

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast Episode 299



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Charles West

Bass Electric Tournament Champ

Charles has been fishing in the Bass Electric Tournaments for 14 years and has had plenty of success, including angler of the year in 2017, when he won 5 of the 7 events. Maroon Dam is Charles' back yard and he has plenty of secrets about the resident bass population to share.



Charles' Maroon Dam Bass Fishing Tips

- Maroon Dam is a storage where the lures and techniques used for bass fishing can vary widely. For this reason, Charles uses this system as a testing ground for techniques.
- Although there are plenty of fish in the far corners of the dam, it's not necessary to travel long distances to find fish in this system. Some of Charles best sessions have occurred when he's fished within spitting distance of the boat ramp. There are plenty of shore-based options as well.
- Australian bass can be taken on surface lures in the shallow water around the shoreline all year round, but the low light periods around dawn and dusk fish best. During the warmer months fish tend to move to the weedbed margins in 15-20 ft of water through the rest of the day.
- Getting weed on your hook is a good sign that you're fishing in the right area, as that's where bass tend to hang in Lake Maroon.

- Fishing areas where there is mixed structure such as gravelly rock transitioning into broken weed is a great area to fish if you're shore based.
- When you're fishing weed, concentrate on the fringes and look for little indents, broken patches, channels and valleys through the weed that hold bass. Often bass bite aggressively in the weed because you're getting a reaction bite.
- Generally only the smaller fish seem to school in Maroon Dam, larger fish tend to be more solitary and hang close to their favourite structure.
- Once you've found fish, put in a half dozen casts with each of your favourite lure styles and if you're not catching fish, mark the patch and move on, then come back later. Bass often start feeding at different times of the day.
- Charles finds that once he cracks the code and finds what's working at a particular spot, that lure and technique will usually also work at other spots. However, he continues to rotate through lures, even after he catches some fish, to see what could be working better on the larger fish.
- "Matching the Hatch" is key to Aussie bass fishing. Find lures that resemble what the bass are feeding on in terms of size, profile and colour.
- "Perfect" conditions for Australian bass fishing on Maroon Dam would be temperatures not above 27-28 C, moon rising close to sun rise, glassy calm around dawn but a slight breeze later. A barometer above 1015 and rising is often good for fishing and overcast conditions, even with some drizzling rain, are great.
- If the fish are shut down, Charles suggests slowing thing down and working lures subtly.
- If (when) a hooked fish buries you in weed it's best to position your boat or kayak above the fish and exert constant, moderate upwards pressure. Often the fish will thrash itself free when you do this, when pulling it from an angle will only cause it to burrow deeper into the weed.

Charles' Maroon Dam Aussie Bass Tackle

- Spin gear consisting of a suitable rod, 1000-2000 size reel loaded with 6-12lb braid and a 6-12lb leader is great for throwing lighter lures.
- A baitcast rod with 12-25lb line is great for throwing heavier lures with a 10-20lb fluorocarbon leader. 25lb may seem excessive, but Charles finds it necessary when throwing lures into tough, rocky cover as fish have to be stopped immediately to prevent bustoffs.
- For specific applications Charles will use straight through 10-12 lb mono or fluorocarbon on baitcast gear.

Charles' Maroon Dam Bass Fishing Lures

- First thing in the morning or late in the afternoon when the wind is calm, topwater lures such as poppers, walk the dog lures or cicada's are worth throwing in the shallow water. Look for lures in the 50-70mm lures work best, but up to and over 100mm lures are not necessarily too big. With experience these lures are versatile enough to be used interchangeably, but for beginners it's easier to have each different lure style and switch them depending on circumstances.
- 2-3" soft plastic lures on 1/4oz jig heads are a useful lure to have rigged and at the ready, especially after the early morning topwater bite when the fish are moving to deeper water. Slider Grubs and Valley Hill Ebishads are suitable options, but there are plenty of others. These lures can typically be cut down to reduce the size and profile of the lures if you're getting short strikes. A 1/4oz jig head is versatile enough that the lure can be worked above shallow weed beds with the rod tip held high or dropped down to slow roll or hop through deeper water or along the fringes of weedbeds. Charles prefers to use white, light green and dark green or watermelon colours that match the gudgeon and other bait in the dam. Fishing through weed with sharp rips can be effective too.
- Hard vibes such as the Jackall TN50 and TN60 are good, as are the slightly larger Valley Hill LV150 or LV200 (62 and 68mm) are good options, giving a range of profiles from 50-68mm in length. Importantly, the Valley Hill lures have options of multiple small bearings, lead knocker or tungsten knocker rattles, which creates lots of sound options. These are great in bays or on points in areas where there's 5-12ft of water above a weed bed and the lure can be burned across the top for a savage reaction bite. They can also be ripped through weed or rigged with a single hook only on the front and worked through timber.
- 1/2 to 3/8oz Pro Factory rubber skirted are not super productive but usually produce bigger fish. Charles likes to fit the jig with a shrimp or yabby style soft plastic, drop it down to the bottom and hop it along mimicking the movements of a yabby. Deep, rocky areas, steep banks and timbered areas fish best with jigs – and this is where Charles will switch to the 25lb baitcast gear and will "lock up" on to fish to avoid being busted off.