

Not all flooded trees are created equal.  
Learn how Elite Series pro Edwin Evers  
identifies the sweet spots in giant fields of wood

# Tricks for Tall Timber

By STEVE PRICE  
Senior Writer

**I**F YOU'VE EVER fished Toledo Bend Reservoir, you've probably heard of an area north of the Highway 6 bridge known as the 1215 Flats. And if you've fished that area, you perhaps may have even discovered the same spot Bassmaster Elite Series pro Edwin Evers once found, where he caught 23 quality bass on 23 consecutive casts. It's an underwater point that ends at the edge of a treeline and has a ditch running by it.

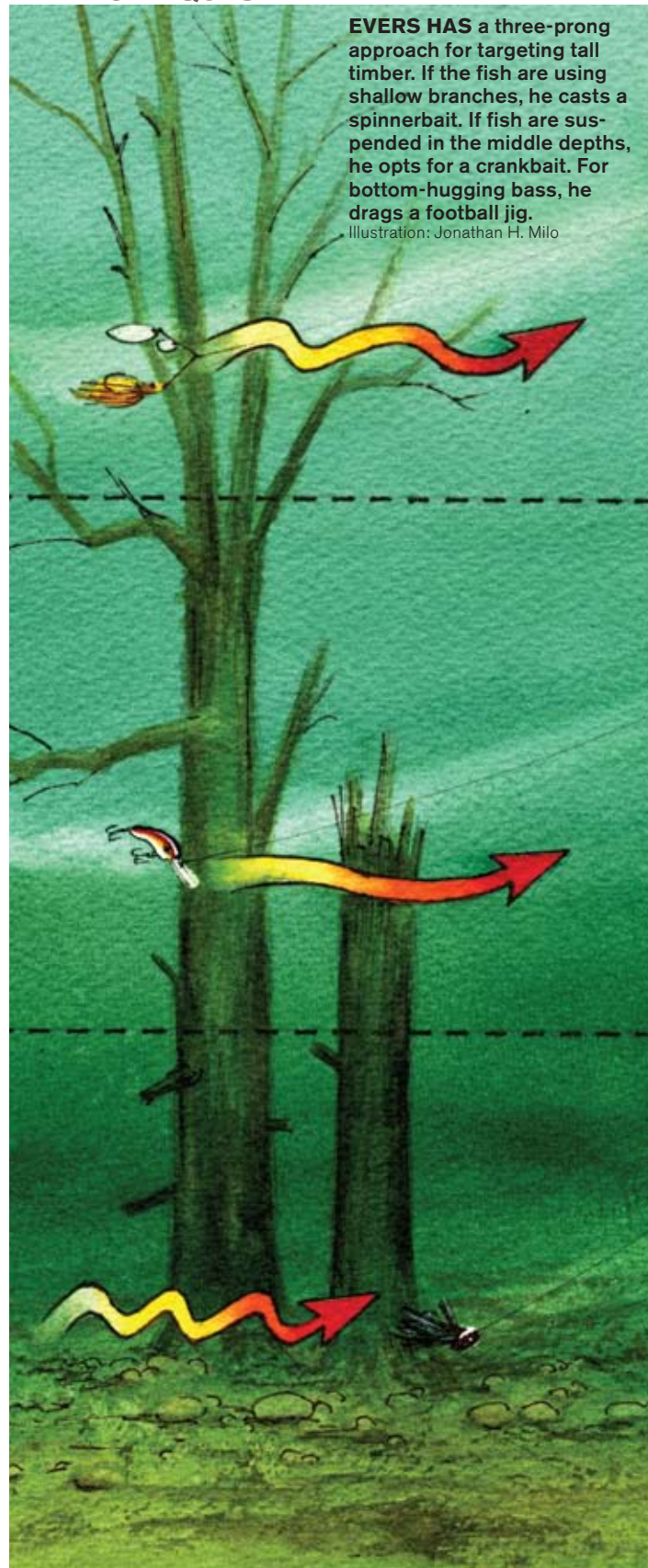
"The key to that particular place wasn't the ditch, the point or even the timber," explains Evers, "but rather, the combination of all three in the same place. I'd gone to Toledo thinking I'd be fishing the timber, as many anglers do, but I had not really done any good until I found that special place, and it made an impression on me.

"Today, standing timber is one of the features I do look for on a lake, but the key is treating the trees as a bonus. The way I fish

*(Continued)*



## THE TECHNIQUES



**EVERS HAS** a three-prong approach for targeting tall timber. If the fish are using shallow branches, he casts a spinnerbait. If fish are suspended in the middle depths, he opts for a crankbait. For bottom-hugging bass, he drags a football jig.

Illustration: Jonathan H. Milo

standing timber is by fishing the structure around the trees, and it works any time of year. Of course, the trees provide some cover for the bass, but the timber can also help you decipher what's down there."

