

Capt. Sprengel splash walks giant stripers

by TODD CORAYER



“Behind you. We went right through them.”

Captain Jack Sprengel, searching at first light for menhaden in the West Bay, was on the bow of his **East Coast Charters** Everglades 325, poised like a drawn bow.

“See them? Right there,” he said, shifting his weight to cast hard east. Mate **Anthony Renzi** dropped twin Yamaha 300’s into gear to face a grey, rainy horizon.

The Captain doesn’t mince words or delay decisions when fish are on the line; he walked to the live well with his first fish before Anthony slid the *Reelin’ N Dealin’* back out of gear.

His plan was to hunt topwater stripers with Shimano’s new **Coltsnipper Splash Walk**, but good fishermen have backup plans and he always seems ready with several. Renzi picked up his Shimano Teramar XX rod to send a four ounce snag hook soaring. Without fanfare, Captain Sprengel out-fished everyone on the boat, sat down at the helm, took out a Splash Walk and wiped rain from his face.



Shimano Coltsnipper Splash Walk

He turned us north, throttled up and within a minute, was gliding at 45 knots across a glassy Narragansett Bay.

Knowing clouds mean cover for bass and that cloudy mornings can turn to clear afternoons, he used intel from the prior day to act decisively.

Big stripers he had lured close would only look and never commit. He suspected some of those fish would move north to feed on menhaden congregating near fresh waters, knowing there’s no guarantee that yesterday has anything to do with today.

Paying out a live pogie on a circle hook, he handed a Teramar to **“Lunch Break” Eddy Stahowiak** with specific instructions: “Keep him short and on one finger.”

Bail open, rod up. Anthony passed me a Shimano rod rigged with a bone pattern Splash Walk, a dynamic new surface plug unlike anything. The Splash Walk takes some practice to fish properly. It needs you to understand how stripers hunt, it needs you to maintain a bit of line slack to give it life as you retrieve. It also likes



Capt. Sprengel will teach you how to catch big fish with the Shimano Splask Walk.

to pause now and then.

“Right, left. Right, left. Right, left. See? Just like that,” Captain Sprengel said over my shoulder. It takes time to learn the method, to find that sweet rhythm, but the best fishing often comes after listening to a good lesson.

“Right, left, right, left...” Proper cadence develops after several casts. Rod tip up, left hand reeling steadily and slowly as my right learned to twitch the tip to make the Splash Walk suddenly heel right, left, right left.

My arms were building muscle memory. Water started erupting with each stroke, calling to deep, lurking bass spying a hapless fish struggling above. It’s a deadly sirens call.

Target Bass on the Surface with the Explosive Slash Walk

As with any good relationship, Splash Walks really perform when you understand their intentions. At 3-3/8 ounces, it’s a 7 1/4” long cast spook reminiscent of classic search baits except this acts like it’s searching for its own prey. It rises, crashes and throws water. Its weighted rear section announces itself with big volume and low pitch vibrations before the occasional pause when she sits low in the water, almost vertically.

Proper cadence also comes with some sore forearm muscles if you swapped the gym for the couch last winter but when you dial it in, that right/left routine is unbelievable. You can fish the Splash Walk right up to the boat since the action never stops. Each pull sends it go one direction then back with the next. If ever there was a reason to “fish to the boat,” this is it. When you cast then raise your rod tip just right, the joy of work begins again.

“I couldn’t not start here first,” he said. We could smell industry as white turbines came into view. “That fresh water from all that rain could have pushed all those fish out,” he said, surveying a line of dark, weathered docks where he had found some fish the day before.

“Cast over there. That way. With the tide gives you bass. Against the tide gives you bluefish,” he said, watching water move along the pier and against his hull. A cast forty feet to the east would have come up shy and sticky with green weeds and he knew that. **(to page 32)**



Big bass on a bluebird day. Todd Corayer displays his catch.