

Stay Or Go

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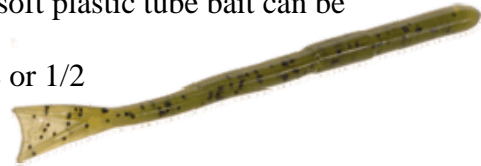
In the world of competitive fishing a question will eventually arise during a tournament when the action is painfully slow or non-existent. Should I stay or go? I know guys who will give a spot twenty minutes and if they don't get a bite, they're gone. If you have better water then the spot you're leaving why did you start there in the first place? If your confidant the fish are there but they won't bite, don't leave in too much of a hurry. Try a few of these techniques and maybe you'll catch those fish you found in practice.



The number one thing I can tell you is to slow down. The excitement of a tournament the first few minutes after you pull into your spot will sometimes get to you and make you fish much too fast. You try to pull out five quick fish, instead of working one fish at a time. You are way too ahead of yourself. Here's what I do to help slow down a little and calm my nerves. I pull in to my first spot in the morning and stop twenty or thirty yards from where I would make my first cast. Then I take my time, and get my gear ready, pull out the net, and unstrap my rods. Then I will quietly lower my trolling motor and move in for my first presentation. The worst mistake you can make is to pull up to your best spot with the outboard motor, wake the area, get up as quick as you can and throw a lure in there. I have actually seen guys do this. What happens when you do this? You temporarily spook those fish right out of there or at best you have just put them on notice to be wary and careful of their surroundings. In the best case scenario, you come in fast and somehow manage to make that first keeper bite, and guess what, it's a good one and your not ready, the nets stored away and your partner is tying on his lures and getting his gear ready. If somehow you manage to land that fish and it goes in the box, congratulations. You are one lucky angler. Ok, so you've quietly moved into your area and you have been fishing for about twenty or thirty minutes. You have fished the area slow and methodically. You pitched your bait, that you caught most of your keepers on in practice to the best cover available and still no takers. This is when you start thinking about bailing out on your spot. I would warn against it. If you know there are fish in the area, try to be open minded and do something a little different. In fishing you will sometimes have to change your lures, or your techniques and your presentations from day to day. Bass and other game fish react to all types of changing conditions. In any given day you will have to react to changing weather or water temperature and changing water levels. The fish will react; it's up to you to follow their clues. They normally do not go that far. In practice maybe it was sunny and you caught those fish tight to the cover, say pitching a **Vicious Big Daddy Craw** or a **Vicious Limit-ator worm** right next to a lay down or stump. Today it's cloudy or a low light condition early in the morning. Those fish may be a little deeper, and roaming the area. You may have to throw a search bait to re-locate the fish. Never leave a key spot before you try something different. The first thing I would do is back out a little and cover the entire area with good search bait. A spinnerbait, or crankbait would be one of my first choices. Also never forget the old buzzbait. Some of the biggest fish weighed in

at tournaments will crush a buzzbait. Try taking that search bait and cover the area, bounce it of the cover, parallel the bank. Use a deep enough crankbait to hit the bottom and make some noise with it. Last but certainly not least do not leave a choice area before you “Back out and rig it.”

I have a good friend in Florida that I talk to every week or so. I’ll tell him about a great spot I found and marvel about how I caught several good fish by throwing up on the cover and the bass were just whacking the daylights out of my lure. It never fails, he will always ask “Before you left did you back out and rig it?” Rigging a spot means probing the deeper water with a Carolina or Texas rig. If you are catching two and three pound bass up shallow, there is a good chance some bigger fish are right below them. It only takes about fifteen or twenty minutes to find out and it could be well worth the effort. Use a **Vicious Slammin’ lizard** on a Carolina rig or a **Vicious Shakin PT (paddle tail) worm**. A Carolina rigged soft plastic tube bait can be deadly any time of the year. Use an **8” Vicious ultimate worm** on a texas rig, with a good solid 3/8 or 1/2



Your biggest fish of the day can come from one of these two techniques. If there is a hard bottom or any scattered rocks on the ledge, crawl a football jig with a **Vicious Big Daddy Craw** around the area. If there are a few deeper fish, you will be surprised at how easily they will bite. All this may sound like a lot; actually it can all be accomplished in an hour or so. By fishing slowly and carefully around a few key areas and trying different techniques and lures, you can be more confident of your decisions throughout the day. You can actually cover four or five good areas in any given day using these techniques. I promise you that you will gain more confidence, catch more fish and be a more complete angler. Next time when you’re faced with the decision to stay or go, ask yourself a couple of questions. Have I tried all the tricks in my arsenal? Have I covered the water completely and thoroughly? Have I tried a variety of lures and presentations? Then and only then will you know when it’s time to stay or go. You won’t even have to ask yourself the question. You’ll be skilled enough to already know.