

The rules of fishing

As all good fishermen know, there are certain rules of fishing. I don't mean the game laws. I mean rules that you follow among yourselves in the effort to catch fish.

One of the most basic of these rules is when you have a wager on the first, biggest, and most fish caught in the boat the fish has to actually make it into the boat. It's simple logic if the fish doesn't make it in the boat then it wasn't caught.

Try and explain that to my wife's sister Sophie.

She had come up from Atlanta, GA to visit one summer and one of the things she wanted to do while visiting was catch some of the St. Louis river walleye's that she had heard so much about. Of course this meant that I would have to take her fishing. It isn't too much to ask of a good brother-in-law it seems.

I got the boat ready while the sisters gathered the food and beverages for the day. We stopped to gas up the boat and get her a non-resident fishing license. That is required by the game laws, which we all follow to the letter.

We launched the Titanic into the river, put all of our gear in it, and set out for a good day of fishing. It was a gorgeous day. Sunny, warm, almost, 60 degrees. From the very onset she started complaining how cold it was. Remember, she lives in Georgia now. What happened to the girl that grew up in Minnesota? She no longer exists I guess.

I looked in my storage locker and found her a nice warm hooded sweatshirt to still the whining. I mean keep her comfortable. We headed out just a little ways from the landing and made ready to start fishing.

When my wife and I fish together we usually have a little friendly wager on who will catch the first, biggest, and most fish, so I asked Sophie if she wanted to get in on the action. "Sure", she said, "I'll take your money". To say that she is competitive would be an understatement. (She even cheats at cards.)

My first mistake was not going over the rules thoroughly prior to making the wager. The second mistake was rigging her line first like the gentleman I am. She was in the water fishing before I could even get my rod out of the rod holder to put my worm on.

Naturally, she had a fish on the minute her bait got to the bottom. I set my rod back in the holder and grabbed the net so I could help land her fish.

I was explaining to her the proper technique of reeling in a walleye and of course she said she already knew how to reel in fish. As the fish got close to the surface I could see that it

was a nice one. This fish would already win first and more than likely would cinch biggest in our little wager.

Just as I tried to get it in the net the fish made a run, hitting the edge of the net. When that happens, nine out of ten times the fish will get away. That just seems to be another rule of fishing.

To this day Sophie claims I knocked her fish off just so I wouldn't lose the bet. I swear it was just an accident. Immediately she started claiming that the fish should count as the first fish. "No way" I said, "the fish has to make it into the boat to count". It's a good thing her sister is as competitive as she is because she backed me up on that statement. Majority rules.

We continued fishing, she continued complaining, and of course I caught the first, biggest, and most. Needless to say, I didn't let her net any of my fish. I said I was a gentleman, not stupid. You have to know the rules of fishing.