

A bad day of fishing

There is no such thing as a bad day of fishing. Even on the worst day of fishing it is great just to be on the water. The wind can be howling, it can be raining cats and dogs, if you've got the right gear on to keep you somewhat warm and moderately dry, it's still fun. Don't get me wrong, there have been some days where I have had less fun than others, but still when it is all said and done I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else.

Some people just don't understand that. Fair weather fisherman is what we call them. We, meaning, those of us that don't mind putting up with a little adversity in our quest for the walleye.

A couple of years ago a friend of mine was planning his yearly trip to Rainy River for the special walleye season that occurs just after the ice goes out on the river. The walleyes leave the lake and start heading up the river to spawn. This special season is something you really have to experience in order to appreciate the great lengths some people will go to just to catch a fish.

Aaron, my friend and co-worker that makes this yearly trip asked me if I was interested in going along. I said sure, not knowing quite what I was getting into. I asked if my fishing partner Scott could go and since he and his fishing partner Dan were already going we decided to take two boats. Aaron and his partner in their boat and Scott and me in Scott's boat.

We picked the day, made room reservations, and we were all set. A perfectly planned trip. Oh, I forgot to mention that I also invited my friend Greg to go along with us since we had room for a third in our boat. Greg said he would love to go along. Count me in he said.

Our plan was to meet at a gas station that was on the way since we were leaving from different locations. We were going to meet at 7:00 a.m., drive for about four hours, fish the afternoon bite and get up early the next day and fish all day and head for home right after that.

The night before the trip the weather report for the entire state was predicting high winds, low temperatures and probable snow. I called Aaron to see if he was still going. Yes, he answered. I called Scott to see what he thought. Well, he said, if those guys are still going, he was up for it. I called Greg. His response was, "are you guys crazy"? I took that as a maybe.

I waited a few hours and called him again. I can't tell you what his response was. I think he hung up on me. Maybe it's just me, but I was beginning to think he wasn't going. I called him again and he didn't answer his phone. He must have caller I.D.

I picked up Scott and we hooked up his boat on my SUV. We were right on schedule to meet Aaron and Dan. We sat at the gas station for a while waiting and watching the snow falling all around us. Pretty soon, in pulls another truck with a boat on the back. We were on our way. Some people may have thought it strange to be pulling boats around in the middle of a snowstorm but actually we thought it was a bit exciting.

It snowed the entire four hours it took us to get there. When we got to Baudette, the little town we were staying in, we went right to the bait shop to find out where the fish were biting and to get minnows. The report was not all that good. Fish were hard to find and the ice wasn't completely out yet at the landing. That did not mean there weren't fishermen, just that there weren't fish.

You cannot imagine the frenzy that takes place in such a small, remote, area just because there is a chance you may catch a walleye if you are willing to brave the elements. There were probably fifty vehicles with boats and trailers at the landing when we got there. They were stacked up in line waiting to launch as though it was opening morning in May. This was in the middle of a blizzard.

We got in line, made our way down to the landing, and found that you had to back the trailer over about six feet of shore ice just to get it into the water. Four wheel drive was not a luxury, it was a necessity. Once you got the boat in, then you had to find a place to park the vehicle. The parking lot was designed for about thirty rigs. We were lucky enough to find a spot within a block or two of the water.

After launching, we made our way downriver, dodging ice flows the entire way. We started fishing at about noon. By four o'clock we had caught one small walleye. The motor was so covered with ice from the snow and sleet that Scott had to chisel the kill switch loose in order to get the motor started. It had frozen closed while we were anchored, fishing.

As we headed back up stream to the landing, we ran into a total whiteout. A snow squall was coming downstream and we could not see two feet in front of us. The funny thing is, when we got to the landing there were as many people putting in as there were taking out. Only a walleye fisherman could appreciate that sight. Not a fair weather fisherman in the bunch.

Was that a bad day of fishing? Nope, just a bad day of catching.