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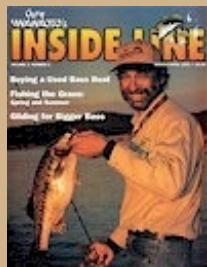


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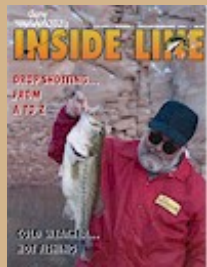
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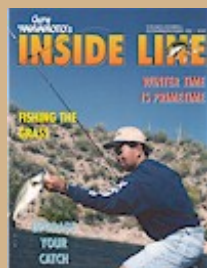
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Split Shottin' For a "Perfect" Day

By Ron Hall

Varying the presentation and rigging makes a difference

The cool air of the October morning felt good as I backed my new 22ft. Champion off the trailer and waved good-bye to my wife. My clients for the day, Mr. & Mrs. Smith and their 7year old daughter, Suzy, had shown up right on time. The weather forecast was for clear skies and no wind. It looked like we were in for another "perfect day" of fall fishing on Lake Powell.

With the 225 Mariner humming in the background, the 40 mile trip to Dangling Rope Marina, our halfway point, seemed to go quickly. Warm coffee and hot chocolate quickly drove away the chill from the cool morning boat ride. Soon we were back on our way to our destination of Neskahi Canyon in the San Juan arm of Lake Powell.

When we came to a stop some 70 miles up-lake from our starting point, little Suzy was getting anxious. She told me that her Dad had taken her fishing a couple of times near their home in northern California, but she had never caught a fish. I told her that was about to change. I explained that two days earlier I had brought a group to this same area and they caught between 60 and 70 fish (Suzy was getting more impatient). But a cold front had since come through and it could have changed everything.

After a quick review of casting techniques they all began casting their single tail grubs toward the rocky shoreline. Mrs. Smith was up front near the submerged rock just off the bow. So she let her Texas rigged [salt and pepper](#) grub (18-20-187) fly and it went just past the rock, nothing happened. She looked at me and said "I guess nobody's home". I asked her to stop reeling in order to let the grub fall down into the dark water on the near side of the rock. A few seconds later her rod tip began to bounce, her eyes got big, and she started shouting "Oh no, what do I do?" Her husband yelled "set the hook". She did so, and the fight was on. The fish was trying to go towards the brush, but she was cranking that handle with all she had. She finally got the smallmouth to the boat where I could lip it for her. I handed the fish to her (a nice two pounder) and said "What a way to start the day." She smiled and said, "Well, I caught my fish, now I can go back to reading my book."

Suzy wasn't real happy with this situation and she gave me a dirty look, as if to say, "come on Captain, I'm supposed to catch the first fish, not my Mom."

The morning sped by after Mr. Smith caught several fish, and little Suzy began to lose interest. I suggested that we take a short boat ride to a shady spot for lunch. We went to an alcove-style overhang near the Great Bend of the Sand Juan. I pulled the boat in under the shade and handed out lunches and drinks. While they enjoyed their lunch, I started thinking up a plan to get little Suzy on some fish.

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You see, fish guiding is often like trying to fit square pegs into round holes. A guide had to match rigging techniques to a client's ability. In this case the best bite was throwing a Texas rigged grub up into shallow brush. But, Suzy, bless her heart, just wasn't able to cast with any kind of accuracy nor present the bait properly. She would just chuck that grub as hard as she could (none of us knew where it was going to land) and then reel it fast until she could see it. Her mom and dad caught some fish because they could cast a little more accurately, and they were good students, using a slow presentation. Suzy just couldn't seem to slow down, she had to get that grub up close to the boat where she could see it. And it's common for a child to be curious, they just want to see what that grub is doing down there. So this called for a totally different technique.

I took Suzy's rod and cut off the traditional Texas-rig and tied on a #5 [Gamakatsu split-shot hook](#) with about an 18" leader, swivel, bead and 1/4 oz. bullet weight. Then I put a 4" [smoke sparkle pepper \(40-20-177\) grub](#) on her hook (in my opinion the best shad imitating color of all) and soaked it in [Yamamoto Attractant](#).

