

A RAINY MORNING TO REMEMBER

By Ron Nelson

It's funny how ventures you may not expect much from sometimes turn out to be some of the best of your lifetime. This was the case on a rainy August morning last week on Lake Minnetonka.

Dave Jackson, the sole proprietor of Metro Muskies Guide Service, asked me to meet him at the access at 5:45 a.m. last Thursday so we could be on the water at the crack of dawn. The rain, which was forecasted to begin after midnight, held off until the moment we stepped into the boat at 5:50. As we crossed the bay near the area where we planned to start it was as if someone was tossing buckets of water at us from the front of the boat.

When we reached our first location it was raining so hard we could barely see. "This is it," Dave said as we looked at each other, half asleep, through a sheet of rain and early morning twilight. "We raised a fish here yesterday."

I looked at him again, thinking we might be completely out of our minds. "We'll give it a shot for a while, but if it continues we'll head in," Dave said.

I'd fished for muskies only one other time with very limited success. And being a walleye junky, I had to familiarize myself with the monster rod and baitcaster combo.

On the fifth or so cast of the morning, the fish of 10,000 casts boiled on the surface and inhaled my Mud Puppy. I laid into the fish with full force when I felt his weight. Dave yelled, "Hit 'er again."

Before I knew it, we had a 45-incher in the boat for a quick measure, photo, and release.

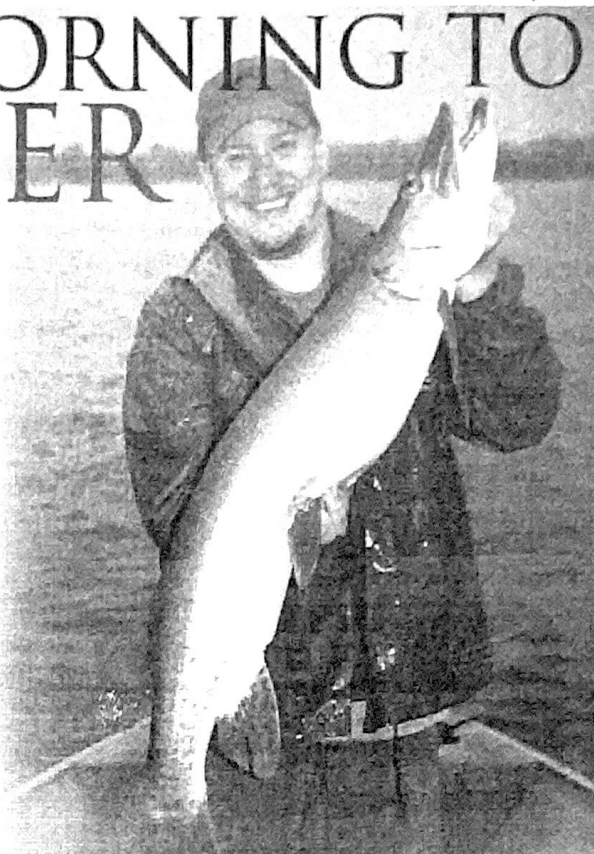
"Wow, 6:15 and we've already scored, and we have a full three hours left. I can feel it, this day is special," Dave said as he laughed his way into another cast.

We attempted to raise another fish on that spot for 20 minutes or so, then opted to move to another point about a mile into the next bay.

"I know there are fish here. This spot has been good to me in the past," Dave said.

No more than a half-hour into working our new location Dave connected with another feisty 45-inch muskie. The fish put up a good struggle as this novice muskie fisherman attempted to net the monster. Once in the boat we took a few quick photos, and released the fish back to her domain.

You hear stories of how these fish are so sought-after, yet rarely caught, so I was more than satisfied with the way things were going so far.



Ron Nelson caught this 44-inch muskie that cleared the water to inhale a surface bait.

Photo by Dave Jackson

"Does it get any better than this?" I asked.

"No, and we have the whole lake to ourselves," Dave replied.

Well, it got better, no more that 300 yards from where we released the second fish.

I was retrieving my bait, and when it got to within 10 feet of the boat I noticed the shadow. "Another fish," I whispered as my heart raced.

I maneuvered the retrieve into a figure eight, but spooked the fish on the second turn. "Did she see the boat?" I asked as my bait dangled only inches above the surface of the water. Before Dave could start his reply, the fish launched at the bait and dove straight under the boat. I did everything I could to contain myself and keep from slamming his expensive rod into the side of the boat.

"I've never seen a fish come out of the water to hit a lure!" he yelled as I struggled to work the rod around the other side of the boat. The fish, angry that his suspended breakfast had hooks in it, put up a good fight. We boated the fish, and were surprised to have another big muskie, a 44-incher.

"Wow what a morning, one for the long-term memory" Dave said. "If we catch one more fish, it will be a record for me in a single day, but these fish are bigger than that day."

It was one of those days when hindsight, for once, was not 20/20. It happened the way you only hear from other fishermen. We could have packed it up early or not gone at all. But, despite the elements, we realized that when you think you shouldn't be out there, get out there!