

A Day on the Lake with FLW Pro: Jim Dillard

By: Doug Vahrenberg



I got to spend a couple days recently with a good friend and fellow angler Jim Dillard of West Monroe, Louisiana. Jim and I fished the BASS Opens and FLW Everstarts in recent years. Jim was preparing for an upcoming FLW Series event on Lake of the Ozarks, October 11 to 14, 2006. This is Jim's rookie season on the FLW Tour and FLW Series events. He currently is in 33rd Place for the FLW Series, the top 30 qualify for the FLW Championship in 2007.

Spending some time on the water with a good friend and fellow competitor that has moved up the ranks provided us a time to reminisce about the prior years and talk about his year as a touring pro. When we competed on last few years Jim Dillard was one of those anglers who always was willing to help you out. If you needed a bait or help preparing your boat; Jim was always there to lend a hand. Jim and my friendship have grown over the years and we now spend more time on the phone, as we have grown in this sport in different directions. To jump in the boat with him for a couple days was a fulfilling couple of days. Here are a few of the topics we talked about.

What has been some of the biggest challenges in your growth? The time and financial commitment to succeed came up. Jim mentioned that the FLW Tour has no off-limits so many of anglers can visit upcoming tournament locations and spend several days and even several weeks on the water learning the lakes and the pattern the fish are in. He mentioned some anglers are there a month in advance to learn everything they can about a lake. All anglers have this same opportunity but this can place higher financial burdens on the younger anglers with fewer sponsors and the time commitment requires less chance for employment opportunities as the time away does not allow much time at work. Jim really liked the FLW Series format as it equalizes the field as far as practice goes. A two weeks off-limits period provides a more equal playing field. But he also stated the rules are rules and he will do what ever is required for him to succeed as an angler. We spoke about both of our levels of fishing and attempting to find financial support. It's amazing the dollars that are growing in the sport of fishing. But most of these dollars are being consumed by the veteran anglers. We both understand they are a more valuable asset but it makes it hard for growing anglers to continue to move-up in the sport without financial assistance. We spoke of the innovative ideas and motivation growing anglers have to help promote sponsors for less value than the veterans. Jim stated he has opportunities but it has ties to his performance in the FLW Series.

Is there any one bait that has contributed to your success this rookie season? Jim stated that most of his top finishes have come on the Shakey Head Worm. We talked more in-depth on this bait. He stated that this bait is very attractive to no aggressive fish and it irritates the fish more than produces a feeding strike. Jim stated the more and more our nations fisheries are pressured with the growth of the sport the more finesse tactics become more important. This can also be contributed to the added time of a no off-limits period. These are the best anglers in the world and they know how to catch fish. And they know how to use electronics and can tell which fish they can catch, just by looking at good quality electronics.

Jim and I spoke in-depth about electronics and the importance they play in fishing success. Jim stated that there are several anglers that are crediting Side Imaging to increasing their fishing success. The one that caught my attention was this years FLW Angler-of-the-year Anthony Gagliardi and his crediting the Humminbird Side Imaging to a key to finding the quality fish to win this prestigious title. Jim is very interested in this product as he knows what it can do for him. He was amazed at some images I showed him. He told me just spending one day behind the wheel he could cover so much more water and know what he was looking at under the surface. It's amazing how electronics are changing the way touring pros are attacking tournament waters.

What are you trying to target during these practice days? I'm not looking for the exact areas I will be fishing in the event, rather looking for areas that are holding fish and trying to understand the seasonal patterns and trying to understand where these fish will be in two weeks. It's not about catching the biggest or the most but to understand and figure out where the fish are. At this level the pros look more for patterns than spots as they are fishing for multiple day events and the fish can change during those events. Jim stated it is sometimes hard and you get stuck on an area and the fish move only slightly and you can miss the opportunity.

Sometimes you feel bashful to fish with another competitor or fellow angler but everyone can learn. I learned a lot over these short two days and I'm sure Jim learned, too! I introduced him to the world of Dave's Custom Baits and the action these baits produce. So much as my tackle bag left a little lighter. Jim had never seen a bait so erratic, and run so crazy but in control all the time. He stated it resembled baitfish trying to get away and the really worked on the bass's sense of reaction. David Ryan has passed on his knowledge to me and today I was able to pass this on to another friend. The action of this bait produced for us time and time again around the plentiful docks of Lake of the Ozarks.

The FLW Series event on Lake of the Ozarks is only a few days away and will feature some of the best anglers from around the world. You can meet the rising stars of tomorrow like Jim Dillard or meet many of past stars like Woo Daves, Luke Clausen, Jay Yelas, Mark Davis, Anthony Gagliardi, and many, many more of today's best anglers. They will take-off starting October 11. All 200 anglers will compete for 3 days with weigh-ins at Public Beach #2. The fourth and final day will feature the top 10 anglers and a cumulative weigh format for all days. Final day weigh-in will be held at the Walmart in Osage Beach. Be sure to mark your calendars and support the nations best as they try to tame the waters on Lake of the Ozarks.

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