

# Lake Evergreen High School Bass Fishing Preparation Guide

## Weather, Water and Forage are Key

In preparation for the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Sectional Bass Fishing Tournament at Lake Evergreen, located near Hudson, IL, understanding **the effects of water temperature and weather on the fish are key elements of fishing success** according to local Bass fisherman Fred Meyers. The "water will still be cold" when the tournament takes place on April 23rd said Meyers at the High School fishing seminar held at Heritage Community College on March 13th. The water will be **in the 50-60°F range** said Meyers. According to Weather Underground, **average air temperatures at Evergreen are 55° to 60°F** with highs of 65-70°F and lows in the 45-50°F range. As the days grow longer, air temperatures rise, and the sun shines directly on the lake, the water temperatures rise as well. In the 50-60° water temperatures, in the 50-55°F range the bass are typically somewhere between their winter habitat (with water temperatures are in the upper 30's) and their spawning habitat in a pre-spawn pattern. In the 55-60°F range, the bass can begin to spawn with ideal spawning temperatures in the 55-65°F range. With the rise in water temperature, the fishes' metabolic rate rises and the fish begin to move between their deeper water winter

homes and shallower warmer water **gradually working their way toward their spawning beds**. Not only are Bass metabolic rates rising, but the bodily functions of Bass food is rising as well. Small forage fish, such as shad, and crawfish, a favorite bass food in the spring, are also moving toward warmer shallower water. Bass, being the predators they are, **follow the food and begin to "bulk up" in preparation for spawning**. All of this adds up to several Keys for Bass fishing success in the end of April on Lake Evergreen. Weather dictates water temperature and water temperature dictates forage location and spawning, Bass movement and behavior. Bass will **typically be found in 15 feet of water and shallower** and may change depths several times a day as the forage moves and water temperature changes. Taking water temperature, and forage into consideration, the Bass angler can now target areas of the lake that are warmer, in the 15 foot or less depth range and **choose baits that mimic Evergreen Bass forage**. At Lake Evergreen, these areas are off of the points spawning coves, and in and around the numerous trees, stumps leading into shallow water. Remember these things and you will hold the Keys to bass fishing success.

**Professional angler Randy Howell is ready for changing weather with this heavy sweatshirt and pullover pants.**



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## Be Prepared, A motto for Bass Fisherman Too!

At a time of year when temperatures fluctuate and the weather conditions are unpredictable at best, **it pays to be prepared for what the elements can throw at you**. Being prepared not only means having your tackle and fishing strategy organized but it means being **prepared for cold, heat, wind, and or rain**. Being prepared for a cold, rainy day is a must. **If you are shivering from the cold, you can't concentrate** on detecting the often times subtle bite that occurs when water temperatures are low. A rain suit is an absolute must and having a good winter coat or even a snow mobile type suit with you is a great way to be prepared. A knit hat, gloves with the fingers cut off and a pair of warm boots is a good idea also. You may have traveled a considerable distance to the lake making a run home or to the store to get something is out of the question. Remember, if it warms up, you can always take off your coat or jacket but **if it gets cold and you don't have it with you, you can't put it on**. Bass fishing at this time of year requires a little more preparation and that means doing some homework in order to prepare your equipment (Tackle box, poles, line, clothing, rain gear, and life jacket) and to prepare your strategy and tactics to locate and catch fish that are transitioning to spawning water. It pays for boy scouts and fisherman to be prepared.

### Quick Tips

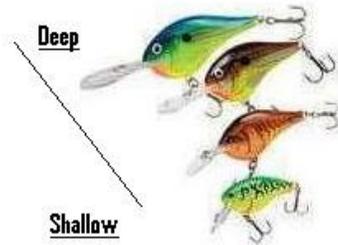
- > A Coast Guard approved life jacket of vest must be worn at all times while fishing in IHSA events.
- > Keep a fishing journal or log book to keep track of water temperature, weather conditions, and successful bait selection.
- > Start your fishing day by searching for active fish with baits that cover a lot of water quickly, then as you catch fish try to determine if there is a pattern to your fishing success. Continue following the pattern until it changes.
- > If the fish aren't active try slower presentations, like suspending baits and finesse baits.

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Assorted Crankbaits. Notice the different lip lengths.



