

Back Lashes

By BRUCE SUBLETT
Battalion Staff Writer

In the last month, I've heard of a string of 20 bass that weighed 81 pounds, a string of 10 that weighed 69 pounds, two ice chests full of white perch (East Texas crappie) that averaged two pounds and a trophy seven-pound six-ounce bass.

All this points out that cold weather fishing pays off in a big way for a fisherman who knows what he's doing. Finding and catching fish when the water is cold is a different game than when the water temperature is higher.

Fish are cold-blooded so their metabolism gets slower and slower as the temperature drops.

As the fish's body temperature drops, its activity slows. A cold fish doesn't feed as often as a warm one, because it doesn't need as much food. When a cold fish feeds, it feeds slowly and with great deliberation. The aggressive tendencies are almost eliminated.

What this means is that the fisherman has to slow down too. Running baits that have to be reeled in a hurry to get deep don't catch many cold-weather bass. Baits that sink quickly and run slowly do. That 81-pound string was caught in 25 feet of water at Toledo Bend on black bucktail jigs barely moving on the bottom.

My personal favorites for cold water are the Little George type baits and spinnerbaits with a twister tail without a skirt. Little Georges work better with the front prong of the treble hook cut off. That keeps them from hanging up. I also substitute a larger spinner blade for the one the bait comes with, to make it easier to feel as it works bottom. Feeling the bait is absolutely necessary, because the slightest deviation from a "normal" feel may mean a strike.

Using a spinnerbait in cold weather means pulling it along the bottom just fast enough to keep the blade turning over. The reason I take the skirt off is to let the bait sink faster.

Finding fish in cold weather is the trickiest part of the process. You can't count on shoreline stragglers to fill a string. Bass and other fish tend to congregate around deep structure when the water gets cold. They won't actively chase a bait, so you have to know exactly where the concentration is. After finding it, you can usually catch several fish in one place. They won't move out.

Finding fish where there is no deep structure is more of a problem. Because shallow lakes and ponds are affected by each change in temperature, the fish will move. Several days of midwinter sunshine can warm the shallow water enough to bring fish into it. On the other hand, a strong front may lower the water temperature so quickly that all fish activity stops.

Welcome back to Backlashes. We'll do a whole bunch of Hawg Huntin' this spring. Hawg Huntin', by the way, is trying to find and catch some big old bass. All you folks who stick with me are in for some tips on how to build balsa running baits for about a dollar each and how to make cheap spinnerbaits out of safety pins. Look for a review of new products and hints about boat maintenance. Tournament reports and lake reports pretty much round out the lineup, but there'll be some surprises as soon as I think of some.

Miller introspective, offers no excuses

Associated Press

Johnny Miller has no apologies for his failure to sweep the two Arizona events for a third consecutive year. "Actually, it may be the best thing for me," Miller said Wednesday after a practice round over the 6,815 yards of gorgeous, seaside real estate that make up the Pebble Beach Golf Links, site of this week's Bing Crosby National Pro-Am Golf Tournament.

"If I'd won again, I'd probably go," he paused a moment, let his body slump, "just go blah like I did before. When you win all those tournaments starting off the year, you kind of have a mental let-down, like you've got it made."

"It happened to me the last couple of years (when he swept both Arizona tournaments and won three of his first four starts). I got off to that great start, really an unbelievable start, both years and then kind of went flat. "Now I'm hungry again. I want to win again."

"Really, I played pretty good in Arizona. I won the first one — Tucson — and finished just one shot out of third in the other one — Phoenix. That's not bad. It's just that I'd played so well before, everybody was expecting too much out of me."

And he has high hopes coming into this unique \$185,000 event — an annual Northern California social hap-

pening familiarly known as "Bing's 35th Clambake."

"This is kind of a second home to me," said Miller, a native of San Francisco. "I usually play pretty good here. I'd say Jack Nicklaus has to be the favorite and I'm probably the second favorite."

