

SCOTT MARTIN'S

# ***Top 5 Tournament Tips***



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## **Tip #1**

### **Scott Martin's - Worm Fishing 101**



The most commonly used freshwater lures are soft baits, which come in all shapes, sizes, colors, textures and scents. But that's the problem – where do you start? Here's where I start to be as effective as possible when tournament fishing or guiding clients...

No matter where I fish, I like to keep worm colors very simple. On most days I'll try a number of colors or variation, but almost always start with shades of purples, (my favorite is junebug -- in a really deep purple). I'll then try variations of those colors with different flakes, worm sizes and textures. Some days the fish like a red color flake, and other days they like a green flake. At the very least make sure you have a selection of worms in junebug, black, pumpkin and watermelon to cover your bases. The only way to know what's working is to switch it up and try them all -- that means having a lot of rods set-up before hitting the water.

For some reason the red flake worm patterns really works well during a full moon phase whenever the male bass are up in the shallows and being protective. Red triggers their aggressiveness and results in noticeably more bites, whether it's a junebug red flake or even a watermelon red flake. In between the moon phases when the fish aren't spawning, I'll try a junebug with green glitter, or even some watermelon candy-type colors (watermelon/purple flake).

When you're fishing lakes that have a redness or tannic stain, I concentrate on the dark junebug colors year round. If I'm fishing a lake that has a lot of grass in it and clear water, I'll start with a

watermelon or green pumpkin color with various colored flakes. Keep notes whenever you go out and you'll begin developing your own system that works.

If nothing is working, or I need a kicker for my livewell, I try adding some chartreuse on the tips of my worms when I'm throwing the watermelon or green pumpkin colors (worms or lizards). I use a chartreuse marker (Spike-It), which is a plastic dye that comes in a small marker pen or jar that you can dip the tips of the worms or lizards, it really makes a difference – here's why...

If you've ever watched a small bluegill swimming through the water, they have a little bit of a chartreuse color on their tails that really stands out. If you see a lot of small bluegills around the area your fishing, grab a watermelon seed-colored worm or lizard and tip the tail in chartreuse. If you see a lot of big giant bluegill, and the water is darker or stained, throw your junebug colors.

When it comes to shapes I tend to fish lizards in March and April. No matter where you fish, after the spawn there will be a lot of fry in the water. Bass fry are brown in color and you'll generally see little pods of them near spawning areas (there's usually a couple hundred of them forming a small cloud in the water called a brood swarm). When you see that, there's usually a male bass nearby protecting them so make sure to really cover that area since they don't go far. And where you find males you're also going to find big females hanging by and they can still be very aggressive even once they off of their beds.

Anytime there are a lot of fry in the water or after I know the fish have spawned, I like throwing lizards. This is especially prevalent in the south and other areas where there are a lot of frogs and lizards that prey on fry. If you're in an area that has a lot of bass beds, lizards will work here as well. When the males are on the beds guarding the eggs, they'll attack a lizard. I won't throw a lizard at all before a spawn. During pre-spawn I've had great success throwing straight-tailed worms and ribbontail worms, for some reason they just trigger more strikes.

There are two ways to rig a lizard: Texas style with a 1/8- to 3/8-ounce weight (depending on depth and wind conditions); or Carolina rigging, which is another great way to fish a lizard. For colors, I study the water color and bluegill population and then I pick the colors. In clear water I like watermelon seed or green pumpkin with a little chartreuse on the tail. In darker or tannic water I like to throw junebug. Small shade variation can make a big difference – so again, keep good notes on what works where you're fishing.

On my home waters, Lake Okeechobee, I have had great luck using 10-inch worms. I like the 10-inch worm when fishing a lot of grass, as the bigger the worm provides a larger profile that's easier for the bass to see. A smaller worm often gets lost in the grass. In addition, the long worms move more water, which is important because bass utilize several different senses to find their prey. They use sight, smell and vibration. Bass sense vibration through the lateral lines in their bodies, and they can actually pick up water movement and tell how big something is based on how much water it's moving.