Throw a shallow running crankbait into structure everyone else threw a weed less bait to and missed.



Its never a good idea to lip land a fish when fishing crankbaits, use a landing net for safety.



Lipless Crankbaits ticked over grass is a great way to catch bass.

### Cranking for Spring Time Success

Crankbaits, also called plugs, are a great lure type **when you need to cover a lot of water to locate bass**. Crankbaits wiggle and wobble as they are retrieved putting out a vibration and a look that attract bass. Not only can you fish the bait fast, but when the water is colder, you can slow down your retrieve to entice a bite. Many times, the bass at this time of year are holding on the points leading to shallower water. Depending on the depth of the water, you may need to cast a short lipped, shallow running bait 0-4 ft, and medium lipped

bait that runs in the 4-8 foot range or a long lipped bait that can run in the 15' plus depth range.

Lip angle, shape and width also play a roll in how the bait acts during the retrieve. Generally speaking, the longer and straighter the lip, the deeper the bait will run. Conversely, the shorter and steeper the lip, the shallower the bait will run. Crankbaits with a wide lip wobble more, and baits with a thin lip wobble less. Lip shape also effects how the bait acts, and where you can fish it. Shallow

running baits often have a square shaped lip that will **make the lure "bounce" off of tree limbs** and other structure without getting snagged. Many times, this erratic action triggers a fish to strike. Local bass angler Ron Bristow says to throw a squared lipped shallow runner into structure everyone else is throwing weed less baits at will sometimes cause the fish they missed to attack your offering, giving you cranking spring time success.



### Necessary Accessories

Fishing tackle can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to but these accessories are more than choices, they really are necessary to keep you, your tackle and the fish safe. First and foremost, a good pair of **long nose pliers or a hook removal tool** should be part of every anglers equipment. The ability to quickly and safely remove hooks keeps the angler, and the fish

safe for another day. A pair of **polarized sunglasses** are also believed to be an indispensable fishing accessory. The polarization allows you to see into the water and also protects your eyes from straining as the day progresses. A **hook hone or small file** to make sure your hooks stay sharp is also an important item to have. Check your hooks several times a day to

maintain maximum sharpness and increase the odds of hooking the fish. Another necessary accessory, especially if you fish with crankbaits is **a lure retriever**. With this device you can get your expensive crankbaits back if you happen to get it hung up. By having these necessary accessories available you can help ensure a successful fishing trip that is safe for you,

### Suspending and Lipless Crankbaits

Suspending crankbaits, also called jerk baits, can be super fish catchers at this time of year **especially when the water temperature is in the lower 50's and the sky is bright** and clear says crankbait specialist Ron Bristow. A clear sky often drives bass a little deeper in the water column and the colder temperatures slow the fish down. These baits are "pulled"

down to their depth where they suspend, or hang in the water without rising or sinking. Then you can **twitch or jerk the bait** to make it jump to the side. This action is believed to imitate a dying bait fish and **often triggers a strike when nothing else is working**.

**Lipless crankbaits, or rattles traps**, are baits that resemble

their lipped crankbait cousins but often times **have rattles, or metal beads inside them that make a noise and can attract and entice a bass to strike**. Bristow says a great place to fish these baits is above grass allowing the bait to ride just above or ticking the tops of the weeds. When you feel the bait catch a weed, **rip the bait free**. This action often triggers a

## Heavy Cover Bassin'

Scott Bree, local heavy cover authority doesn't fish on Evergreen without banging the numerous logs, stumps, brush

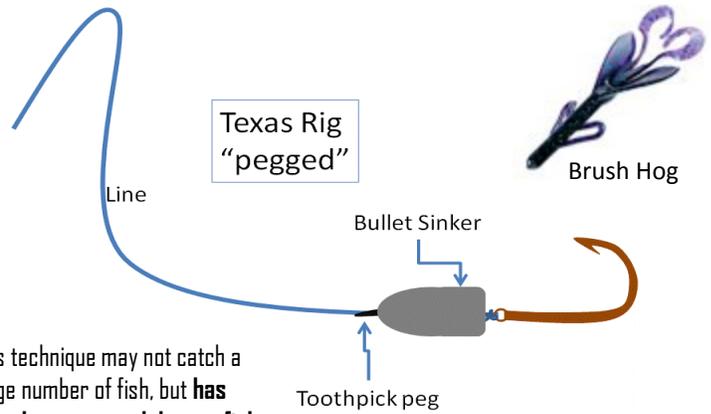


piles, and lay downs that dot the main lake basin to the southern tip of the

lake. His favorite bait is a **1/2 oz. blue and black bass jig** with a craw fish claw trailer in the

same colors. Not only does he jig the bait in likely heavy cover areas but **he even swims the bait with great success.**