The assessment appears to be correct.

Nicklaus, coming off one of the finest seasons of his unmatched career, is making his first start of 1976. And he'll be playing on one of his favorite layouts. He's won this tournament three times and acquired the 1972 U.S. Open crown on the same Pebble Beach Links.

"My goals for the year?" Nicklaus mused. "Well, as always, they're in the major tournaments. But we're at Pebble Beach now. How about starting off the year with a win here?"

Opposing him is the usually strong lineup of the game's best. Among the standouts are defending champion Gene Littler, British Open king Tom Watson, Tom Weiskopf, Hubert Green, Hale Irwin and Billy Casper.

The 168 pros, each with an amateur partner, play one round on Spyglass Hill, Cypress Point and Pebble Beach before the field is cut to the low 60 scorers for the final round on Pebble Beach Sunday.

ABC-TV will provide national coverage of portions of the final two rounds.

Huge center

Walton is not look like average p

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bill Walton doesn't look anything like your average pro basketball player. But the huge center of the Portland Trail Blazers is becoming an awesome force in the National Basketball As-

sociation.

The 6-foot-11 Walton comes on the court with his scraggly red hair tied in a pony tail, a flowing red beard, both knees bandaged, the last two fingers on his left hand and the third and fourth fingers on his right

hand taped to protect dislocations, and his left wrist heavily taped following an early-season fracture.

After the game, Walton can be seen in the locker room with his hair tied in pigtales, putting on his tied-dyed longjohns, a pair of heavy blue pants with a rope-like belt and a de-caded tee shirt.

Looks aside, however, it is Walton's basketball ability that most concerns the Trail Blazers, and in that regard, he is beginning to pay huge dividends on the reported five-year, \$2 million contract he signed with Portland last season after a brilliant collegiate career at UCLA.

"When I'm healthy, I play real good, I think," he said.

Walton, however, has not been healthy very often in his 1½ seasons

with the Trail Blazers.

In his rookie season, he missed a total of 47 games of the 82-game campaign because of a sprained finger, a bone spur on his left ankle, complications from the ankle injury, a strep throat, a sprained ankle, a broken toe, a bruised cheek and a cut eye.

This season, he already has missed 14 games because of the hairline fracture of the left wrist, the dislocated fingers and an ankle injury.

"You keep hoping every injury will be the last one," he said.

When he is healthy, however, he plays like the three-time All-American and two-time Player of the Year he was in college.

Tuesday night, against the New York Knicks, was a typical example.

Although the Trail Blazers scored 104, Walton was a star with 28 points and game-high 10 rebounds and 10 assists. His passing and passing were impressive for a man of his size.

He threw passes beyond the length of the court. He drove through the mid-court and led the Blazers to a found open teammates of the Knicks' defense to get the ball back.

"I thought I played good," he said.

"I missed some, but I think we should have won. I just could have played better. I think we should have won."

Musselman firing ends Squire split

Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — Bill Musselman's nine-week stint as coach of the Virginia Squires has been terminated because of his apparent split with both the players and the front office.

Musselman's troubles began shortly after he succeeded Al Bianchi last Nov. 19 as coach of the American Basketball Association team, whose money woes have made its ABA future uncertain.

An underlying factor in Musselman's woes was his penchant for using few substitutes during a game — a throwback, perhaps, to his college coaching days at the University of Minnesota and Ashland, Ohio, College.

In one game, all five starters played the entire 48 minutes for the Squires. This left six players benched — and unhappy.

The unhappiest of all turned out to be Ticky Burden, Johnny Neumann and Jan van Breda Dolff.

Bothe Neumann and van Breda Dolff later were traded to Kentucky for Marv Roberts. Musselman, furthermore, strongly favored trading Burden, the team's leading scorer with a 22.59 average.

Veteran players such as Willie Wise and Mack Calvin said they wanted Burden kept on the team.