Thus, Evers' first task when he's fishing a timber-filled lake is locating primary structure features within the trees or very near them. His favorite features include points that extend into the trees or end at a treeline; creek channels or small ditches that meander through the trees; roadbeds; and humps or high spots.

"These are pinpointed and identified on lake topographic maps, and so is the timber," notes the 10-time Classic qualifier, "and while I'm looking for these features, I'm also trying to find 'structure within the structure,' which is where two or more of these features may be together, like I found on Toledo Bend. The more you can fine-tune your approach this way, the more likely you are to locate bass.

"I'm not forgetting about the standing timber," Evers emphasizes. "I'm simply narrowing my choices. If you just start trolling through a hundred acres of look-alike flooded trees, you could cast for hours without getting a strike. I know, because that's how I used to fish."

The edges of treelines hold special interest for Evers because he knows something nearly always changes on the bottom that stops the trees from extending further. This can be a variation in depth or bottom composition, or a combination of factors. Bass frequently travel along a treeline, Evers says, just like it's a wall, so these are always places he checks carefully.

With potential fish-holding areas identified and marked on his map, Evers finds them with his electronics by slowly idling through the general area. Along with the structure, he's also looking for baitfish. If he sees forage species, he tries to determine their basic depth.

"Everything in bass fishing involves identifying the basic depth bass are using, and the baitfish, which are more numerous and show up better, will tell you that depth," he continues. "That depth, in turn, then tells you which lures to use."

During the late autumn and winter months, the Oklahoma angler uses three basic lures, depending on the depth of the fish and the type of lake. His favorite is a BD7 Bomber Fat Free Shad, but if fish are suspended in the timber, he may slow roll a 3/4-ounce Bass Pro Shops Lazer Eye spinnerbait through them. When he believes bass are holding closer to the bottom but beyond the range of his crankbait, he drags and hops a 3/4-ounce Booyah football head jig along the bottom.

"The average depth range I like to fish around standing timber is between 10 and 20 feet," Evers

explains, "and while I concentrate on bottom structure, I also study the trees themselves. For example, I never pass up a leaning tree, because it provides more shade, and a line of leaning trees will show you a creek channel. If I can identify the species of the trees, I look for hardwoods, because they usually have more limbs and branches under the surface than pines, and as I look over all the trees, a clump that has higher tops than the others can indicate a hump or high spot, which is an excellent place to fish.

"Isolated trees, or small clumps of trees growing away from the main group, can be productive. I know when we fish the Santee Cooper lakes, you could spend a lifetime fishing the flooded cypress trees, so you have to find something different about them to fish, and isolated trees are often the key."

That day on Toledo, Evers learned another lesson about fishing in timber. He'd caught some bass from that spot with his Fat Free Shad, but when he returned, the fish weren't hitting the plug at all. He was surprised because he knew they were there; he left for half an hour, and then returned to try again.

"The first couple of casts went untouched," Evers remembers, "so then I just absolutely burned the crankbait back as fast as I could reel, and that's when the first bass hit. All the others followed when I reeled fast, so now that's how I always fish crankbaits in timber. This time of year the bass are in big schools, and a speeding lure is one of the tricks that sometimes ignites them to start biting.

"I fish the spinnerbait much slower because I only use it in the timber when I'm after suspended fish. I prefer a heavier lure so I can get it down — normally, I fish it 8 to 12 feet deep — and I don't do a lot of erratic things with it except raise and lower my rod so the lure has a gentle up/down motion and the blades spin differently.

"The football jig is particularly effective when I fish timber and gravel combinations, such as those at Table Rock. The heavier weight sinks faster and allows me to cover water quickly, and I can fish it deeper if I need to."



### DON'T FORGET SWIMBAITS

In timber located in extremely clear water, such as that found at Lake Amistad, Evers likes to use hollow-body swimbaits because bass can see lures better, and the small, tail-thumping swimbaits do look like forage. These lures also work well when fished over the tops of trees that do not reach the surface.

Under these conditions, Evers reels the swimbaits very slowly about 8 feet deep, without any erratic action. Rigging includes 50-pound Excel braid with a 5-foot, 25-pound XPS fluorocarbon leader and is used with a belly hook and either a 5/16- or 3/8-ounce weight. His favorite rods for all types of timber fishing are a 7-6 medium action BPS Pro Qualifier Cranking Stick for the crankbaits and a 7-0 medium-heavy model for the others.

## THE LURES



**WHEN FISHING** treetops in clear water, a hollow belly swimbait is tough to beat.



**EVERS VARIES** the retrieve speed on his Fat Free Shad to identify the presentation the fish prefer.



**IF EVERS** finds rock mixed with the timber, the football jig is his go-to bait.



**THE TOUGHEST** fish to catch on tall timber are those suspended in the middle depths. To coax these fish to bite, Evers finesses a spinnerbait through the zone.



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