On the rare occasion Bree is not fishing a jig, he is usually fishing a **Brush Hog**, Texas rigged on a 5/0 super heavy worm hook. He uses a 3/8 to 1/2 oz. bullet sinker and pegs it at the hook. Again, Bree is pounding the cover. He uses a green color in lighter water, and a pumpkin color in darker water.



This technique may not catch a large number of fish, but **has been know to catch larger fish at Lake Evergreen.**

## Finesse Your Way to Success

One technique that is known to catch a **high numbers of fish** is know as finesse or light line fishing. Using spinning tackle and 10-12 lb. test line, **plastic worms** can be thrown and allowed to slowly sink. Rigged without a weight, these baits pulse and move as they sink and have been know to entice cruising bass

especially in the **covers at the north end of the lake.** Power-bait or Gulp worms work especially well due to the scent they put out into the water. Dave Norris of the BNBC says to **keep an eye on your line** because you might not feel the bite but you will see your line moving. He says a sweeping hook set is best

when using this technique. Norris will also fish a Shaky Head jig and worm on the rocks in 0-15 feet of water. He also says the **wacky style** works well on a #6 thin wore hook. Finesse fishing may or may not catch you a giant, but it is known for catching a lot of fish which just might be they way to finesse your way to success.



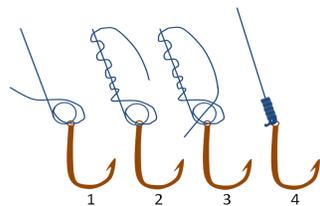
## Last but Knot Least

You can have all the gadgets and the fanciest boat, but if you don't tie a good knot, all that won't land the big one. The following knots are tried and true for monofilament and super lines.

The Trilene knot and the Palomar knot are great choices for attaching to lure of hook.

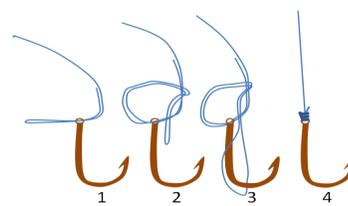
Trilene Knot:

1) Form double loop through eye 2) wrap free end 4-5 times around standing line 3) pass free end through double loop 4) pull standing line and free end to tighten knot.



Palomar Knot:

1) Form a double line, then push through eye 2) make an over-hand knot around standing line with doubled line 3) put hook through the loop formed in the double line 4) pull on free end and standing line to tighten knot.



## Chatter and Spin

Bloomington, IL fisherman Ken Peterson says he had to find a way to keep his kids interested in fishing and found it with the chatter bait. This **"bass jig with a funny flat blade on top"** com-



bined just the right amount of activity to keep the kids busy casting and to Peterson's surprise really caught fish. Peterson now spends a lot of time fishing tournaments with some of the home made and customized baits he makes at home but

he says **they fish just fine** "right out of the package." He fishes a weed less version in all the heavy cover you would fish a bass jig with a medium heavy rod and 15-20 pound test line.

**Spinnerbaits** have been around the bass fishing world for a long time and **still produce fish**. Besides catching fish, there is **almost no way to fish a spinnerbait the wrong way**. The key is to keep the bait upright and the blades turning. Experiment with different retrieve speeds, depths, and types of cover. **Fish will strike a spinnerbait** on a fast retrieve, and slow rolling retrieve, while the bait is falling, after a pause, on the surface or

in deep water. The fish might hit the bait hard or so softly you can't feel it. When reeling the bait you will feel the pulsing of the blades while they turn so if you feel any hesitation in the beat of the blades, set the hook, it might be the fish of a lifetime.



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Terry Brown  
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## Tournament Checklist: What to bring

Fred,

I thought this would be a great place for a tournament checklist. You mentioned one in the first of the class, will you send me a list to add here?

Thanks, Allen