

TOP FISHING SECRETS

TOP FISHING SECRETS.COM

A Blind Willingness to Fight Fish " No Matter What!"

"One foot to the left or in front of me and I'm going to disappear!"

Timothy Kuserets

Have you ever thought about the definition of what an adventure really is? I have, and have found that they're often created within split seconds and over before you know it. When in pursuit of fishing we can sometimes forget that we're mortal and that risk simply doesn't exist in our minds when the entire focus is to find elusive holds that are hard to get to. It is the focus of finding fish that leads to fighting them and when you have that kind of determination it leads to a blind willingness to fight fish no matter what!

"How far are you wading out today?"

"Not too far. I just got these great glasses and I don't want to risk getting them getting wet or lost. God knows I'm really great at losing things and the extended warranty just adds to the cost; you know, the penny pincher in me."

"What's so great about those particular glasses?"

"For starters, they're for reading, polarized, and I can convert them back and forth anytime I feel like it."

"Timothy, if I were you, and I'm not, there's no way I would have thought about taking glasses like those to a river like this, especially if they cost a lot of money. The water's really moving."

"The only thing I'm worried about is the fish and besides I won't put them on till dawn. Are you ready to head out?"

"I'll wait until the sun comes up if you don't mind. Don't worry about me. Head out if you think the fish will bite before light."

"If you come out before sunup don't shine the light on the river okay? I don't want the fish scattering once I find them."

I headed out into the dark and made my way to the drop-off that held fish day or night. It was then that I started to think about the trip there.

It took Mike and me over two hours to get to the river. The early morning hours meant that the roads were relatively clear of traffic, good for us bad for the fish. We'd been talking about superstitions and one in particular stuck in my mind; it was about seeing animals alongside the road just before getting to wherever we were going. Over the last couple of years each time we saw animals we hooked into fish hand-over-fist. It's silly of course, but it happened so routinely that we actually started looking for them. On this trip, just before we got to the river, four small rabbits hopped in front of us and it was the only thing I could think about as I waded further and further into the river.

All of my gear had been setup so I'd be able to tie and retie my line without turning on the light. With a pole and the reflection of the moon I was able to see the drop-off where I stopped and got ready. All the precautions of avoiding snags had been taken care of with a previous recon trip so the only thing left for me to do was cast out. The river was flowing from the left to the right so the first cast was to the eleven o'clock position, which drifted to the two-o'clock position before reeling in. As the line drifted on down the river the tension of the line told me exactly where the line was so when it went limp I set the line and set it hard. A fish on the very first

TOP FISHING SECRETS

cast! It raced directly out of the main current towards the drop-off directly downriver from me and to the right! It had made a ninety-degree run; I knew it was a Coho! Racing backwards without reeling in the line I made my way downstream with the rod tip high! It jumped and the shine of the moonlight showed me that it was bright! It was spinning each time it jumped and each time it did I'd put the rod tip down reel like crazy while running straight at it! After only a couple of minutes the fight had worked its way to shallow water where I was able to tail it; that was when turning on the light was an option for getting the hook out of its mouth. Hooking into fish in the dark had become standard procedure for me over the years so getting back to fishing was just as fast as the fight.

At the crack of dawn Mike made his way out to the hold.

"Hey. How many fish have you hooked into? Now and again I'd see a light turn on. Does that mean you had any luck?"

"Seventeen so far and the real good fishing should be picking up soon. Get down below me and we'll horde the spot for as long as possible."

He was an excellent fisherman and his hook-to-land ratio was actually better than mine so by the time noon had rolled around we had attracted some unwanted attention from a lot of fishermen forcing me to come up with alternatives. We had landed many fish and we wanted to keep it up.

"It's getting a little crowded around here. I'm going to head upstream. You want to stay or come with me?"

"I think I'll watch you first and see how deep you get. Sometimes you get into some pretty treacherous water and that's water I'd just soon avoid...if you don't mind?"

As I progressively waded upstream, about fifty-yards or so, the river began to rise up past my waist and the speed picked up along with it which is why I stopped when the river got near the top of my chest waders.

"Hey tough guy! Why'd you stop?"

It looked as though Mike was hollering at the top of his lungs, but I could barely hear him over the roaring river.

"One foot to the left or in front of me and I'm going to disappear! You going to catch me if I float downriver?"

"No, I'll just cast out and try to reel you in! Maybe one of these other guys has some heavy test and they can reel you in! Ha, ha, you're just funning me right? Be careful!"