We motored back to the Neskahi Bay area positioning the boat just off a submerged point in about 20ft. of water. I checked my Lowrance X-70 and saw that the point ran out almost 75 yards, maintaining 20ft., but it dropped to about 35ft. on either side.

During the short boat ride from the lunch spot Suzy had been coached on how to effectively use the split shot rig. She was to drag it behind the boat and let the bullet weight drag the bottom, banging rocks and kicking up silt. "Whatever you do," I said "Don't set the hook, just let the fish eat the grub. The split shot hook will hook the fish when the fish turns to swim away." I looked back to see her rod doubled under and her going to town on the reel handle. When she finally got that pound-and-a-half smallmouth to the boat that little girl was so excited she was running laps around my boat. We finally got her calmed down enough to take a few pictures.

Suzy had had enough picture taking, and wanted a new grub on her hook so she could catch another fish. And within a couple of minutes she got another bite, but before she could boat that fish, Mr. Smith was hooked up with a good bass. A double! The excitement level was so high that Mrs. Smith put down her book and grabbed a rod to join the fun. They pulled in fish after fish. I would just get the boat in position and another smallmouth would hit.

Often a guide has to switch horses mid-stream. In other words, change the whole pattern or presentation during the course of the day due to uncooperative fish and/or client's abilities. In this case I positioned Suzy on a long point with a split shot rig but I was actually fishing her bait for her with the trolling motor. By using the graph and the trolling motor I could drag her bait right through the place where fish were holding. So even though this wasn't the best pattern for the day and the fish weren't as big as the ones up in the shallow brush, I was able to help Suzy catch some fish. May times split shotting will save the day.

On other days a split-shot rig may not work at all for a client. I'm reminded of a day last year when my clients, Sam and Mark and their wives Michelle and Jackie, were with me in the Last Chance arm of Lake Powell. The pattern for that day - a split-shot [chartreuse grub \(18-20-169\)](#) fished very slowly. Sam and Mark loved to set the hook but they both worked the bait too fast. No matter how many times I asked them to slow down, they just couldn't. Consequently, they didn't get as many bites as the ladies. And when they did get bit, they would try to set the hook, which doesn't work well for the split-shot hook. Michelle and Jackie on the other hand, were very laid back. They worked their grubs slowly with the sinker dragging the bottom and neither one of them even knew how to set a hook. When a fish bit they would just put pressure on by starting to reel.

The boys, who insisted on a big hook set, weren't doing as well. So after about an hour I made a change. We cut off the split shot rigs and tied on Texas rigged chartreuse [Hula-Grubs \(98-10-169\)](#). They caught a lot more fish even though they were still reeling too fast. It didn't seem to matter though, they were happy with their Texas rigs

instead of messing with that "sissy split-shot stuff".

But back to little Suzy. By the time the afternoon sun was headed down we had worked a half dozen productive points and the Smiths estimated they had caught nearly 75 fish. We all strapped in and before we knew it we were arriving at Wahweap Marina. I eased the boat up onto the waiting trailer and my wife pulled us up the ramp (yes, I'm spoiled). As the Smith family climbed out of the boat, they graciously thanked my wife and me for the best fishing they had ever had and a "Perfect Day".

We said our good-byes and jumped in the truck and headed for the house. As usual, we only had about 10 hours to get home, get the boat ready, re-spool the reels, get gas and oil, get lunches ready and get some rest before we were back on the launch ramp for another "Perfect Day".

Other Split Shot Hook Information:

- [The Split Shot Hook](#) The Advantage
- [Split Shotting](#) The Perfect Day
- [Split Shot Hooks](#) Tips for Using Split Shot Hooks
- [Split Shot Hooks](#) What Size Hooks for What Size Baits?
- [Split Shot Hooks](#) For Lures or Live Bait?

Other Hook Information

- [Hooks](#) Matching the Tool to the Job
- [Hooks](#) One Size Does Not Fit All
- [Hooks for Grubs](#) Best Hook Choices to Rig Grubs
- [Hook Setting](#) Types One and Two
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