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Thank You Mike!!!!!!!

BIG FISH ON Trophy Striper Guides

Down Rod Fishing for Stripers

The down rod is one of the most effective and consistent methods of catching freshwater stripers, day in & day out, throughout the year, it's hard to beat a down rod. A down rod is basically a Carolina rig with a heavy weight and relatively long leader. A standard down rod (if there were such a thing) consists of a line counter reel, a fairly limber 6 to 9ft rod, the main line, an egg sinker placed on the main line, a swivel, a 4 to 8 ft leader, the hook and most importantly a fresh frisky live bait!

Lets cover each component of the rig in more detail. Your decision of what rod & reel combination to use is primary based on the size of striper that you are targeting. All reels should have a good drag and a line counter, so that you can get your baits to the strike zone as quickly as possible. For “average” size fish between 5 and 20lbs a “normal” sized striper line counter reel , spooled with 15lb mono and a 7ft light/medium action rod. You want a softer tip to allow the smaller baits that are used to target this class of fish to have some freedom of movement. Some entry level equipment would be the Daiwa Accudepth Plus 27LC or Okuma Convector CV-20D reels mounted on rods such as the Shakespeare UGLY Stick Striper rod model # USCA 70 or an Okuma Classic Pro GLT Striper Live Bait rod model # CST-LB-701ML. Again, this is entry level equipment, as your progress in your angling skills, you might want to upgrade the quality of your gear. If your targeting larger stripers between 15 and 30lbs you would want to upsize your tackle accordingly, using an Accudepth Plus 47LC spooled with 25 or 30lb test line mounted on a 7ft medium heavy rod. Monster stripers of 25 to 50lbs should be targeted with a large reel such as an Accudepth Plus 57LC spooled with 50lb test on 7ft heavy action rod. The very large baits used when targeting monster stripers also require moving to a larger egg sinker

– between 3 and 5oz – to keep the bait as straight down as possible. A longer rod such as 8 or 9 ft is sometime used to cover more water – the additional 2ft spread on each side of the boat sometimes make the difference in getting bit or not.

Another important part of the down rod equation are your rod holders. You need a quality rod holder that is very strong, holds the rod firmly and allows for easy removal of the rod under the heavy pressure that stripers generate. My favorite rod holders are made by [DriftMaster](#). I prefer the heavy duty “Pro” series . Since you are fishing straight down, the reel does NOT need to be “locked” into the holder, simply having the rod in the holder is enough, if your reel is “locked” into the holder, there is a very good chance you will NOT be able to remove it once a fish is on.

The terminal tackle used for down rods varies just a bit, again based on the size of the fish your targeting and the depth your fishing. As far as the swivels go, a simple barrel swivel, matched to the line class your are using is sufficient. If your targeting monster stripers, you should move to crane swivel as they are slightly stronger than barrel swivels. The weight used can run from 1/2oz to 6oz. If your fishing with dissimilar size weights the heaviest weights should always go in the front of the boat and the lightest weight in back, this way as you move around on the trolling motor the lines will not tangle as much. If your lighter weight rigs are in the front they will kick back into the more vertical heavier rigs in the back. Using the light weights in the back allow you cover a wider variety of depths. As you speed up and slow down on the trolling motor, they will rise and fall vertically in the water column. My standard down rod weight is 2oz egg sinker. If your fishing very large baits in fast current or trolling at a higher speed you want to increase the weight of your sinker to keep the bait down in your target zone. There are some variations available in the weights you use. Some examples of these variations are egg sinkers with built swivels at both ends, long slender pencil weights with swivels on both ends, egg sinkers that are painted red or black (to reduce their visibility) or “invisible” egg sinkers made of glass. I personally like a normal egg sinker, that has been “aged” in the boat for while. Having the sinkers banging and rolling around in your

tackle container will get the shine off of them. I don't like a brand new shiny sinker.

Your leader size should be the same size or larger than your main line. Some people recommend a lighter leader so that you lose less terminal tackle when you get your rig hung up in something. I would rather lose my terminal tackle than a good fish. Since the leader is so much shorter than the main line, it has much less stretch and therefore will break before your main line. Your leader can be mono or fluorocarbon. Fluorocarbon is only needed in very clear water. All my leaders are fluoro since I never know what conditions I will be fishing on for any given trip and the last thing I want to do is re-tie all my rigs on the water. Leader length is determined by two factors – the size of the bait and depth that you are fishing. You want shorter 5ft or so leaders on your bigger baits, this is primarily to reduce tangling, as the bigger bait pretty much can swim wherever they want, putting them on a short lease helps keep them from getting together. If your fishing your down rods in shallow water – 12 to 25ft a shorter 5ft leader helps keep the bait closer to your targeted depth and also helps prevent tangling of all size baits, since the “spread” vertically will be much smaller in shallower depths. This will be covered more in the tips section.

Hook size is determined solely on the size bait you are using. Match the hook to your bait and do NOT over power your bait with too large of a hook. If you are a “set it and forget” type of angler circle hooks are great as the fish will hook themselves when they take the bait and make their run. If you are more of a hands angler who likes to hold the rod in your hands and set the hook, then I would recommend an octopus hook. As always you want a sharp hook that is strong. Always remember to wet your knots when tightening them down. I personally like a palmor knot.

Obtaining and caring for live bait is a whole subject of its own. I am just going to say you need to have the LIVEIEST bait possible. Your bait is THE most important part of the puzzle when striper fishing, the better your bait the better you will do. For smaller baits, check them

fairly often as they will often get bit and killed or taken while you're not looking. Larger baits will be making the rod tip bounce so you should easily be able to tell if their ok or not.

Here are some various down rod fishing tip's. When fishing in deeper water with fish throughout the water column stagger your baits to determine what depth the fish are most active. For example on Lake Lanier in the summer time the thermocline might be at 30ft and your marking fish from 40 to 80. Place your rods at 40, 50, 60, & 70 feet. Having the large spread along with longer 8ft leaders allows you cover as much water vertically as possible. The deeper you are fishing the more you can tighten down your drag as you have plenty of stretch available in your main line. Tightening down your drag is especially helpful when fishing near timber, just remember to back it off a bit when the fish gets close to the boat. When fishing 12 to 25 ft below the boat you want a looser drag as your don't have as much stretch available. Always place your baits above the fish your are marking, stripers suspended in the water column look and feed up. If your marking fish and you're not getting bit, drop down the bait 15/20ft below the fish and quickly reel your baits up though the fish, this will often trigger a bite. This technique is called power reeling. Sometimes banging on the bottom of the boat with 2x4 or broom handle will "call" the fish to the boat, striper are curious by nature and will come to investigate. I prefer to play loud ROCK & ROLL to draw them in. Other variations on this technique is jumping in the water for a quick dip during the summer or leaving your out board running. When fishing in shallower water, I keep the rod closest to me on the bottom, bouncing along, pulling it up quickly if I see a tree or other obstruction. Often only that bait that is right on the bottom is the one getting bit. If the fish are hitting softly, it helps to have everyone hold a rod and set the hook on them manually, rather than letting them set the hook themselves using the rod holder. Just hold on tightly incase a big fish makes a strong hit.

You can watch this [Lake Lanier Striper Fishing Video](#) to watch live bait on down rods in action catching stripers.