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**Don Wojciechowski,** *Sports Editor*

# Our Town

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## Motor City muskie madness at Lake St. Clair

I like to pride myself in catching big fish relatively close to home. There's not a lot of interest from this writer in traveling to exotic fishing destinations. Lake Michigan does me good for small and largemouth bass. I can even throw in a trophy steelhead, lake trout or chinook salmon when the timing is right.

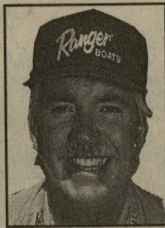
For trophy walleye, I look to Lake Erie or Little Bay de Noc. Spring and fall white bass fishing on the Illinois River is as good as anywhere else I could go. I've taken huge northern pike in Door County as well as a number of Michigan lakes that connect to Lake Michigan via channels.

Now I've found the perfect muskie spot.

It's Lake St. Clair, that 256,000-acre aneurysm I've written about in past articles.

Lake St. Clair lies approximately 20 miles north of Detroit and filters water running between Lake Huron and Lake Erie. It's an easy six-hour drive from the Fox Valley area. My fishing buddies and I headquarter out of the Georgian Inn in Roseville, Mich. (810) 294-0400. It's a quick 15-minute ride to the boat ramp from there and is near quality restaurants for breakfast and dinner.

I first learned of Lake St. Clair from its resident muskie expert, Don Miller.



**Mike Norris**

Miller guides for muskies on Lake St. Clair approximately 120 days a year. His 30-foot BAHA Sport-Fisherman is well equipped to handle St. Clair's unforgiving waters. At a maximum depth of 18 feet, St. Clair can roil up in minutes under stiff winds, catching small boaters by surprise and endangering life and limb.

But I've learned the twists and quirks of Lake St. Clair after having fished with Miller several times. My 20-foot Ranger 620VS with a 225-hp Mercury outboard can move me across its waters quickly in search of safe harbor. And it allows me to fish comfortably in a one-to two-foot chop.

With the knowledge I've gained from several trips with Miller, Aurora's Kim Presbrey and I set foot last week to take on St. Clair's muskies.

We bolted a Riveria Dual Planer Mast to the front deck of my Ranger and laid Riveria Planer Boards over the sides. Utilizing Jim Grandt tarpon rods filled with 40-pound test Berkley Big Game line on Abu-Garica Am-

bassadeur baitcasting reels we spread out a mix of Terminator muskie plugs and Lindy Big "M" crankbaits 20 feet back on OffShore OR-8 heavy tension downrigger releases that we slid down the planer mast line. Then we set my 15-hp four-stroke Mercury outboard into gear and ran our speed up to six miles per hour.

And the muskies came. Nineteen of them in eighteen hours of trolling over a three-day period. Most ran 38 to 42 inches, but we did manage three at 44 inches, two at 45 inches, one at 47 inches and a behemoth 50-incher.

Not bad I'd say. I'd challenge anyone to tell me there's better muskie fishing this close to home.

St. Clair's muskies are hungry and plentiful all summer long. The real secret is finding and catching them. Miller has mastered this and taught me well. His log speaks of 300-350 muskies per season with 25 to 30 going 45 inches or better. During our three-day visit last week Miller guided clients to two 54-inchers.

"I don't want to give anyone the impression that they'll catch a 48-incher or better each time we go out," says Miller. "I do have my share of tough days. Any day I catch four to six muskies of any size is considered a good day."

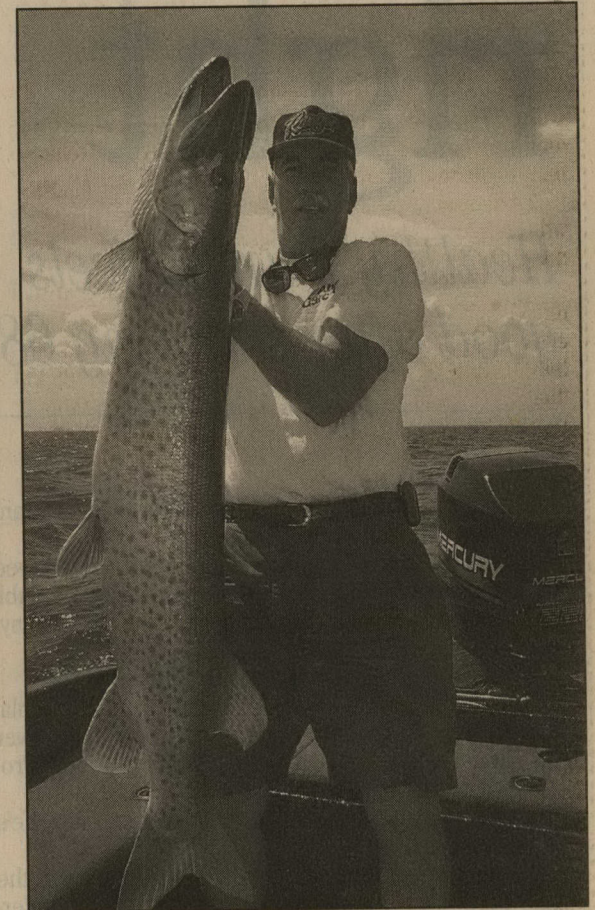
Trolling is the definitive way to catch

muskies on Lake St. Clair. Forget about islands. There are none. Classic humps and saddles, ditto that too. St. Clair's muskies roam in open, featureless waters. They chase around schools of perch and walleyes and feed at will. And most importantly, they suspend in the water column. All of our catches were taken running baits no further than three feet down and 20 feet back behind the boat.

Presbrey and I found and caught our muskies by keying in on areas where huge swarms of newly hatched mayflies covered the surface of the lake. The mayflies were attracting baitfish, and the baitfish were attracting perch and walleyes, we reasoned. Muskies were not too far behind.

If any readers are interested in giving Lake St. Clair a try, do yourself a favor. Hire a guide. The fish are there, but without the proper tackle, boat and knowledge, you'll be spinning your wheels. Several guides operate on the lake; I'd certainly recommend Don Miller. He offers both full-day and half-day charters. He can be reached at (734) 429-9551, or visit his Web site at <http://millers-sportfishing.com>.

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COURTESY PHOTO BY KIM PRESBREY

**Mike Norris struggles to hoist this 50-inch muskie he caught and released last week at Lake St. Clair in Michigan. It was one of 19 muskies he and Auroran Kim Presbrey caught during 18 hours of trolling.**