

Flat Lines and Planer Boards 101

This is a basic overview on getting started Striper fishing with bait using either a flat line or Planer board. This is one person's theory. Ideally, you will want to put these ideas to use and always better them when possible.

Rod and Reel Selection

This is a personal preference. With the number of choices of brands, one can go crazy buying equipment. Very simply, whether you prefer a spinning reel or a conventional styled reel, there are only two important factors. First, line capacity is a major issue. The reel you choose should be able to hold 150 yards or more of line. The more the better. Remember, large Stripers have been known to run 300 feet in a single run. Secondly, the reel should have an adequate drag system to handle large bursts of speed and slowing a fish down. An important fact is that any reels drag system is designed to work at its best with a full spool of line. Once you break off 50-100 feet of line, its time to respool. Linecounter reels offer good information. These reels will display the amount of line is out. It's not critical information, but is good information to know. Consider that if the fish are biting 50 feet behind the boat, it's simple to see how far back your bait is at any time. These reels are also handy while fighting a fish. It's nice to know if the fish is 100, 200, or 300 feet away. If you are in the market to get new equipment, the best advice I can give is to buy the best equipment you can afford. Definitely stay away from no name reels. Ask your local tackle shop. The locals will know what everyone is using. There are reasons why everyone is using them.

As far as rods go, it's another personal preference deal. However when just starting out, a fiberglass rod in 6'6" to 7'6" is a wise choice. A medium light action to medium action rod is preferred. We want the fish to be able to grab the bait and flex the rod. If using a stiff heavy or medium heavy styled rod you may miss a lot of bites. Stay away from graphite rods. They are way to stiff for bait fishing. Again the rod you

choose should be flexible up top and have plenty of backbone at the butt of the rod. A standard in the industry is the Shakespeare Ugly Stick Striper rod. Its an inexpensive rod with great feel and backbone. Best of all, it comes with a great warranty.

Fishing Line

For basics on Lake Lanier, most anglers will use a minimum of 15 to 30 pound test monofilament for their main line. You can use lighter or heavier in certain conditions. Again, quality is the main issue. The line is the connection between you and the fish. Now do you want to buy the bargain line or the good line? You make the call.

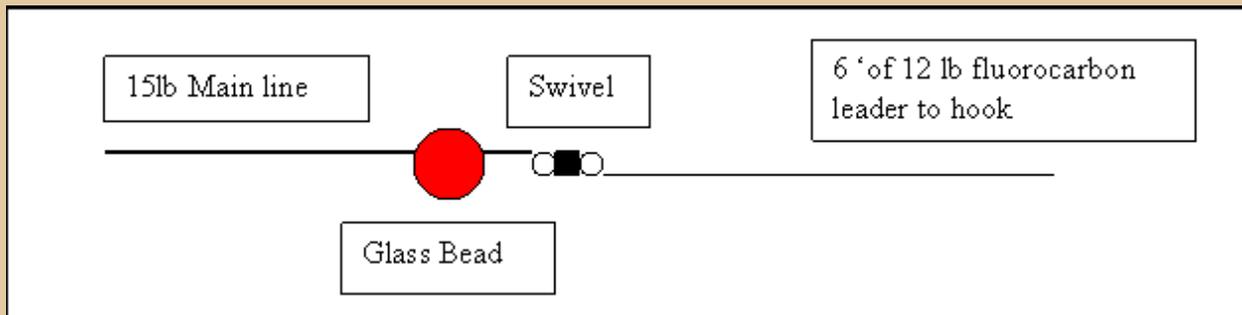
Braids can be used as well. It's important to add a leader as we will further discuss.

Rigging

We discussed having your reel of choice with a main line. For example, lets say we are using a Abu Garcia Ambassador C3 6500 with 15 pound test line. I will be adding a Fluorocarbon leader at the end of this line. The size of the line is important. You will want to use a fluorocarbon with a lighter pound test rating then your main line. For example, we are using 15 pound test main line with a 12 pound test leader. The 12 pound test is lighter and allows the bait to swim more freely. Also, when your bait gets caught in a tree or brush, you will normally break the section of leader off when pulling it in. This saves your main line (keeping a full spool). You will simply tie another section of leader on.

The two lines (main line and fluorocarbon) meet with a barrel swivel. The idea is to use a small swivel. Make sure it's of high quality. Better swivels have a rating of break strength. I like to use a swivel with at least a 30 pound strength or more. The size of the leader changes

with lake conditions. A good rule of thumb is to make the fluorocarbon leader about the length of your rod. So 6 to 7 feet would be a good starting point. One last thing, I rig all of my rods the same. It's easier that way. I add a small bead above the swivel on your main line. The bead adds some good value which we will soon discuss.



