

Amazing but True Lake Erie Fishing Stories

by
Michael Veine

Some of the best fishing stories often involve catching huge fish. The biggest walleye that I ever caught was back in 1995. I was fishing by myself on April 1, out of Bolles Harbor and the east wind was throwing sizable waves over the near-shore, Michigan waters. I had fished all morning without so much as a strike.

I was ready to call it a day and since it was too rough to run fast, I decided to troll my way back to the harbor. I was about 1/2-mile from Bolles when one of my in-line boards suddenly pulled back sharply. I was trolling in just six-feet of water, so I naturally thought I had snagged bottom.

After clearing my other line in preparation for circling the snag, I finally figured out that the snag was actually a big fish. After a long tussle, I finally managed to slip the net under a huge walleye that measured 33" and weighed 14-lbs. Incidentally, those fish were packed into that tight, shallow spot and I caught and

released at least 30 more fish in the next few hours and 10 of them were 30" or longer.

Even Bigger Walleye

As a charter captain, I rarely get to catch many fish myself anymore, but I do get to help plenty of people to land some awesome



Rod Stafford broke this big walleye off and the next day was able to recover the lost planer board and hand-line in the fish. Michael Veine photo

catches. On March 31, 2000, I was fishing with Revius Williams and Roger Poore. These two friends are like the Odd Couple: One a hardcore Democrat and the other a diehard Republican. These two unlikely friends were having the fishing

trip of their lifetime. With flat, clear water conditions and air temperatures in the 70s, the walleyes were feeding big time. We had already caught and mostly released about 25 walleyes with most of them being trophy class, adult fish weighing 8 to 11-pounds. It seemed like wherever we trolled, big walleyes were hitting with

reckless abandon, so when one of the Mr. Walleye boards was again pulled behind the boat from the weight of a big walleye, the mood seemed rather routine.

Revius Williams took the rod and slowly worked the fish towards the boat. As the fish came closer, it surfaced and slowly slicing across the water giving us all a clear view of his immense proportions. The mood on the boat

changed to pure excitement as the long, lanky walleye bared his fangs at us with some nerve-racking headshakes on the surface. I even had a hard time getting him to fit in my net. He measured 36" and weighed 14-1/2



This enormous walleye ranks as the largest one ever caught in the author's charter boat. Revius Williams was the lucky angler to take this 36", 14-1/2 pounder. Michael Veine photo

southwest wind that put ideal chop on the water. During prefishing, we had located a large school of walleye located in water 8' to 13' deep. We caught some walleyes on crankbaits, but we were catching about five sheephead for every walleye. We tried crawlers pulled behind bottom bouncers and experimented for several hours before coming up with a combination that resulted in mostly walleye hookups. We pulled 3-oz. bouncers with long leads to the chartreuse beads/blade crawler harnesses. The trolling speed seemed to be critical to weeding out the sheephead. We skimmed along at 2.2 mph.

On the first trolling pass of the first day of the tournament, we

pounds. Revius didn't want to mount the fish, so my charter boat policy of releasing prespawn walleyes kicked in and after snapping a few photos, we tossed it back. I wonder if that fish is still swimming in Lake Erie today and if so, how big is she?

Too Many Fish

I heard a saying that goes something like this: "You can never have too much money, too pretty of a wife or catch too many fish." The first two may be true, but despite popular beliefs, it is actually possible to catch too many fish.

My wife and I were fishing a MWT; team, walleye tournament and the weather conditions were nearly perfect. The water was slightly stained and the weather was warm and sunny with a nice



The mouth on this 14-pound walleye was like a gator. This is the largest walleye the author has ever caught himself. Michael Veine photo



Chris Schasroth smiled through his seasickness when he caught this 23" smallmouth bass. Michael Veine photo

managed to catch 10 walleyes. The fish were obviously of the same year class measuring 23"-25". However, about one out of every 10 walleyes was a couple inches bigger. The action was steady all day long. We would catch a bunch of walleyes until we had our legal, two-man limit in the livewells, then we would sort through them and keep the biggest five, which was all we were allowed to weigh-in. It was a frantic pace. We were constantly either reeling in fish or

resetting lines.

