

Be prepared

Being prepared requires great attention to detail. The problem is sometimes you don't know what to prepare for. Let me tell you a story about a fishing trip I was on one time and how well I was prepared without even knowing.

A group of my friends and myself used to have an annual outing in the spring. It was called "take your dad fishing weekend".

Several of us had father's that were getting up in their years and weren't able to go on some of the fishing expeditions that they had done so many times when they were younger. We decided to dedicate a weekend each spring to fishing with our dad's.

We would make all the plans, pick a lodge or resort to go to, buy all the food, beer, and bait, and all they had to do was bring their clothes and whatever money they wanted to invest in the nightly poker game.

For several years we did this and every outing was one that I will treasure forever, especially since my dad passed away a few years back. You can't imagine how good it makes you feel when you get the opportunity to pay back someone that taught you how to tie a fishing knot and land a walleye, or bait a hook, pick worms in the middle of the night, etc. etc.

Every one of us "kids" had grown up learning the sport of fishing from our dads and now we had the chance to even the score a little bit. Life is strange, and wonderful isn't it?

This one particular outing stands out in my mind because I happened to catch a fairly large northern that year. Let me preface this story by telling you that my dad hated northerns. He referred to them as snakes. The little ones were hammer handles. He said they stunk up the boat no matter what size they were.

Anyway, to continue my story, one of the other "kids" and I got up early one morning and decided to go out fishing while the rest of the group was sleeping.

We jumped in the boat and headed out into the fog filled lake. The sun was just starting to creep over the horizon and we knew it would burn the fog off by the time we got to our fishing spot.

One of the small islands we had picked out on the map had some great structure around it and I knew that it would be a haven for big walleye's. I dropped my line down into the water as we trolled by the island. If I remember correctly, I had a crawler harness on with a chartreuse spinner blade.

Wham!!! I had a fish on instantly. Boy, this was a monster. I could not get it to budge off of the bottom. I told my buddy Jim to grab the net cause we weren't going to lose this one.

As I fought the fish Jim grabbed the landing net that I had brought along. The net was an old one that had been passed down to me by my dad. It was probably twenty years old and had landed many nice fish in its years of service. Slowly the fish was tiring out and began to come towards the surface. I was positive that I had a state record walleye on my line.

Wouldn't you know, as it got closer and I could make out what it was, I had a snake on my hook. Seventeen pounds worth of snake. It looked huge in the water and the net was not even close to being big enough to land it. Now this is where the story gets interesting and shows you how you can be prepared without realizing if you pay attention.

The night before, I had gone to the outhouse because nature had called. You have to believe that nature calls you for a reason. When I got there, someone had left an outdoor magazine to read while you and nature were becoming one with each other. I started paging thru the articles and one of them was a helpful hint kind of story. One of the tips that they suggested was how to land big fish without a net.

They said to take a towel, cotton or terry cloth, play the fish out until it is weary, get it alongside the boat and then simply drape the towel over its back and then lift it into the boat. Who would have thought that I would ever need that little trick of the trade? Much less, the very next day.

Well, to finish the story, when Jim tried to scoop up the snake with the landing net, the fish was so heavy that it broke the netting. The fact that it was twenty years old may have had something to do with it.

Remembering my visit with nature the night before, I had Jim back the snake out of the net, and I grabbed the towel I always carry in my boat, after all a clean boat is a happy boat. I handed Jim the towel and told him to drape it over the back of the snake just as the article had said. It worked like a charm. Jim hoisted the snake into the boat without even getting any northern stink on himself.

It pays to be prepared at all times.