

# No trophies but plenty of action on Lake St. Clair

OK, I was spoiled. I'll admit it. Last summer I went to Lake St. Clair near Detroit and caught my first muskie — a 53-inch. Veteran anglers told me at the time that it could very well be the largest muskie I'd ever catch in my lifetime.

I was hoping they were wrong. Last weekend, however, a dose of muskie-fishing reality slapped me in the face.

I returned to Lake St. Clair on Saturday with high expectations, based on my memories of last year's trophy fish.

My 30-year-old nephew, Jeff, who lives in Michigan, joined me for the four-hour charter trip with Capt. Don Miller, who also was my guide last year.

As we left the dock at 5:30 p.m., Miller said another 50-inch was not out of the question as one of his customers had boated a 54-inch weighing 35 pounds the day before.

After about 30 minutes of trolling, one of Miller's 8-foot Grant rods bent down and the 40-pound test line began zipping



Doug Goodman

off the reel.

"Fish on." Jeff grabbed the rod and began reeling. Seconds later the muskie flew out of the water about 40 feet behind the boat, violently trying to free itself from the Believer lure.

Five minutes later Jeff had the fish at the edge of the boat. Just as Miller lowered the net near it, the fish thrashed once more and managed to escape the hook.

Miller estimated it to be 44 inches in the 20-pound range.

Jeff was a bit disappointed, having missed the opportunity to be photographed holding the muskie, but he was thrilled with the action of the fight.

The excitement created by

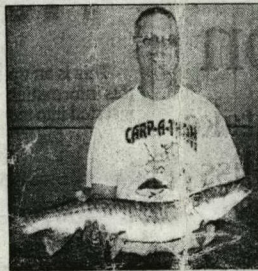


Photo by Jeff Goodman

Doug Goodman holds a 36-inch muskie that he caught and released on Lake St. Clair last week.

the first fish had all but vanished by the time we got our second hit an hour later. Jeff boated this one — a 36-inch — after a 10-minute battle.

As I shot a few quick photos before releasing the fish, I could see in Jeff's eyes the same euphoria of catching his first-ever muskie that I had experienced last year.

Shortly after that I was reel-

ing in my first muskie of the day — another 36-inch — that hit a Dark Frog Wiley.

We later boated and released two other smaller muskies and missed three more hits before returning to shore.

And while we didn't hook into a 50-inch, Jeff and I agreed the four muskies we caught justified the trip and guaranteed our return to Lake St. Clair next year.

## U.S. anglers stay at home

Capt. Don Miller said his muskie-fishing charter business on Lake St. Clair is booming this year. He attributed some of the demand to the effect of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

He believed many anglers were staying in the United States to fish instead of traveling to Canada because they didn't want to go through the added security checks and delays at the border.

## Mississippi walleye biting

Rose Breekha of Big River Bait and Taxidermy in Mount Carroll said last week Mississippi River anglers are getting a

substantial walleye bite.

"They've waited all year for this," she said, noting the walleye are in water 10 feet or less.

She also said the crappies have moved out into deeper water, and the bluegills, bass, northern pike and catfish are biting.

## Good Canada trip

John Milani of Rockford wrote recently about his week-long fishing trip last month to Sandy Point Camp in northwest Ontario, 40 miles east of Dryden.

He was accompanied by his 16-year-old son, Matt, and Kevin Whelihan of Rockford, who has been going to Sandy Point Camp for more than 30 years.

John said the fishing was slower than in previous visits "but we caught fish."

They caught lake trout in the 20- to 26-inch range on Lake Kawashegmuk, and walleyes averaging 17 inches and north-erns on Mennin, Suzanne and Cox lakes.

The fishing highlights were a 33-inch northern and 21-inch

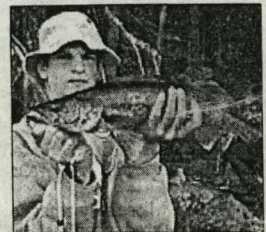


Photo provided

Matt Milani of Rockford caught this 21-inch walleye on Lake Suzanne in Ontario, Canada.

walleye, both caught by Matt.

They also had nightly visits at the camp from black bears, which checked for garbage and ripped window screens as they peered into the cabins. The bears also chewed on minnow buckets.

Doug Goodman covers outdoors for the Rockford Register Star. If you have information you'd like to submit for the Sunday outdoors page, contact him at 815-987-1386, fax 987-1204 or e-mail [dgoodman@sntp.registerstartower.com](mailto:dgoodman@sntp.registerstartower.com)