The action was just as fast and furious the next day. We never went five minutes without catching a walleye. At the end of fishing time on the second day, we had managed to catch over 200 walleyes. We were both physically and mentally whipped at the end of that tournament. If we had been fun fishing, we never would have pushed ourselves that hard. Needless to say, we managed to cash a check

though and that's what tournament fishing is all about.

Huge Smallmouth

On April 27, 2000, a strong northeast wind was kicking up some pretty good waves. My charter for the day consisted of the Phil Schasroth and his 10-year-old son Chris. Chris had been suffering from a mild case of seasickness, but when it was his turn at the rod, he bucked-up for the occasion. Even though we were trolling for walleyes in Brest Bay, his fish turned out to be a dandy smallmouth. The fish jumped, bulldogged and pulled like crazy. Finally, Chris managed to bring the fish close enough to the boat so I could net it. The chunky bass measured 23" and weighed 7-1/2 pounds. Michigan's bass season was still closed though, so the fish went back.

Lost and Found Walleye

On a charter on March 28, 2001, Rod Stafford was battling a good walleye when another one hit a lure on the same side of the boat. Steve Griffin grabbed that rod and somehow managed to twist his line around the Rod's breaking off the Rod's fish above the Mr. Walleye board. We circled the boat to try to pick up the lost board, but couldn't find it.

The next day, with the same charter party, we were fishing the same waters and spotted that board floating near the same spot where it was broken off the previous day. As we passed by the planer board, Rod Stafford netted it and began hauling in line when he exclaimed, "There's a

fish on here! I can feel him pulling.” After a brief tussle, I netted the 10-1/2 pound walleye. They had already caught several 11-pound walleyes that morning though, so Rod released his lost and found walleye.

Robin Hitch Hiker

On April 7, 2001, it was a misty, almost foggy day on Erie. My charter was a family from IL. Visibility was about a half-mile when a robin suddenly fluttered into view with a seagull in hot pursuit. The robin had obviously become lost over the fog-shrouded water and the gull was trying to knock it into the water and eat it. The robin spotted my boat and landed on the gunnel. It then walked down the gunnel all the way to the top of the passenger side console, where Kristi Hicks was seated. Kristi was wearing

two hooded sweatshirts with the inside sweatshirt hood over her head and the other one hanging over the back her neck. After a couple minutes the robin jumped up on Kristi’s shoulder and eventually situated itself in the hanging, hood for a long nap. As the day went on the bird stayed comfortably sleeping in Kristi’s hood. She even fought a couple fish without disturbing the soundly sleeping little bird.

Towards the end of the trip, the fog finally cleared. When the robin caught sight of shore and it took off for land. Just before taking flight though, the ungrateful robin left Kristi a smelly, white gift on her shoulder.



Kristi Hicks is all smiles with this robin hitchhiking on her sweatshirt. Michael Veine photo

Sinking Boat

Last year, during mid-May, I was running a charter from Bolles Harbor. It as a rough day with east winds kicking up 2-4 footers. We had run out to the MI/OH boarder and I was just starting to set lines for our first trolling pass when my customers John Demuth and Billy Mercer spotted a flare several miles to the east. I quickly pulled the two lines that I’d set and sped off to investigate. Two more flares were seen as we ran out near the shipping channel and I was radioing the Coast Guard when we saw a swamped boat with two very wet anglers in trouble. It was too rough for us to pull very close to them, so I threw them a life ring and pulled them to the back of my boat. I was able to hoist them aboard my boat over the transom in the slot next to my big Mercury outboard. The two men were chilled, but otherwise OK. We sped them to shore where they could change cloths and facilitate the recovery of their drowned boat.

These are just some of my collection of true stories from the big pond. If you have any questions, mikeveine@trophyspecialists.com is my email. Good fishing.
