

I Think I Got a Bite

By Mike Djokic

I look at this last semester as one big fishing trip. My trip started with the conclusion of winter break; the starting of a new season, a new semester. For this new season I turned in, set aside, or sold all of my old and used gear and purchased new, updated, and seasonal equipment. This season, however, I would fish in upper level locations that require the experience that I had received during the fall semester. The largest lake that I fished in this semester, the one that I received the most credit from, was CORE.

This season at CORE I was able to learn a lot from just fishing the water. I did not have to catch anything everyday to get some kind of new knowledge from the lake. In fact, not every day was a nice relaxing fish; I came across several challenges that took as much work as they gave pleasure. There were times when, during my cast out into the air, my line caught a huge bird's nest and the lure violently stopped in mid flight, only to shift direction toward my face. Such a bird's nest can be one of the most frustrating things a fisherman can encounter, but getting upset does not solve the problem and it does catch the big fish. I looked at the bird's nest like another small opponent; the only way that I could overcome this opponent was by sitting down and untangling the line. At times I felt like I was in a really big hurry. All I wanted was to get to the lake, throw in a line, and pull out a MONSTER. However, after seeing that the sport of fishing does not work this way, I had to come up with a new approach. If I wanted the "lunker of the lake," I would have to work for it.

I spent several late nights going over fishing magazines, books, and entries online so that I would be more knowledgeable of my new fishing location and the hunkers that lurked the

water. Sometime during the break, in between seasons, I seemed to have forgotten that, although this was the same CORE Lake as last season and I had caught some big fish last time, it was a new season and the fish required a new effort. On several occasions, I woke up very early in the morning to try to find some fish, so early that the sun had not even risen. I would hustle to try to throw in as many lines as I could before the fish were done biting for the day. Although on some days it was painful to rise up before the sun; I had no other option. As I got further along into the season, the time I had left to fish at CORE Lake was getting scarce. I had to find a way to balance my time so that I could fish at all my locations and get an equal amount of big fish from each. Probably one of the greatest gifts that this season has given me is a nice dose of reality. I have seen first hand how demanding a fishing season can be once I have committed to catching big fish from too many lakes. I have seen how much effort it takes and how it has affected me physically to balance such a load. One person cannot catch all the big fish.

Life is not always forgiving; if I was able to catch some good fish this season, it's because I am still a novice with a lot of energy and a lot to learn. I realize that I will not be able to go on and set such high goals every season; eventually I will tire out and end up having a bad season. I will most likely choose to fish at fewer locations for next season. Although I will not be able to catch as many fish as this season, the fish I do catch will hopefully be bigger. Catching one big fish is better than catching ten guppies, in my opinion.

Even though this season was hectic at times, I did learn a lot about fishing. At CORE Lake, I was able to further my progress as a caster. Casting is a fundamental part of fishing; my cast will be important for me to fish at all the lakes I choose to fish at in the future. Using handbooks, getting advice from my instructor, and comparing with my peers have all helped my cast dramatically. I was told that my overall cast is not bad; rather, I was never really taught how

to set it up. It is the initial stance and release that make one's cast decent; I had always overlooked the importance of this. I have learned that improving my stance and release, can significantly improve my accuracy. Thus, I will be more likely to sink my lure in the hot spots of the lake.

Another thing that I have picked up CORE Lake is my approach. I was taught the basics of fishing as a child and then learned as I got older by teaching myself. By the time I got to CORE Lake, I felt like my fishing technique was perfect and I knew all the secrets to catching good fish. After several discussions with fellow fishermen/fisherwomen by the lake, I realized that I was closed minded. I actually really enjoyed the techniques some of the others had and tried to learn as much as I could by listening to them. I truly believe that the most beneficial part of fishing at CORE Lake was the interaction that is encouraged to take place. The way that I learn best as a fisherman is by comparing the styles of others to my own fishing preferences. This helps me see things in my own technique that I overlooked and thought to be complete. I have learned to be open and I love to hear the thoughts of other fisherman, even if we don't agree initially.

Overall, I am thankful for the experience that CORE Lake has presented to me. Every phase of the fishing season has taught me how to adapt and grow. The priceless lesson received on how to manage my time better and what size workload I can handle, learning new ways to cast and fish with an open mind, and how to interact with anglers who have complete opposite methods are some of basic things that I have received out of this season. These "basic" lessons are crucial lessons that are necessary in order for me to advance in my fishing career. Although I am glad to be getting a short summer season off, I am already confident and excited for my next season at Valpo.