw and a tape measure. Measuring 7-1/2 feet back from the rod tip of their Hawgers, they whacked the rod down to tournament requirements (enough to make Lew Childre vomit). Then they slipped on some Fugi Speed guides and taped them down. They were in business. Well, not quite. The big comfortable 16 ft. MonArk bass boat would have to sit this one out. Losing 4-1/2 feet of rod length, sitting back in the wide roomy MonArk would barely allow the rod tip to reach over the gunwales. (That's the sides of a boat-landlubbers) They hooked up the small Gregor boat. This would, by sitting way up in the bow or crowding the stern - give them the additional reach - compensating for loss of rod length. This would help in their "lure presentation." How then, is the lure

presented any different with a chopped-off Hawger? According to THOMAS, a 35 or 40 yard cast is spectacular, but because of the angle of retrieve... the control of the action is extremely limited. Also a lot of time is wasted on long casts retrieving the lure through "dead water." HAUCK says he can make three casts while everyone else is fishing out a single cast with the more conventional method. They seldom consider fishing water any deeper than 15 feet and prefer depths shoreline to ten feet, as the feeding fish will likely be in the shallows, providing water clarity is permitting. FRANK and DEE use black jigs (bucktail with polyethylene weed guard) almost exclusively. Using a 12 foot rod they can cast about twenty-five feet or so, by gathering line in their left hand - taking it up between the first guide and reel seat - and snapping it out to shoreline-ala fly casting. (Except without any false casts.) In the WBFA event, they could get 16 to 18 feet distance on a cast. These two fishermen claim they can do things with a jig that they could never accomplish with the more popular techniques: "flip" the lure over a rock, make it dance off a shelf... manipulate it down and along steep banks, at the same time feel what's going on and set the hook quicker and deeper. And more often.

Call it what you may; "controlled structure fishing or toolie dippin"...it doesn't really make that much difference when you are standing in the winner's circle.