

OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

~ Pompano 101 ~

12/15/25

It's time to go back to school boys and girls (no vacation for you). It's time to pay attention, take some notes, and trust your instincts. In other words, if you want to get a passing grade in this course, you'll need to do some studying and soul searching. Drifting and casting sporadically isn't going to cut it anymore. Concentrate Grasshoppers. You can do this. If you fail this course, if you fail this challenge, then, you have failed as fishermen.

Now, your homework: First, put your shrimp rod in the closet. Second, don't rig a paddle tail as a back-up. Third, rig 2 rods (light action 7-footers) with 10lb braid on 3000 series reels and 30lb test fluorocarbon 2½ft leaders. Use a pink teaser on your (3/8oz) yellow Willy and a lime green one on your pink. Personally, I cut the small hook from the teaser and let it run the teaser *freely*. With the rod tip down, I gently whip it which brings the hook to the teaser. Keep your drag very loose for you need more finesse than muscle to be successful. More often than not, I hook the pompano right under his chin. I usually out-fish my fellow Buds. While they are getting two hooks untangled from the net (and their fingers), I'm casting and hooking-up. If you prefer the 11 o'clock "pop and sink" method, then go with your comfort zone; and while you are getting hung-up on the bottom, I'll be casting and hooking-up (again). Getting the picture?

Don't leave the dock unless you know the tides and the winds. If you leave the dock in *ignorance*, you are at the mercy of Mother

Nature. Not a good place to be. She loves to mess with your head. If you know what she's "up to" ahead of time, she'll actually help you succeed. She knows that the Pompano are not yet schooling and she'll make you alter your drifts and your approach to the day's conditions. Trust her. Don't drift the exact same spot again even if you hooked-up. Move. Zig-zag the channel and play the wind. If you read your textbook, you know that the Pompano are no longer in the deepest water; so, drift the center of the channel but don't *fish* it. Fish the slopes for they are running in 5 to 9 feet. If the tide is incoming, fish the east side; outgoing, fish the west side. It doesn't matter where you are, the trend is the same.

The hot spots as of mid-December are markers 15 through 19 in Blackburn Bay and 16 through 12 in Robert's Bay (referred to as; The Old-Timers Run). Hit these spots early for the Freedom Boat Clubbers take control after 11am and your life may be in peril. At least they wave as they are buzzing you full throttle in the slow zone. God Bless 'um.

So, students, I have given you more information to succeed in life than I set out to do; but, I need to start passing the torch. Someday, you'll be the teachers and the Grasshoppers of the future will be waiting for you to share your knowledge. Share it. Coveting it is bad juju.

Don't be shy; I'd love to hear from you.

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