The times I use the smaller worms are in the heat of the summer, when the water gets low and there are areas with very high clarity. At that time of the year I'll switch to a 7 or 8-inch ribbontail throughout much of the summer. Big bass shy away from the larger worms when the water temperatures are at their extreme peak.

Expanding on this proven theory, I use the longer worms when the water temperatures are 60 to 80 degrees. Once the water temperatures get to 80 degrees, I'll start downsizing the worm just a little

bit. When the water temperatures get above 85-90 degrees, I'll throw 7 – and 8-inch worms, and even go down to my straight-tailed 6-inch worms – and this is the time of year when wacky worming can really be productive.

Keep in mind that what works one day may not the next. Experienced bass anglers figure it out and are able to change things up to their advantage – so can you.

The trick with worm fishing is to experiment every time you're on the water. Tried and true techniques can work day in and day out, but for those off days you need to be responsive and that's what separates those that get a pay check and those that have an empty livewell.

### ***Scott Martin's Gear List for Fishing Worms:***

- 10-12 Pound BassPro XPS Fluorocarbon Leader
- 17-20 Pound BassPro XPS line
- Okuma 7.6H or 7H Scott Martin TCS
- Bruiser Avenger or Intruder
- Bruiser 10' worm
- Trokar TK120 (3/0 or 4/0 hook)
- River2Sea ½ ounce Tungsten weight.

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## Tip #2

### Scott Martin's – Fishing the Jig and Pig Basics



The jig and pig had been around for a long time and is a favorite for many bass anglers.

So let's look at the standard jig and pig. The jigs come in many shapes and sizes, with the most popular being a banana-shaped head with a built-in weed guard with weights from 1/4-ounce to 1 1/2 ounces depending on the cover you're fishing. There is also the football jig which has the head that faces sideways and is designed to create more commotion in the water. This particular style jig is more for dragging around rocks, along sandbars and along the bottom, but it's not really a good jig for fishing in the grass.

The banana shaped heads and the Arkie heads are the best in my opinion for flippin' situations. A lot of companies claim to have a weedless jig, but their weed guards stick up too high, or the heads are shaped in such a way that the grass will catch on to it. The weed guard needs to be set at an angle where the grass doesn't want to grab on it, so it slithers through the grass without catching and hanging up.

I usually use a 5/8 -ounce up to a 1-ounce jig any time I'm fishing around the cattails and buggy whips. These are the most popular types of grass to flip jigs around, especially in the south during the winter months. I'll jump up to the heavier jigs like the 1 1/2-ounce any time I'm fishing around the more dense and matted vegetation like hyacinth and hydrilla.

Jigs come in a lot of different colors and what I've found over the years that there are two colors I like to focus on -- black and blue or any type of brown or black/amber. These colors imitate bluegills and

crawfish at different times of the year and you want to try and match them accordingly.

These colors don't always match the bait exactly, but when you're throwing the darker colors in stained water it has a better silhouette. If you're fishing a brown colored jig in muddy water, it will blend in and the fish don't really see it well, whereas the black will really stand out. In clear water the browns and green pumpkin colors really stand out and are my first choice.

When fishing in Florida I wouldn't bother buying a lot of jigs with chartreuse or other crazy colors -- black and blue and brown and amber or orange are the colors that work. In other areas of the country the wild/bright colors work well, so you need to experiment and see what works best in your area and then fine-tune your presentation from there.

The most important detail when fishing a jig and pig is rigging them up with the proper trailer. You can't just go buy the jig, tie it on and start throwing it. It needs to provide life like action and the color needs to match up with the jig head. I rely on the Bruiser Crazy Craw or Avenger -- they have a great swimming action and I've have had great luck with them.

What you want to do is pick the color of your trailer that closely matches the color of your jig, although there are some times I admit I will experiment and try a contrasting color and sometimes it works well. Like any other bait, you just have to play around with it and see what works in your area, since it can vary drastically from one part of the country to the other.

