

SCHOOLING: "CO-to-PRO"

By Martha Goodfellow

Deciding to fish as a Co-angler or a Boater brings up plenty of questions, I know because I've experienced both. In 2009, I decided to fish a lady tournament trail as a Co-angler. I asked my friends that fished the ladies trail and I did research online about what a co-angler needed to know. All the anglers that I have fished with and met have been a very nice and supportive group.



South Carolina Pro Angler,
Martha Goodfellow

Advice – Tips for Co-angler:

- Read and understand the [LBAA Rules](#) and at the pre-tournament meeting, listen for local rules and any additional information. Know your boat number, flight number and what time you and your Pro is due in.
- If you are new to fishing with the LBAA, plan to attend the “Newcomers Meeting” for information.
- Make a list of what you need the day of the tournament – including your **Life Jacket**/tackle/water/food....cash for your share of the boater’s gas/oil cost for the day.
- After you have been paired with a boater, ask questions. Any answers to your questions will prepare you for the tournament and make you more confident. Ask questions about how your boater will be fishing like; Depth? Water Clarity? Current? If they’ll be fishing Slow or Fast? Remember, you know what your “confidence baits” are, fish them.
- Pro Angler, Heather Broom, once told me, “As a Co-angler, have your tackle organized and rods ready to put up when your boater is ready to change locations.”
- Respect your Boater. Be on time.
- Know that your boater plans to “be on fish.” But, it’s fishing. Keep a positive attitude, that will help your boater put you on fish!
- Do not discuss or share any information about how your Pro was catching fish or any information about where your Pro fished. (Same courtesy applies to Pros not sharing how you caught your fish.)
- Net – Discuss beforehand if you’d like your fish netted and how your boater prefers to handle their catch.
- Dress for the conditions. Recommendations for cold days: Layers work great, use your [Save Phase](#) for long rides on cold days, neck gators... Remember your rain gear and boots. On hot days, you might want a neck cooler. Sunscreen....
- Tip: “You don’t know what you don’t know”... ASK QUESTIONS! Ask for tips and advice from others for what they’d recommend to help you be a “good co-angler”, catching fish and being in the “back of the boat.”

Transitioning to Boater... or new Boater

If you’ve fished as a Co-angler, the natural progression is to go Boater. It’s a big step and a bigger commitment. I transitioned to Pro/Boater in 2012. My experience as a co-angler was invaluable. I can relate to what it’s like to fish from the back of the boat. I

have learned a lot, experienced fishing new waters, and have seen a lot of different conditions.

I remember preparing myself to perform as a boater. Just as when I started as a co-angler, I asked lots of questions. Plan to become familiar with your boat. Learn what is necessary to safely handle the boat in all conditions. Time on the water and time behind the wheel, are the best teachers.

Boat handling is a good prime goal. I've driven our boat plenty of times. Usually cruising about 35 mph and just enjoying life. Now, tournament fishing, lends itself to getting to your next spot quickly which means increasing speed. Practice-Practice-Practice. Traveling at higher speeds, you need to experience keeping your eyes out for other boats, navigating safely, and using your GPS while boating. Most important thing to keep in mind is SAFETY!

Thoughts on going boater:

- Read and understand the [LBAA Rules](#). Be sure to listen at the pre-tournament meeting for additional information. Make a note of your boat number. Know what is off limits. Ask questions – especially for safety while navigating on new water. Be sure to know what time you need to check in by.
- Practice and improve boat handling. Practice the speeds you'll actually be driving on tournament days. Be prepared for driving the boat in the rain and all conditions for the lake.
- Make sure your boat is safe and reliable. Do maintenance if needed.
- Respect your Co-angler
- When you know you're about ready to change locations, let your Co-angler know that you're making one more cast. That'll let them know to prepare to be ready to move.
- Familiarize yourself with your electronics.
- Get experience with all controls and buttons on boat. You don't know what you don't know so, ask someone to tell you all the details about your boat.
- Think Positive - Stay Focused - Don't let anyone intimidate you - Don't Second Guess Yourself.
- 3x5 note cards (Patti Campbell's tip) – make notes as needed; “live well functions”, electronics, etc.

As my nephew, Phillip said, “My advice to all boaters and co-anglers is the same....go rip some lips, catch lots o' fish, and make sure a couple of them are whoppers....oh yeah, and have FUN.....it's just fishing not brain surgery :-)”

If you have questions, please E-mail me at: mgoodfishin@yahoo.com

You can visit Martha's web site at www.goodfishin.weebly.com

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