

Tournament Accessories

Options for the Tournament Angler

By Jeff Bruhl

Any new boat comes well equipped for a recreational outing but tournaments require special needs. Live wells, trolling motors, and platforms are a few options that transform any weekend tub into a tournament ready machine. After choosing the style of boat, accessories complete the package. A properly outfitted craft is a pleasure to compete in and is often the difference between a check and donation to the prize pot.

Jim Fisackerly of Boat Stuf has learned from numerous events on the IFA Redfish Tour and the ESPN Redfish Cup. From equipping boats for recreational anglers to decking out a tournament rig, Jim's experience helps pros and amateurs alike find the right boat. Live wells, Power Pole™ anchors, trolling motors, and platforms are several tips he recommended for new boats.

"Live wells keep the fish healthy and ready for the weighins," begins Jim, who regularly competes on the IFA Tour. "Dead fish penalties can knock you out of the money."

Live wells should be a minimum of 25 gallons. Any less is too small to hold two 27 inch redfish. The hottest addition to live wells is an oxygen system. Keep Alive™ and other companies provide special aeration system that infuses oxygen into the water. This benefits the fish and helps ease some of the stress placed on them. Additives like Rejuvenade help stabilize the PH and other chemicals in the water. Jim's recommends using a recirculation pump only when Rejuvenade is added. Pump in fresh water after a few hours and add additional Rejuvenade to keep the fish from losing any weight. In the heat of the summer, anglers make use of frozen bottles of water to cool the live well environment down. Jim adds that bottles or blocks should be removed when making long runs in rough water. This keeps the bottles from harming the fish when the ride is rough.

"Another must have accessory is a Power Pole," adds Jim. "It can be used before take off or to stop a drift across a flat or point. The pole anchors the boat and keeps you from drifting into the fish."

A Power Pole is a device that attaches to the back of

approaching fish, a button quietly eases the Power Pole into the bottom and anchors the boat.

Depending on the areas of the country you fish, a trolling motor or polling platform is another needed attachment. Being quiet is a big part of sight fishing for redfish.

"Florida redfish are notorious for being spooky," explains Jim. "A poling platform is a must for Florida. The water is clear and poling is better for Florida fishing.

Louisiana's water clarity is more forgiving. A trolling motor is a great addition for Louisiana anglers." A poling platform is a tool used by Florida anglers to spot redfish and push the boat around the grassy flats. Many Louisiana anglers use platforms on the bow of the boat instead of the stern. The added height brings a whole new world into the boat. Extend handle trolling motors makes a ride through the marsh a breeze.

"An eighteen inch increase in height lets the angler see more area," continues Jim. "Flats boats are low to the water and a platform increases the view dramatically."

Manufacturers like Tops and Towers, Bird Sall, and various local shops sell fishing platforms. Fiberglass platforms turnbuckle to the front deck to prevent the platform from flying off during runs from place to place. Eighteen inches is a great starting point for a platform. Higher levels are acceptable but remember stepping off becomes increasingly hazardous.

If you really beg your wife, a few other options may find their way into the boat of your dreams. Hand held GPS and radios, rain gear, Boga grips, and tournament measuring boards complete the tournament package. Mobile GPS units are great when the angler makes the top 5 and switches to the boat provided by the tournament sponsors. Radios are required by most tournaments for launch and check ins.

"Buy a quality rain suit," comments Jim. "It is well worth the money."

Scales like Boca grips and measuring boards keep the best fish in the boat and help when culling. After completing the list of add-ons, be sure to purchase a high quality life vest. It is the best insurance made.

Picking the right boat is half the battle. Choosing a proper live well, trolling motor and other accessories is the half that turns a boat into tournament machine. Boats made by Hughes, Maverick, and other manufacturers come in as many combinations as one angler can imagine. With some research, a new redfish boat could be

