QUALITY OR QUANTITY?

Is it better to catch bigger bass, or more?

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A QUESTION THAT'S OFTEN ASKED ON Internet fishing forums is "Would you rather catch more bass, or bigger bass?" and, being a relative newcomer to the art of lure fishing, my answer has always been more.

Don't get me wrong, I'd have liked nothing better than to catch a lunker every time I ventured out but, first of all, I considered consistency to be the Holy Grail and a more realistic target. That was until last season.

As usual, I began my bass hunt in mid-April with the traditional blank. That didn't put me off, though, and a week later I was out again, hoping for better luck.

I arrived at my chosen mark an hour before low water, and for the next four hours I cycled through several of my most productive plugs from previous years, and a few of my new purchases. Despite my efforts, I still didn't have any luck until well into darkness when I was 'walking' a small top-water plug slowly towards me across the dark water's surface when, bang, it was smashed about 10 metres out. A fantastic scrap ensued before I successfully landed the culprit, which turned out to a 7lb 8oz personal best. What a way to start the season.

The next couple of sessions resulted in blanks, but the memory of that first fish kept me going. On my next outing, the blanks were well and truly forgotten when, not only did I land four bass, which was my most productive lure session to date, but they included a second personal best of 8lb 2oz, and then a third of 10lb exactly.

BIGGER BASS

Over the next few sessions my mind was still on numbers, but the bigger bass just kept on coming, no more new bests, but a 6lb 8oz fish on a lure and a 6lb 10oz on bait kept things ticking over very nicely.

As usual, the summer months brought a lull in numbers of bass caught, but I took the opportunity to fulfil another aim of mine, which was to make more use of soft plastics and, thanks to some great blogs on the BASS website and some fantastic advice from the members, I eventually caught my first fish on a senko, when a feisty four-pounder put in an appearance to keep my numbers rising slowly.

Summer passed and, as autumn set in, it was the senko again that accounted for my next fish of note when I tempted another beauty of 8lb 6oz on the seemingly unattractive piece of plastic.

I hoped that this would be just the start of a productive autumn but, unfortunately, it wasn't to be, and after a string of disappointing blanks, the increasingly unsettled weather eventually brought an end to my season.

So my final tally in 2015 was 19 lure-caught bass, including four personal bests, and just the one on bait, which also happened to be a pb. This gave an average weight of just over 4lb per bass, which was more than I could possibly have dreamed of at the start of the year. Although it wasn't the massive leap in numbers I had hoped for, it was an improvement nonetheless.

Since then I've spent the winter planning my next campaign. Although I still hope one day to catch consistently large numbers of bass, after the quality of the fish I caught last year that aim doesn't seem to be as important as it once was. I'm increasingly asking myself the question, "Is quality better than quantity after all?" ■

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