If there are a lot of bluegills present and the water is clear, I like to fish the brown colored jigs and match it up with a green pumpkin trailer. You can tip the ends of the trailer with chartreuse to imitate the bluegill. If the water is dingier and has a bit of stain where I can only see down a foot or so, then I'll throw the black and blue jig, and tip it with a trailer that's junebug in color, a black, or a black and blue. But if I can see over two feet into the water, I'm going to stick with my brown jigs more often than not.

When I'm fishing around isolated cattails and reeds, I'll throw a 1/2 ounce jig, because I want a real subtle fall. If you use too heavy of a jig and throw it around the cattails, it falls so fast through the water column that the fish don't have the time to react to it.

The fall rate when flippin' around any structure is really important, whether you're throwing a jig or any soft plastic. Bass around structure react to how fast the bait is falling through the water column, and there are some days they want a slow fall, and other days they want a faster fall -- you just have to pay attention to how they are reacting.

The great thing about a jig is that it has a skirt with 40 or 50 strands of silicon material so it undulates well and really fluffs up providing a bulky profile, which big fish seem to really key in on. Picking the right size jig when you're flipping the open cattails and grass is important and you just have to play around with it until you figure out what the fish want that day. Keep in mind that it's the fall rate that the fish are focusing on, so keep trying different presentation until you figure out what is working.

When I'm fishing in the heavy cover like big mats, hyacinths or thick patches of cattails that I have to bust through, I'm going to go with a heavy jig most of the time. That means fishing a 3/4 ounce to 1 ounce jig, no matter what, because you have to get through the grass. You're not going to get fish if you don't get it through the hole just about every time you're flippin' it, so the heavier the weight the better.

My favorite set-up for fishing the mats and heavy grass is to use 65-pound braid on a Okuma Scott Martin TCS 7.11 XH Mat Daddy. But when I'm fishing the open water cattails and reed clumps, I'll throw 17- to 25-pound fluorocarbon on a 7.6H TCS. One of the nice things about using monofilament or fluorocarbon line is that you can control the fall rate of your jig by increasing or decreasing the diameter of the line you

use. Obviously, the heavier the line, the slower the jig will fall.

When I'm fishing cover like cattails, I'll flip to the outside target first, fishing the outside edges. Then I'll focus right to the heart of the structure, and try to fish the shady side of the thickest part of the grass. Find the majority of stalks, because there are little spots near them where big bass go to hide from the sun and hang out to ambush prey. Bass like mass—they like to be around the biggest piece of cover in the grass.

You have to think like a bass. Plan every cast and expect to get a hit each and every time your jig lands where you want it don't make random flips into the grass. Instead, think about where you want to go with the lure and really focus on dropping your jig on target to increase the number of strikes. On sunny days, target the center of the clumps and on the cloudy days or early morning focus your efforts around the edges.

Jig fishing takes a lot finesse and practice and once you figure it out, you'll out fish your partner or competition time and again. It's helped me to win a lot of tournaments!

### ***Scott Martin's Gear List for a Jig & Pig:***

- Okuma 7.11' Extra Heavy Mat Daddy Scott Martin TCS
- 65-70 lbs Braid
- 17-25 BassPro XPS Fluorocarbon
- Okuma 7.6' Heavy Scott Martin TCS
- Bruiser Bait Crazy Craw

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### *Tip #3*

#### *Scott Martin's – Fishing Tidal Waters*



Fishing tidal waters is a challenge for a lot of anglers, but I have refined a few techniques that have helped me win tournaments, and will put more bass in your boat as well.

The Potomac River is a great example. It's a really neat river to fish because it has a lot of grass and docks. But what makes this river especially interesting and sometimes difficult to fish is the fact that it's a tidal river which means that it drains into the ocean and is affected by the tide. Every day the water levels rise and fall and the fish really key in on those water movements.

Knowing how to fish the changing tides and knowing what you need to throw during the best stages of the tide are really important in these types of venues. The tides can lower or raise the water level as much as three feet, and knowing where to be during the different tides can make the difference between success and failure.

