

# OFF THE DOCK

WITH D. A. MANN

## ~ Working on My Tan ~

Back in my golfing phase, it was imperative to have a list of excuses in my pocket before teeing off on the first hole. The list would include (but not be limited to): health issues, marital distress, the weather, and/or your “old” clubs.

Fishing has taken a detour and is following the same path as golf. If you are a good golfer and hit the perfect drive, you’re lucky. If you are a good fisherman and hook-up on your first cast; you, too, are lucky. All this being said, if you are good and the fish aren’t biting, you’re still good – just not lucky. Wow! A revelation!

With that last reservoir of knowledge being made available, let’s examine the fishing conditions we’ve endured over the past month. February is generally great fishing from abundant Sheepshead to schooling Pompano. So far, with only a few days left in the month, February has been a bust. Some days you can’t get a bump on a jig or a bite on a shrimp. I can count the slot fish I’ve caught all month on one hand. Sad.

A new set of variables have been introduced since late in September that are not normal, not expected, and not warranted. My list of top ten excuses is as follows:

1. Two Hurricanes
2. Mid-night Pass opening
3. Pollution run-off
4. Massive quantities of debris
5. Extremely low tides with minimal high tides

6. Red tide
7. A full week of cold temperatures
8. Windy
9. Milky incoming tides
10. No inshore bait fish

The excuses lead to noticeable changes:

1. No Pelicans diving
2. No Trout in the flats
3. No Pompano around the Intracoastal
4. Ladyfish are the dominant catch
5. Inshore crabbing is unproductive
6. Few fishermen are on the water
7. Fewer inshore charter captains are on the water
8. The only pleasure boaters are Freedom Boat Clubbers
9. Big cruiser inshore traffic is on the rise
10. Nobody is fishing the docks

As I drift the bays casting on auto-pilot, I can't help but notice the mangled lifts and the broken docks. Roofs with tarps still dot the shoreline; some with boats trapped in their backyards. Land yachts. The dominant traffic in the Bays is the barges either repairing docks or picking up debris that keeps coming from a thousand locations.

If you assimilate (now, there's a word) the above noted twenty items, you will deduce that *fishing has sucked big time*. Sorry, but there is no way to sugar coat it; nor, do I wish to give you false hope. So, unless you are targeting kayakers, your cleaning table will remain "clean". Your tip of the day is: Kayakers tend to run on the weekends and around mid-morning. It is rumored that if you bleed them, they'll taste just like chicken (but you didn't hear that from me).

So, for now, I'll continue to work on my tan.

And I'll long for those days when I come home smelling of fish.