General Manager Jack Ankerson said he felt "we should try to iron out our differences concerning Burden and keep him."

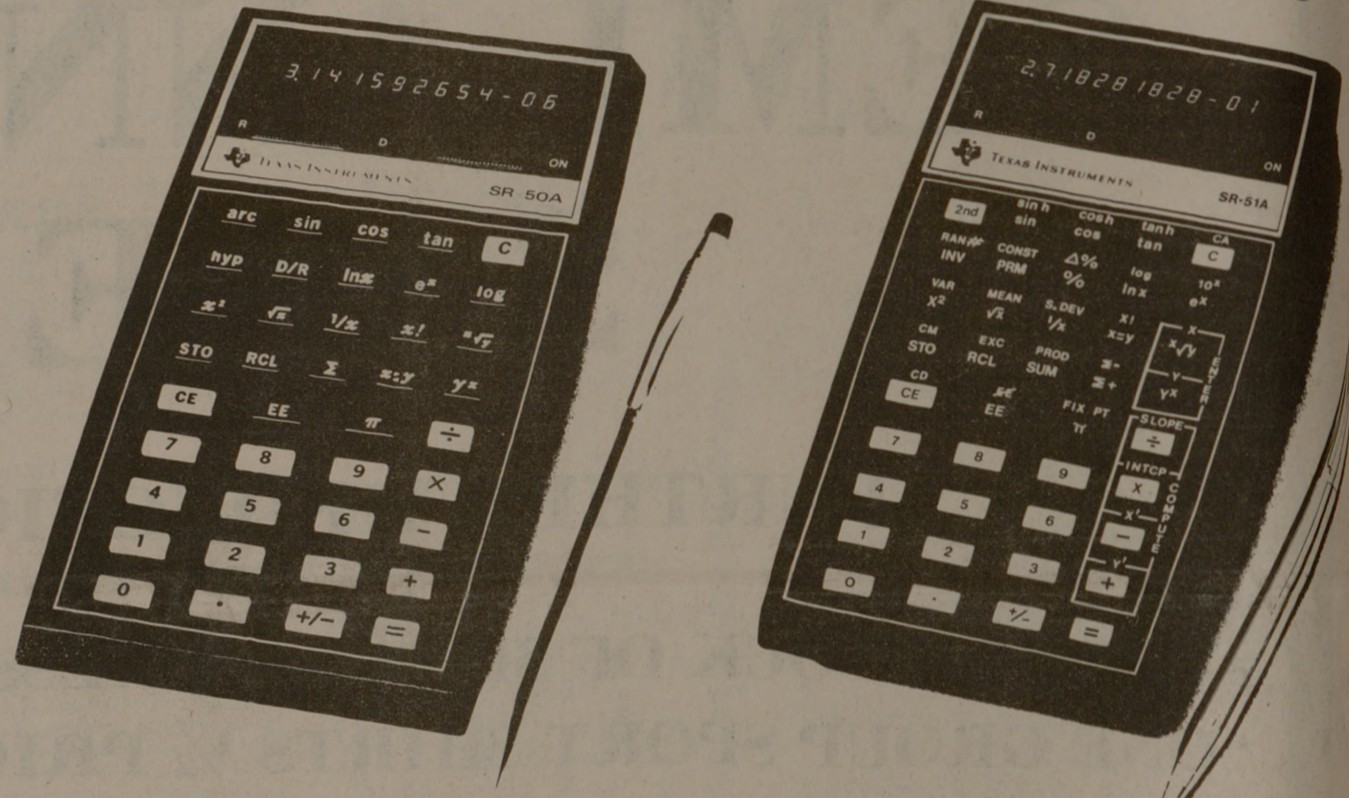
Burden was left home on two road trips, and for one week didn't practice with the team at all.

Any students, or faculty members, who are initiated members of Alpha Tau Omega, please contact Joe Hamrick at 846-7103.

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 - y^x y to the x Power Key — Raises y to the power of x.
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