I like fishing the last couple of hours of the incoming and the last couple of hours of the outgoing tide. I'm primarily fishing grass and that's the primary areas you'll want to focus on as well. During the last two hours of incoming tide the water levels are higher and the fish will move back into the grass from the outside edge and the grass will be completely submerged. What you want to do in this type of situation is to throw moving baits such as a spinnerbait, super shallow crankbaits. Focus on the outside of the grass to about halfway in. If you try to flip and pitch now, the water level will be too high, and the fish so spread out that you'll really limit yourself on the number of potential strikes. You'll be able to catch some fish on plastic worms or jigs, but the high tide is best suited to fishing with moving baits.

I prefer throwing a 3/8 ounce River2Sea spinnerbait with Indiana blades. What the Indiana blades help



with is to create more resistance to slow the bait down a bit, so it stays over the strike zone longer in the small holes in the grass.

In this situation when throwing a spinnerbait I use 17-pound fluorocarbon. I like fluorocarbon over monofilament in this situation because it doesn't have as much stretch, and allows for a better hookset and I'm able to horse the fish out of the grass much better. Regular monofilament is a little spongy in this grass and a fish will come up and grab the bait and go straight back into the grass. If you don't have a lot of power you can't drive the hook through their jaw and you miss and/or lose a lot of fish.

I will also throw a shallow running crankbaits (River2Sea Gripp), but in this case go with 17-pound monofilament because it floats a lot more which helps keep the crankbait from going down too deep and getting hung up in the grass. Keeping my crankbait about a foot deep and having the correct line on my rod is extremely important.

As the tide starts to drop the fish that are up in the grass will start to move to the outside edge where they'll hold in the deeper water. When this occurs I concentrate 100 percent of my efforts on the outside grass edges. To go one step further, I focus on locating the thickest lines of grass and large clumps. If the grass is scattered or in small clumps, I won't spend much time working it. I want to find the thickest, sharpest edge of grass when the tide goes low – that's where the biggest concentration of bass will be holding.

The last hour of the tide, when it's almost dead low, is the magic hour on a tidal river and when the fish are the most aggressive. The reason is that as the tide comes in, the shad, crayfish and other food items get up into the grass. But, as the tide falls, they come out of the grass and move to that outside grass line so fish where the bass are waiting to ambush their food source, right when they come into the open water.

Bass have better success feeding in the shallow water when baitfish and other food sources are concentrated, than they do in the deeper water where everything is spread out. I always try to be in my best spot on the last hour of the outgoing tide, to take advantage of the feeding frenzy that is almost a given.

When the tide is low I'm flipping and pitching since the fish are in a smaller strike zone on the edge of the grass. I'll work that area with a big jig or some type of soft plastic bait. Bruiser Baits has a 4-inch bait called a Crazy Craw, and it's an awesome flipping and pitching bait that you can fish on a jig or alone with a bullet-type weight. In this situation I'll match the size of my weight to the grass thickness. If it's matted and very thick (the best areas to target), I'll flip a 1-ounce or 1.5-ounce River2Sea Tungsten on that bait.

The same theory I use for bass also works in saltwater tidal rivers for snook and redfish -- as long as you know your tides. One of the cool options is many of the GPS/sonar units on the market these days offer tide features. I run Garmin GPS/sonar on my boat and it has the tide charts in it that I rely on constantly. I can punch a button and pull the tide up for where I'm at anywhere in the country and can use my cursor to look at other locations on the river by pulling up the tidal conditions for those areas as well. This way I always know what the tide is doing in my top fishing locations and it assists me in identifying where I want to head before making a long run.

One other very important detail you have to keep in mind when reviewing your tide charts is to determine where you want to fish is the wind direction. Wind can play a huge role in how strong the tides are in a given area and how that will affect where you can find the best concentrations of fish. If you're fishing on the East Coast and have an easterly wind, it can really hold up an outgoing tide and even make it a shorter duration tide cycle, particularly as you get closer to the coast. That same east wind will help an incoming tide push water into the river and may even help push more water than normal into the system resulting in

extremely high tides. You want to think about what the wind is doing and how it will affect the tides before you make any decisions on where you plan to fish.