Getting Started

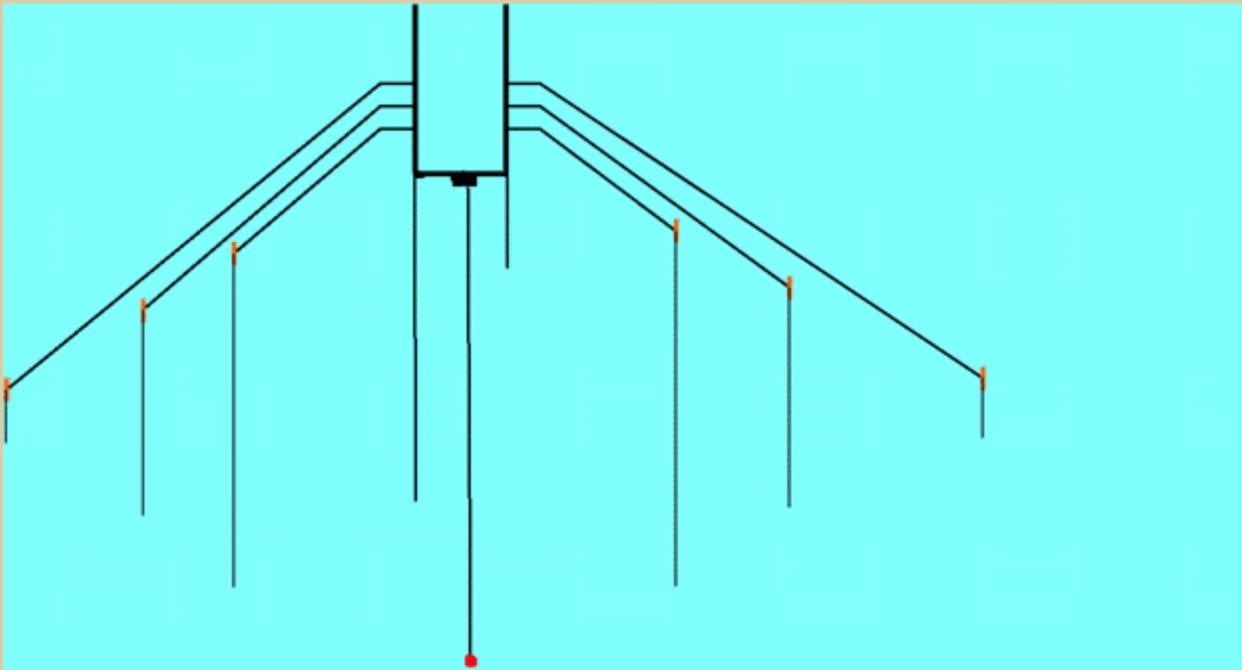
A flat line is also referred to as a free line. This is when you hook a bait and let the line out behind the boat. There is no weight added. The idea is to have the bait on or near the surface. The strikes will be seen as well as heard most times. The variations of this are to add a small split shot (above the swivel) to allow your bait to swim deeper. Another way is to add a float to keep your bait on a short leash. This will ensure your bait is near the surface. This is very effective when trolling over brush piles etc.

Planer boards

They look more complicated than they are. Planer boards are a great tool. They move your bait away from the boat at a distance that you control. It enables you to fish many more lines without getting tangles. It also is extremely productive when the fish are spooked of the boat. You can run a planer board into 2 feet of water while your boat stays in deeper water. You simply let out a determined amount of line and attach the planer board with a clothes pin styled clip that's attached to the board. When the fish strikes the board is released. I

use the glass bead so my board slides down my line and stops at the bead. Some people prefer not to clip their line directly to the back clips, allowing the board to fall off the line completely. I have lost too many boards doing this. The only time I would recommend doing this if you are the only boat in the area. You will need to have plenty of boards to replace the boards with every bite you get. Or like I say, you can attach it to your line and reuse the same board repeatedly.

Check out the illustration. Use it for starters. Customize it in any way see fit. You can add more lines or take lines away. Utilize the rod holders on your boat.



Notice the planers on the outside have about 10' of line after the planer board. This is designed to pull shallow water in either direction. The middle boards will be maybe 20' and the ones closest to the boat will be the longest. There is a flat line on the rear right side of the boat at 10'. This is the Prop wash bait or Transom bait. The flat line on the rear left is 40'. The float down the middle is the longest line, about 75'. Notice that you are covering a lot of water. The outside boards maybe 50' away from the boat. This is giving you a 100' wide

area to fish. You are covering different depths as well. Change it around to you are comfortable with it. Add split shot to the middle planer board leaders. Experiment around till you find what works best on your boat. Stick around for lesson 102.