Famous last words "be careful". How careful can you be in a raging river if you're underneath it? There were fish in the water and I intended to catch some away from the advancing glut of fishermen; which had turned into about fifteen anglers' shoulder-to-shoulder. I could see some of them meander up my way but most stopped about twenty-yards short; guess they didn't like the idea of slipping.

The luck I'd been having was predominantly along the seam of fast and slow water, but I knew to hit into the big boys I'd have to fish the faster deeper water.

On the far side of the river I could see a seam forming below some riffles just above a pool that slicked up with deep fast water. It looked perfect. I cast out and hit the surface past the seam about ten o'clock. Reeling in the slack I watched as my neon bright line drifted into the seam for a great presentation. It was nearly the perfect drift when the line stopped moving. Setting the hook, I held on and waited. Nothing happened. I reset the hook again and still nothing happened. It was a sure sign of being hung up or snagged. Right at that moment it occurred to me that I would have to break off the line when it started heading towards me. Raising the rod over my head I began reeling in the slack as fast as I could when a fish jumped out the water and shaking its huge Chinook head! The Lunker seemed to break the sound barrier with my six-pound test! That's right, can you believe it? Fishing with light line, it was never the intention to be chest deep fishing for the whoppers! I was sure it was going to get away! As it screamed on by me I stretched out my rod as far as it would go in front of me to try and tease the fish inshore and away from the drop-off; it was then that I took great notice of the edge! The two huge boulders I'd been on were the last ones before the abyss, but it was too late even as I thought about it. Instantly I was in the water, completely submerged, and headed downstream with the whopper that promised stories to last a lifetime! The idea of heading downriver "below" the surface that "now" seems to be

TOP FISHING SECRETS

significant to me and the lack of fear for drowning that never occurred to me shows me the grim determination I'd had on that day.

"Hey! Where the heck did he go? Did any of you guys see that? Did he fall in? He just seemed to vanish! What are we supposed to do? Can anyone do anything?" Mike was in a panic...the same panic I probably should have been experiencing.

"Well for Christ's sake! Take a look at that! Is that what I think it is? Hey buddy, you better take a look at your fishing partner, or at least what's left of him!" A fisherman who had been near Mike, when I went down, yelled at him to look at what was coming downriver.

There I was fighting my fish about nine feet below the surface with the tip of my rod just above the surface; which was the only thing Mike could see of me. The speed of the current along the drop-off kept me in the upright position practically allowing me to run beneath the surface. Time seemed to slow and all I could do was think about fighting that fish and nothing else. It all seemed so natural. Off in the short distance was a hill of boulders coming up on me fast! Lifting my legs and holding the rod out, and to the left. There wasn't a moment to lose! Each step had to be perfect or I would hit the main current and drown in the raging white water on the other side of seam! I braced my legs for the impact that was sure to hurt near the surface! I knew it would feel like a jump and I also knew it was going to hurt! I literally ran up the hill! Putting my legs out on top of the algae covered boulders, directly in front of me; I broke through the surface where I could clearly see the edge of the drop-off! Falling to the left, with my rod up high, I stumbled to my knees and looked off to the distance to see my fish far out on the other side of the river! I could tell that the battle was long from over!

Suddenly, there was Mike along side me while the other fishermen applauded.

"I don't know how you do it! It was the most remarkable thing I'd ever seen and funny too! It was like something out of the movies! If I live to be a thousand years old, I think the only way I'm ever going to see something insane like that again is if you do it again! What in the heck were you thinking?"

Mike was breathing so hard you'd think he had just gone down the river. Without saying a word I headed on downriver without losing a stride leaving him to scratch his head!

I had to concentrate on the behemoth, which was about to make his way into even deeper water around a huge bend! A bend that was insurmountable! There was no way I was going to get the fish if it made it there! There was only one thing to do and it meant risking everything! I flipped the bail open and ran! In my waders I ran as fast as I could to make my position parallel with the bend in the hopes of heading off the Chinook and tricking it into thinking that the fight had changed directions to below the fish rather than above it! It was always a gamble and it had always worked, but that didn't make my heart beat any less faster!

Reeling in the line as fast as possible I watched as the line finally caught up to me and began to turn upriver and get tight! It worked out perfectly because there was no more room to run! The line had tangled around a boulder and snagged! It was inconceivable! There it was snagged in the fast water and just above it was the king salmon flailing about near the surface fighting line that promised to break at any moment!

Tired, I was so tired of running and fighting and to add to it I was no overcome with frustration! "Should I just call it quits and break the line? What the heck is there left for me to do?" Six-pound test, that's all it was and the line had gone through hell up to that point! How much more could it take? I didn't know. So I took a breath and headed back up river keeping the line as tight as I could!