Anytime you're fishing tidal rivers, studying the tides and picking the right baits are the two keys to having a successful day on the water. Pay extra attention to everything you're doing when fishing tides, including the type of line, baits or lures that have worked best in the past with similar tide conditions and make sure you have a game plan mapped out in terms of where to start and finish your day. If you hit the water and try to fish the tidal changes in a haphazard way, you'll spend more time running and gunning and less time bring bass to your boat.

### ***Scott Martin's Gear List for Fishing Tidal Waters:***

- Garmin GPS/Sonar Unit with Tidal Conditions
  - **Spinner Baits** – Okuma 7' Heavy Okuma Scott Martin TCS
  - Okuma Helios Air casting reel w/17 pound BassPro XPS fluorocarbon
  - River2Sea 3/8 ounce spinnerbait with Indiana blades
  - **Crank Baits** – Okuma 7' Heavy or 6.9' Medium Heavy Okuma Scott Martin TCS
  - Okuma Helios Air casting reel w/17 pound BassPro XPS fluorocarbon
  - River2Sea Gripp Crankbait
  - **Flipping** – Okuma 7.11' Extra Heavy Mat Daddy Flipping Okuma Scott Martin TCS
  - Okuma Helios Air casting reel w/65 pound Braid
  - Bruiser Baits 4" Crazy Craw
  - River2Sea 1oz or 1.5 oz Tungsten Weight
  - Trokar 5/0 TK130
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## *Tip #4*

### *Scott Martin's – Fishing the Swim Jig*



What I'm going to share with you here is a relatively new fishing technique that got its start in the upper Mississippi River, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and it's a technique called swimming a jig. Swimming jigs imitate fish and are worked in a similar style as a spinnerbait.

It's exactly what it sounds like. You fish a jig head, but instead of dragging it on the bottom, you swim it through the water column like a baitfish. This technique does have some idiosyncrasies that we'll cover to help make this technique work for you.

Most importantly, you need to have the right kind of jig. You can go to any tackle store and find a lot of different jig styles, but the best option are those made for swimming and labeled as "swimming jigs". There are a number of companies that produce these jigs—All Terrain Tackle Swimming Jig, RC Tackle Swimming Jig and the Tom Monsoor Swimming Jig being the most popular. Monsoor is one of the anglers that developed and refined the technique of fishing the swimming jig in the Mississippi River, and you can find his products at most Bass Pro Shop Stores.

The difference between a swimming jig and a standard jig that is used more for flipping is that the head of the swimming jig is more pointed so that it travels through the water with less resistance. A standard flipping jig has a banana shaped or fatter head, whereas the swimming jigs



are fuller and have more of a bullet shaped head that allows the jig to move through the grass and water column more like a fish.

Most swimming jigs have an eye on them to imitate a fish, and that's important, because most of the time you fish this lure you're trying to imitate a shad or bluegill. In the summer time when there's a lot of shad in the area and fish are feeding on the surface and in the grass, I'll throw a white swimming jig. In the springtime when the shad are scattered and there are beds with the bass about to spawn, I'll throw a black and blue or brown swimming jig.

There are two sizes I tend to use - a 1/4 ounce or 3/8 ounce jig. I throw the 1/4 ounce jig most of the time, because I'm not really concerned about getting the bait down to the bottom. If you're fishing deeper water you'll need to go with a heavier style jig so you can run it where the bass are holding. But in most cases I swim the jig through the water column similar to how I work a spinnerbait so it runs six inches to two feet below the surface.

The 1/4 ounce jig works really well for the shallow water presentation, as it has a really subtle fall to it, and when you slow it down while going over logs, grass or any other type of cover, it has a really soft fall to it that keeps the bait from nose diving too fast. If your jig is too heavy the bait will nose dive to the bottom which is not natural for a baitfish. It needs to glide through the water very naturally and fishlike.



