They Have A Lot in Common

By Stan Fagerstrom

Part 1

Some of the country’s top professional golfers are also excellent fishermen. I had that proved to me once by one of the best there was at the time.

I mentioned once to Bob Schmidt, the general manager of Mack’s Lure, how surprised I was to find out just how some of those golf pros got to be as good as they are with a rod and reel.

Bob’s thoughtful answer cleared things up in a hurry. “Stan,” Bob said, “why should that surprise you? Have you ever stopped to think about how many similarities there are between fishing and golf?”

Obviously I hadn’t, but the more I thought about it the more what Bob had to say makes sense. Let’s take a closer look at certain of those similarities and see if you don’t agree.

I mentioned that I’d had opportunity to share a bass boat with one the golf pros who had proven his ability at the very top of professional competition time after time.
Old timers who follow golf will remember a top pro named Julius Boros. Some six decades ago it was said he had “the sweetest swing” in professional golf. I don’t know how sweet his golf swing was but I do know he sure as heck could handle a rod and reel.

We met way back in the 1950s when we were both guests of the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. At that time Lake Mead was one of the world’s best bets for largemouth bass fishing. Lake Mead was where my old friend Jason Lucas, at that time the fishing editor of Sports Afield magazine and one of the world’s early leading authorities on bass fishing, sometimes spent his winters.

One place where golf and fishing do differ is in lure selection. If a golfer doesn't like the way his game is going he can't do a blasted thing about it. He might have a dozen balls in his bag but they all do the same thing. Nobody knows better than the man you see here just how important it is for an angler to change tactics if what he's doing isn't getting results. He's Bob Schmidt, the general manager of Mack's Lure. Look closely at the lure Bob used at Mexico's Lake El Salto to nail this dandy bass. Actually, the bass weren't biting well when Bob took time to add that Smile Blade you can see just above that big worm he was throwing. When his partner did the same thing, the two of them wound up catching 19 bass on 21 casts.
I could show you letters from Jason (this was well before computers) telling about the great fishing he experienced at Lake Mead. He said the lake was consistently kicking out large numbers of beautiful largemouth as well as platter-sized crappie.

Having heard that sort of thing from a man who was one of bass fishing’s early day heroes, you can imagine my eagerness to try Lake Mead myself. That’s exactly what Boros and I got to do. Because we were both hotel guests, we did our fishing from the Flamingo Hotel’s beautiful big 35-foot cruiser.

Despite the handicap of throwing our lures from that big boat, we still had great fishing. I kept track of the bass we caught. In just that one first morning we boated 35 dandy fish. Most of them ran from 2 to 6-pounds.

The day before I fished with him Boros had won a major PGA tournament in Las Vegas. The weekend after we were together he won a PGA tournament held in Houston. There just wasn’t any question about his golfing skills.

But it was watching him do his fishing that brought the surprise I told Bob Schmidt about. It was obvious as soon as he made his first cast that Boros also knew what he was doing as an angler. He handled that bass outfit just as expertly as he did a putter or a driver.

Mike Johnson is another good friend who knows his way around a bass lake or a golf course. And like the par golfer and expert angler that he is, you'll always find him picking the best tools he has at his disposal to get the results he's after.
Like I said, this surprised me at the time, but then after talking to Bob Schmidt and thinking about it a bit it was a whole lot easier to understand.

As Bob pointed out, I really shouldn’t have been surprised in the first place. Why? Because those pros you watch on television as they compete for big bucks are already doing many of the same things essential to an angler who hopes to be consistently successful.

“The game of golf,” Schmidt told me, “can be just as competitive as you chose to make it. The same thing is true of fishing. “

...Do you have the ability to use both a level wind bait casting reel as well as a spinning reel? If you can't you're much like a golfer who has to try to play nine holes without a putter or perhaps a driver.

Again, Schmidt was telling it like it is. “Ever see those golfers out there smacking one bucket full of practice balls after another in an attempt to smooth out their swing and improve their scores?” Bob said. “They remind me of the fishermen I’ve seen using practice casting weights. Those guys know darn well improved casting accuracy is one of the things that will help them put more fish in the boat.”
That cluster of partially submerged trees you see in the foreground really don't resemble a sand trap on your favorite golf course. But they do present a similar set of problems for a bass angler. The golfer will pick a club designed to best let him blast his ball up on the fairway or green. The bass man dealing with those trees will be wise to pick a rod, reel and line that will give him the best chance of taking a good fish out of that heavy cover.

The general manager of Mack’s Lure brought up more interesting comparisons between those who fish and those who play golf. I’ll get into what they are in my next couple of Stan’s Corner columns.

-To Be Continued-