

Gus Griffiths Story 2022

“What if?” The quote that motivated me to keep going and stay motivated even when fishing was tough. Throughout my high-school fishing career, I have been very fortunate to land quite a few trophy fish of many different species. Oftentimes, you’ll realize that you know where the different master-sized fish live it’s just the matter of grinding it out to get the right one. The best anglers are the ones who are willing to put in the work and aren’t afraid to fail. For me personally, I went on countless different fishing trips for master angler fish (I’d estimate 75 trips just for my senior year) and only had success on 17 of them, which was not a very high success rate (about 22%). Throughout this quest, I have been able to figure out some good strategies to stay in the game both mentally and physically. Number one would be to choose the best times to target fish. Walleyes, for example, run up rivers and go shallow in lakes to spawn in the spring, so the probability of getting that bite of a 26+ incher is much higher during the spring months and can help you reduce the time it takes to land a trophy, which is valuable when trying to target so many different species. Number two on my list of tips is to go fun fishing mixed in with master trips. Fishing with friends or family just for fun is just as important as the actual master trips. Once in a while, you get a little lucky and catch something you weren’t expecting (which fun fact, I have never done but friends or family of mine have), but what’s important is spending time with awesome people, it will keep your head in it. Adding to this point, bring a bump board any time you fish, you just never know! Tip number three is to try new things. Whether it’s a new body of water, strategy, etc, it doesn’t really matter, try it. Coming from a person who is pretty shy about trying new bodies of water it’s worth it. The few times I decided to go for it and try new spots it paid off BIG TIME. One of my first times trying out a new spot was my junior year, a new lake that ended up giving me two different master species throughout the year. The thing is you have to be curious, thinking “what if”. Maybe you catch some fish, maybe not, but the worst thing that can happen is you don’t catch anything, which is a chance I have taught myself to take. My personal favorite tip would be to get friends and family involved. Fishing by yourself is fun, but doing it with people whom you are close to is ten times better. Find a group of family and friends that you trust and go together to spots, it will make fishing long hours much easier. Many times I have gone to spots struggled, went back with others, and done so much better. Maybe 3 guys can switch between lures faster instead of just one, running boats or pulling sleds becomes easier with more people, and most of the time everything works out better. And the final tip, one some may struggle with, grinding spots/species out. Going back to the walleye example, many days can be tough, especially when you 100% know you are in the right place. For this past season, I probably went on 20 trips walleye fishing for my master. I had days where I caught fish ¼ inch short a few times, but success came from grinding it out. Many times, I sat in the one spot I knew that consistently gave up monster walleyes for 12-14 hours at a time without moving. Even though that seems like a lot of time I just kept thinking “what if...”. What if this next cast I hook a master, “what if I get my PB today”, “what if I catch a 30 incher”, you just never know. Eventually, I was able to land my master, a 26.25” walleye after countless hours, thousands of casts, and many different trips, and it was all worth it. I even continued to fish after catching it and caught 4 more 26+ inch fish. After all, the most important thing is to have fun! Don’t put too much pressure on yourself because you don’t want to ruin fishing for yourself. Finally, I just want to give a shoutout to all of my family, friends, and WIFA for helping me, I am truly grateful for all of the memories made and experiences we’ve had.