The other thing you want to do with a swimming jig is to rig it with the right trailer. There are a number of options, but the one I use the most is the Bruiser Crazy Craw or a Bruiser Super Swimmer. I try to match the plastic trailer to the color of the jig I'm throwing. If I'm throwing something black, I'll add a blue and black tail. It's important that you have your swimming jig appear as much like the baitfish in your area as possible.

For the perfect presentation and bait control, you need the right rod and reel. The setup that I have found to work the best for open water or light cover is a 7' Heavy Okuma Scott Martin TCS matched up with a Helios Air 7.3 casting reel with 15 pound fluorocarbon. In heavy cover I prefer a 7.3' Heavy Scott Martin TCS with the same reel, but spooled with 50 pound braid.

Like any of the techniques I use, you need to practice different ways to present and work a swimming jig. Once you perfect your presentation, this is a very effective way to catch more and bigger bass every time you're on the water.

### ***Scott Martin's Gear List for fishing the Swimming Jig:***

15 Pound Fluorocarbon for light cover/50 pound braid for heavy cover

Okuma 7' or 7.3' Heavy Scott Martin TC

Okuma Helios Air 7.3 Casting Reel

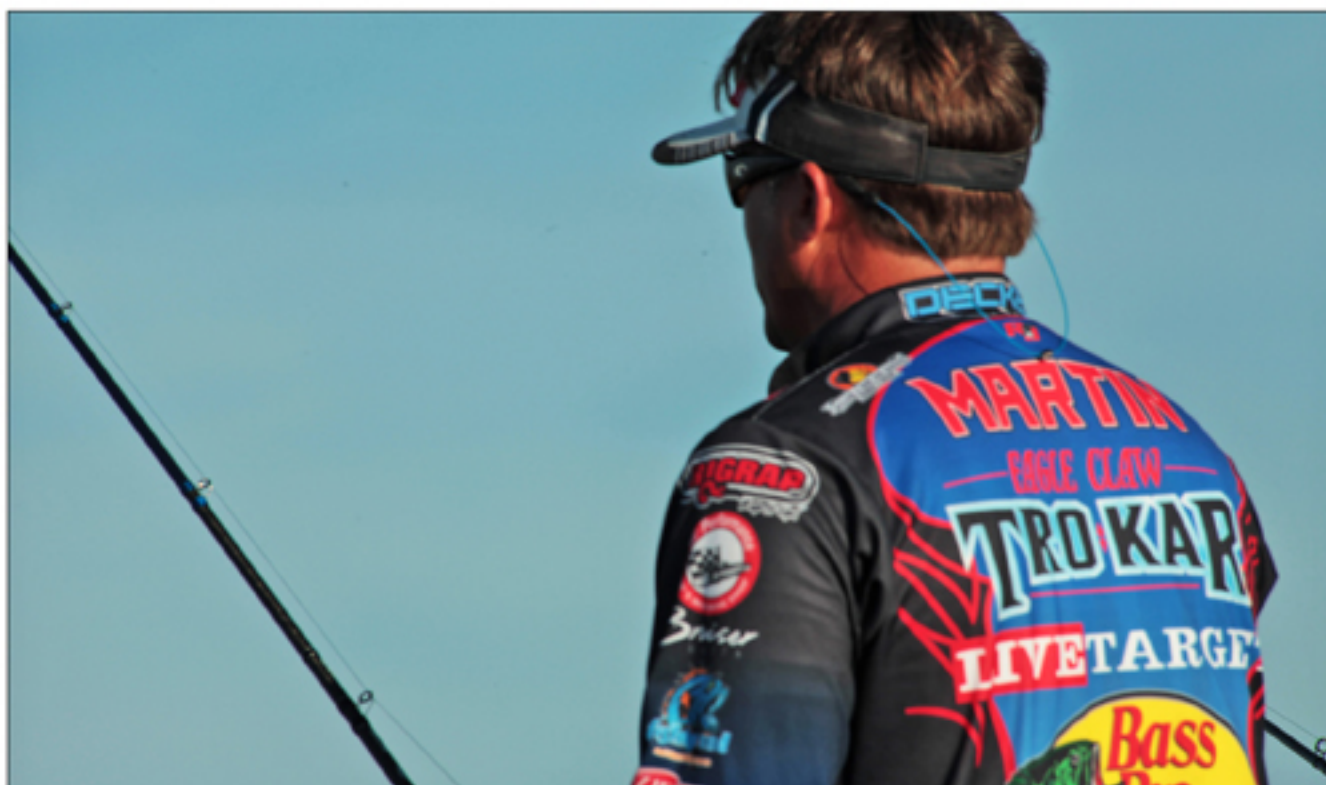
Bruiser Baits Crazy Craw

Bruiser Baits Super Swimmer

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## Tip #5

### Scott Martin's – Fishing Soft Plastics, The Carolina Rig



The soft plastic category is the most commonly used bass bait nationwide and when used correctly there is nothing better.

One of my favorite ways to search a new body of water is to use the Carolina rig, which was developed originally to fish the deeper basins in the Carolina's. A lot of anglers think a Carolina rig is something you use just in deep reservoirs or deep-water situations, but I catch a lot of my fish on a Carolina rig shallow lakes throughout the country. In most scenarios, I'm dragging this rig along the bottom in just 2 to 6 feet of water and can cover a lot of ground in a short time.

The key is to go as light as possible. When in shallow water, I won't go any heavier than a 1/2-ounce weight. If you're fishing in a deep-water impoundment or a river system where you need to get your worm down deep and keep it there, then you can go up to a 3/4-ounce or 1-ounce weight. But 90 percent of the time, I rig my Carolina rig with a 1/2-ounce weight River2Sea tungsten weight.

