

Monster fish of morning required a fairly long battle for fishermen

by Lee Keck
June 29 2017 8:42 PM



Jack Ruffini of Highland is likely more skilled with a soccer ball than fishing. In fact, it wasn't until after his high school practice soccer game last Thursday when the 16-year-old, his father and I left on our fishing trip to Kentucky.

The plan was formulated nearly two weeks earlier. We thought it was basically foolproof. We were to meet up with noted striper guide Jim Doom of Grand Rivers early the next morning and spend about five hours catching stripers and hybrid stripers below the Kentucky Lake Dam. I had done this same basic trip several times before and always had good luck boating plenty of striped bass.

Two weeks prior to our outing the forecast was calling for sunny skies and virtually no rain. Of course, that was before Hurricane Cindy decided to show up in the Gulf of Mexico. Who would ever think that nearly two weeks later the watery remnants of this hurricane would dump on a handful of hopeful anglers in northwestern Kentucky.

We had one goal. Though Jack was quickly developing into quite a young fisherman, he had never boated a big striper. Unfortunately, that fact still remains true and our goal remains unfilled. Apparently, there is some old saying about mice, men and best-laid plans that still rings true today. And, this is one of those times.

Following Jack's soccer practice, we began our nearly three-hour jaunt to Grand Rivers. Arriving at our hotel at about 10:30 p.m., it required very little time for our heads to begin comfortably resting on our pillows.

Oddly, we weren't the only ones having bad luck this trip. While cleaning fish the day prior to our outing, our guide had an unfortunate incident with a very sharp knife. This required a few stitches at a doctor's office and probably some orders to keep the wound dry. In order to warn me ahead of time, he sent an email that I never reviewed.

Fortunately, he recovered from his accident in time to meet with us at 5:30 the next morning. Though plenty of rain was predicted, nothing had yet fell from the sky.

I found it interesting that Doom's first words to me were about an email I had not yet seen. He said to ignore the previous email because we were going fishing.

Within a few minutes, we were launching his spacious jon boat into the swirling waters of the Kentucky Lake tailwaters. This is when he finally mentioned that the stripers we were becoming a bit difficult to locate and they had caught very few the previous day.

Though the tailwaters were running a few feet high and rather swiftly, no rain was falling and our day looked like it was going to be a good and dry one, despite the forecast.

After netting an hours supply of shad, we began our fishing adventure. Brian, my son-in-law, was the first to hook a fish. Though weighing only about three pounds, the blue catfish fought like one twice its size in the swirling waters.

Then came the monster fish of the morning and it took Jack's bait. It was a fairly long battle. First Jack would gain some line and then the fish would take it back. This type of action resumed for about ten minutes.

Finally, Jack pulled his sinker above the waters surface meaning the fish only had about three feet of line remaining. Just as the final moments reached its conclusion, the line went slack and the fish was gone.

Doom, our guide, figured it to be a rather large (ten-pound or more) flathead catfish. The whole incident troubled everyone except Jack. Within minutes he was again battling another big flathead catfish, and this time he landed it. Though weighing about five pounds, it was nowhere near the previous fish's size.

The morning went on, each of us landing fish from time to time. In fact, the cooler holding our catch was becoming quite full of mostly blue catfish and sizeable white bass. Few sauger, channel catfish and flatheads also occupied spots in the cooler. However, there were to be no stripers this day.

Of most interest to me was the fact that we remained dry, except for an occasional few drops of rain. It seemed like the weather forecasters were again going to be wrong. With about an hour remaining, the skies finally opened up and dropped its watery load. Even this didn't bother us because we were still catching plenty of fish.

Each drift would begin at the dam and continue until we crossed under the first bridge. And, each time we would add a couple fish to our growing catch.

On our next to the last drift, we began at the dam and floated under the first bridge. However, it seem like the bridge had been holding all its water until we passed under it. Then, it seemed like it unloaded about 100 gallons right on top of our heads.

This was a bit more than our rain gear could handle. We decided to call it a day in spite of all the fish we were catching.

Though finishing only a few minutes short of our five-hour outing, Doom still had plenty of fish to clean. And, he made short work of the task in spite of his injured finger.

Once we dried out a bit, the three of us began our plans to get Jack his striper. Of one thing we were sure, these plans would definitely include Doom. Through his endless efforts, we kept catching fish and had a terrific time. We plan to return this fall for another outing.

Anyone interested in learning about Doom's services, can check the internet at Between the Rivers Guide Service or call (270) 703-7337. His guide service is one of the few that can take you out for many different species in the Kentucky and Barkley Lake area.