

V.P.'s Corner: Are You Ready To Fish The Pro-Division?

Often, the word “Pro” in Pro-Division intimidates many anglers from participating in this division. Sure, it can also be a little more taxing on your wallet when it comes time for registration. On the contrary, you may have a better chance of getting into the money, especially BIG money, by participating in the Pro-Division. Let’s discuss the advantages of fishing the Pro-Division and some tips on how you can improve your odds and give you the confidence to fish with the “Pros”.

The Pro-Division was instituted to have licensed fishing guides, and professionals in the fishing industry. These individuals tend to spend more time fishing or in a fishing environment. This is thought to give them an advantage over the “non-pro” or “weekend” angler; thus the separate divisions. But guides and pros are also human and most are just regular persons who can also have a bad fishing day, make wrong decisions when it comes to finding the “hot lure” or the “hot spot”, or simply finding fish that cooperate. Ultimately, nature is in control of the game. The fish don’t care if you’re a pro guide, brain surgeon, or Starbucks barista. Keep this in mind at the next derby you participate in.

Placing high in the Pro-Division is determined by the weigh-in of (2) fish. Placing high in the Sportsman’s Division is determined by the weigh-in of only (1) fish. Sounds easier to fish Sportsman’s Division right? However, it can often times involve more luck in determining first place over skill and knowledge. Anyone can get lucky with one big fish and win 1st place. You may fish regularly for kokanee and easily catch a beautiful limit on any given derby lake. But along comes an angler, new to the sport, and he or she catches only one fish the whole day with some off-the-wall lure. Unfortunately for you, it is two centimeters bigger than yours and now this angler just beat you for 1st place. The Sportsman’s Division is great for giving new anglers to the kokanee sport an equal opportunity, but leaving you, the more experienced kokanee angler, feeling like you got hosed. So now we have the Pro-Division where a second quality fish is required to get you into the money. One lucky fish can no longer beat you.

Sheer odds can be another reason for you to try the Pro-Division. In the Sportsman’s Division, you can count on fishing against 100 to 200 other anglers, all only needing one lucky fish to beat you. Generally, the Pro-

Division has only between 20 to 30 anglers. Well, you do the math. Besides not weighing in any fish, the worst you could do in this scenario would be 30th place instead of 150th. At the least, you could tell your buddies, “Yeah, I fish the Pro-Division”. The payouts may not go down to 15th place, as it does in the Sportsman’s Division, but the prize money is much more. Keep in mind; the more entrants entering into the Pro-Division the more places are paid out.

So now you may be telling to yourself that you may actually have a better shot at placing high in the Pro-Division than in the Sportsman’s. But you still have to fish against the guides and the pros. Well fish don’t care if your boat says “guide”, “pro”, “staff”, “licensed” or “bonded”. Kokanee don’t know if you’re an expert angler or if you know the difference between a kokanee and a bluegill. All they see is your presentation and presentation is the key. To fish amongst the pros, you need to give yourself more advantages. An often over-looked aspect to kokanee fishing is the use of low voltage to attract fish. For years, commercial salmon fisherman have used low voltage to help them put fish in the boat. It is a scientific fact that salmon and trout use voltage to navigate and find food. By inducing a low voltage field around your boat, you can attract fish. The use of a “black box” will give you this advantage. Kokanee are attracted to a voltage ranging from 0.60 to 0.70 volts. Setting your black box within this range should help you attract fish to your presentation(s).

Obviously, catching **large** kokanee is key in winning in a derby. Target them! All of the anglers who you consistently see place in the top spots do. Remember, you only need to catch (2) large kokanee not a limit. Five mediocre fish will do you no good in placing high. Be patient until you find the bigger fish then work them. Look for the singles or groups of two or three on your sonar, not a screen full of fish. Stay in the area and show them different presentations to try to get them to bite. Then again, don’t spend too much time trying to get them to take. There is limited time in fishing a derby. If those fish are lock-jawed, move on until you find cooperative ones. If you do, but your sonar screen is empty, it may be worth staying in the area for a few more passes. Remember, large kokanee are like beach muscle heads. They group together and are usually ornery.

Running appropriate colors to the depths you are fishing is also key in getting fish to bite. Shades of red, yellow and orange disappear before blues, purples and blacks as you go deeper in the water column. Also, matching

colors from opposite ends of the color spectrum like pink/purple or black/chartreuse give the effect of higher visibility break-up patterns. This can often attract fish and get them to bite.

Whether you are dragging Killer B's spinners, Apexes, hootchies, Marni Bugs, or your Uncle Fred's old rusted Kastmaster from 1970 something, have confidence in your presentation. For whatever reason on a given day, one angler may be "knockin the heck out of em" with a certain lure that you have never tried or caught fish with, so, you try it. But if you don't have confidence in that lure, it will not fish for you. I have witnessed countless anglers catch kokanee on lures, that if I used, I could troll for ten years and never get a bite. That's because I'm making a presentation without confidence. Without confidence, you tend to not make the effort in your trolling patterns, speed, adjustments, and time spent working the lure.

Remember, fishing the Pro-Division doesn't mean you have to be a pro. You simply have to do a few simple things to ensure you catch a couple of better than average fish. Quite often, the single big fish in the Sportsman's division are bigger than the ones in the Pro-Division, but they may not necessarily have that second quality fish to add to their score like you do. Don't get beat out by one lucky fish. I'm confident that most of you are good enough anglers to compete in this division. Wouldn't you rather have a "phat" \$500.00 or more check with your name on it that said "First place-Pro-Division" to waive in your buddies' face. Fact is, it may be easier to win that Pro-Division than it is to win the Sportsman's.