Just as I got even with the snagged boulder I put the rod up as high as I could and reset the hook! Nothing! I set the hook again and still nothing! I decided that I'd give it one more try before breaking off. Wading out into the river as far as I could I reeled in any slack that formed and stopped at the drop-off once again and flipped the bail for the last time!

The line formed a belly in it and curved near the surface getting ahead of the snag with the fast water! Flipping the bail closed, the line had gone back down to the bend, I began to reel in! I watched as the line made its way back to the snag and held my breath as the reeling began to feel like panic! The line was cutting through the

TOP FISHING SECRETS

water like a knife and the ripping sound told just how fast I'd been reeling when it occurred to me the line had gone past the boulder and up to the fish!

Hot dog! The fight was back on and talk about luck taking a turn, this fish came out of the fast water as though it was as tired as I was! As a matter of sheer curiosity, I reeled in the line, as it came in, to feel the abrasions that was sure to be there! Nothing had happened to the line at all...that is...until there was about twenty-feet of left! Just one thing! Couldn't one thing go right that didn't involve some kind of crazy stunt? The exasperation was so intense that I began to physically wretch! It was the coupe de grats! If the line, fish, or river didn't get to me then I guess it just made sense that my body would betray me and fail...why not, everything else had gone wrong?

The fight had been going on for over an hour by that point so it really made sense that the moment the huge fish got out of the fast water that it headed straight for the bank, which was still no small feat since I had to keep constant "Light" tension upriver from whatever position that darned fish put me into! The whole thing felt personal to me and the longer we fought the more I was sure that it had intentionally decided to torture me. Suddenly it came to the surface and floundered! Turning on its side it floated at the surface gasping for air opening and closing its mouth quickly! "Not like this! Don't you dare do that to me! Not like this! You're not going to die on me before I get my hands on you to put you back! Catch and release, catch and release, that's all I wanted!" Throwing down the rod I jumped into water that was much deeper than I'd thought! I had to swim out to the fish in my waders, which were quickly filling to get to the fish that seemed to want the anguish of this particular fight to never end! I didn't have to go far before I was able to grab it by the tail...that huge tail and head in towards the bank! Making it to the side of the river I was unable to get both the fish and myself out, so, there in the river, I began to resuscitate it by moving it back and forth! The peduncle (tail wrist) was gigantic, even for the size of this fish, which couldn't have been less than fifty-inches! An hour, I spent an hour with it in the water. Sometimes it would feel as though it was fine and I'd let it go only to watch it sink. Each time it would go to the bottom I'd have to swim out, grab it, and head to the bank to start the whole process all over. Looking into the eye of the great fish I watched as bubbles began pouring out of its mouth. It was finally dead. I'd done everything I could to bring it back to life, but in the end the battle had been a draw. Even though it had died I still considered it a draw with all it had put me through.

Tailing it, I cleaned it, gathered up the gear and headed back up to Mike, which had turned into about a mile downriver. With the huge fish in hand it took about forty-five minutes to get back.

I saw Mike running down to me yelling all the way.

"I thought you were dead! You know the only thing any of us saw was the damned tip of your rod? That's it, nothing else just the tip of your damned rod! Are you trying to send me to an early grave?"

"It died in my hands. Can you believe it?"

"Sorry about that. I know how you feel about catch and release. It did put up one great fight for you though didn't it?"

"There is no way I could have asked for more. You know what's really funny? I still have my hat and glasses. I don't know how long I was actually in the water but the fact that I still have those says to me that the scene where the fisherman jumps into the river and pops back up with his hat says to me that I could really happen. Do you know the movie I'm talking about?"

"Every fisherman does, but what were you thinking?"

"That's just it. I didn't think at all. The only thing I knew for sure is I wanted to get that fish and nothing else. I suppose nothing else mattered...at the time."

"You're nuts! I've seen you do crazy stunts before, but I don't want to see that again! I respect your abilities but I'd prefer it if you didn't show a blind willingness to fight fish, no matter what, that kind of thinking could get you killed."

We talked about it many times since then and the memories will last for the rest of our lives but then again,

TOP FISHING SECRETS

that's what an adventure is all about isn't it? Mike wanted to know if I had to do it all over again would I. I told him that I'd have to wait until the next time because I couldn't honestly answer him until that critical moment came. After all, those kinds of decisions are made in split seconds and an honest fisherman would not be able to answer the question until he's faced with the possibility of the adventure and not one moment sooner.