To build a Carolina rig, I like to start with fairly heavy line (17- to 20-pound test). I thread on a 1/2-ounce weight, add two small beads (I like glass beads as they provide an additional attractant which simulates the clicking of a crawfish), attach a ball-bearing swivel and finish it with a 2- to 3-foot length of 10-12# Fluorocarbon leader. I don't like to use anything longer because it limits my casting distance and accuracy.



When fishing in very clear water I want the smallest leader diameter I can get away with and usually go with a 10# Fluorocarbon leader. The other reason for using a leader lighter than the main line is that if you get your hook hung up on something, you can break the hook off without losing the entire rig.

I personally like to fish a shorter worm on my Carolina rigs than I do on other worm rigs. My favorites are a 4- to 6-inch straight worm, or even a creature-bait. In the spring I throw creature baits a lot – it makes a huge difference.

Distance and accuracy is very important whenever fishing a Carolina rig. You need to be able to make long casts with pinpoint accuracy so you can cover a lot of water from one spot. With a Carolina rig you want to hold the rod tip down close to the water, and drag the rod with a sweep to the right or left side, moving it a foot or two at a time. Give it a good 2 or 3 second pause, reel up the slack, and then drag it another foot or two with pauses between every drag to try to detect the slightest strike. Keep repeating this process and you'll start loading up your livewell and will be headed to the weigh-in station. It's worked for me time and again.

Most fish will bite the worm when it's dead still, rarely when it's moving, so pausing the worm at regular, but mixed intervals is very important. No matter what style you rig the worm you want to allow your bait to sit on the bottom for at least 2 or 3 seconds during each pause, giving fish to pick up your bait and enable you to detect a strike which is usually just a light thump or heavy feel.

Like any technique, variation is the key to success. Try different speeds, different periods of pause, color and shape – what works changes daily and if you don't keep mixing things up you're going to be pulling your rig past a lot of trophy bass.

### ***Scott Martin's Gear List for Carolina Rigging:***

10-12 Pound Fluorocarbon BassPro XPS Leader

17-20 Pound BassPro XPS line

Okuma 7.6H Scott Martin TCS

4- to 6-inch Bruiser Avenger or Intruder

6" Bruiser Straight tail worm

Trokar TK120 (3/0 or 4/0 hook)

River2Sea ½ ounce Tungsten weight

River2Sea 1oz Tungsten weight

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