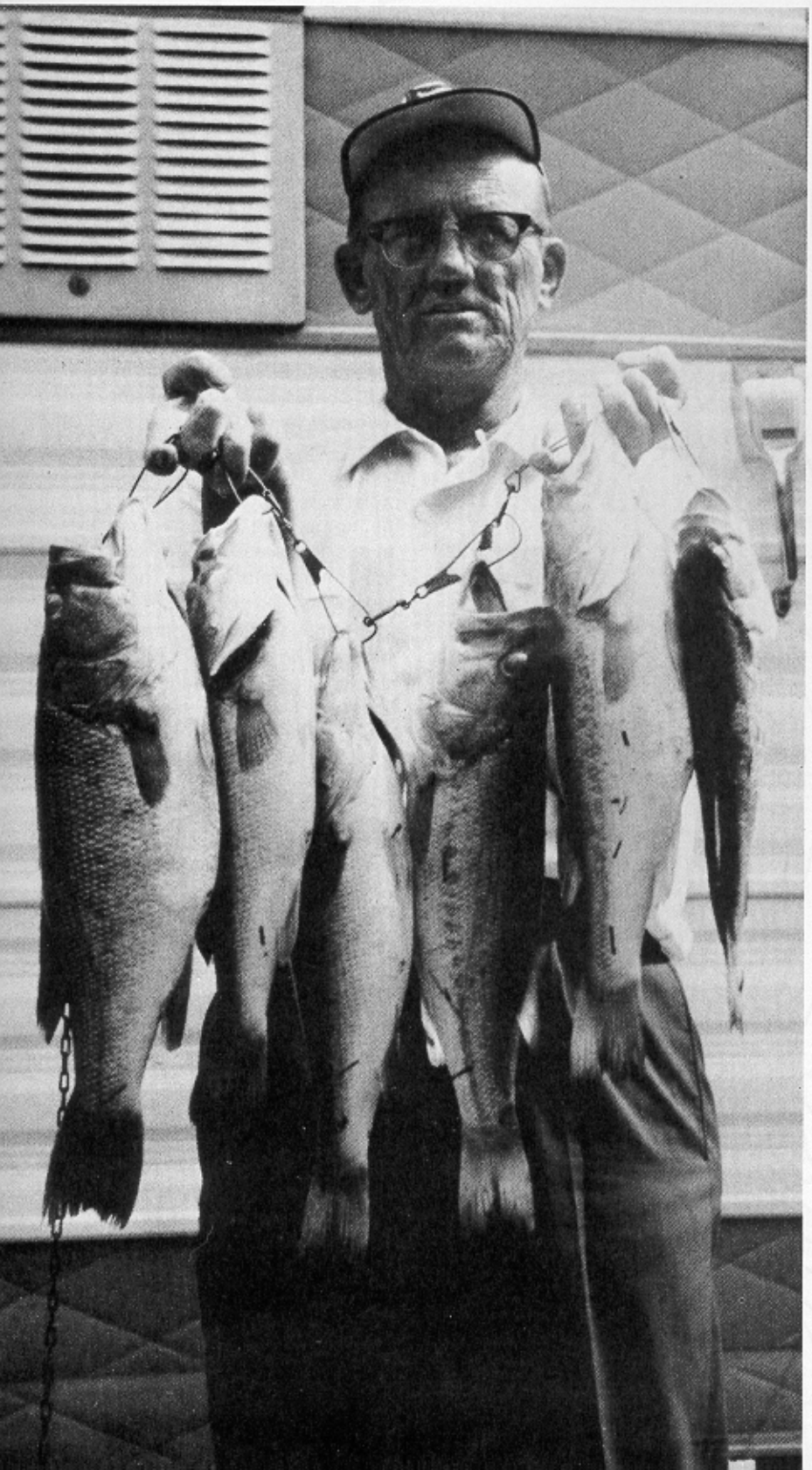
Knowledge Is The Key To Fishing Success

by BUCK PERRY

Part VI



Buck Perry pictured in front of his camper with a limit catch of largemouth bass. Buck doesn't fish "hot" lakes or "virgin waters", he specializes in catching fish like this from waters that most fishermen have given up on. The fish are still there . . . and fish knowledge is all it takes to taken 'em. Fish knowledge, incidentally, is much, much scarcer than big fish!

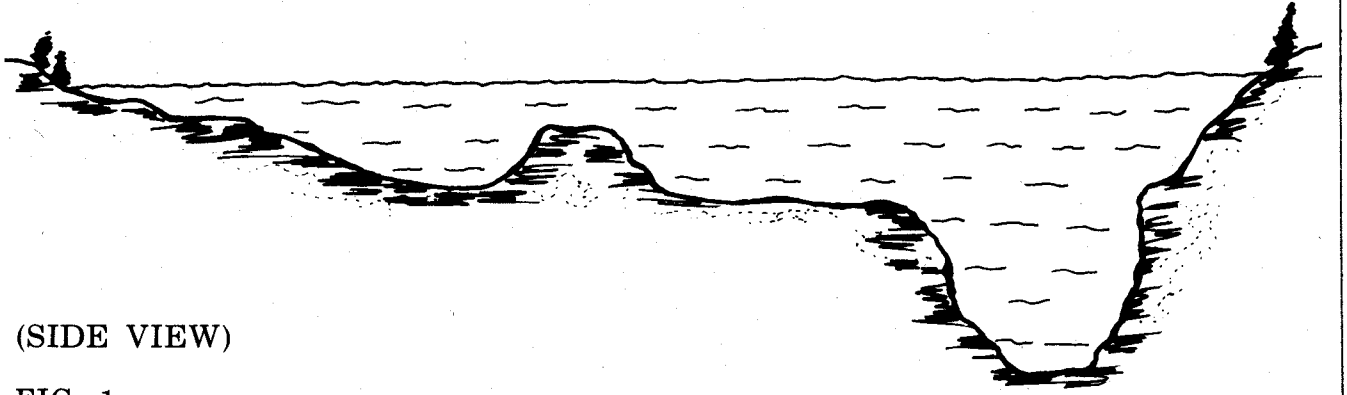
A look of shock and disbelief came over Albert's face when I said, "You will never find any good largemouth bass on this structure."

The above comment came as a result of an invitation to look over a section of one of the T.V.A. impoundments. I had received several requests to come to the area, and in each instance I was told of the great white bass fishing they were having. Emphasis was placed on one particular underwater island, or hump, that had been found some distance from shore. Their comments were, "We are having a ball on white bass on this structure and if you would come over and show us how to take largemouth bass, we would have it made for sure."

After several delays, I finally got to the area and it wasn't long until I had a firsthand view of this particular structure, and after looking it over carefully the above comment was made.

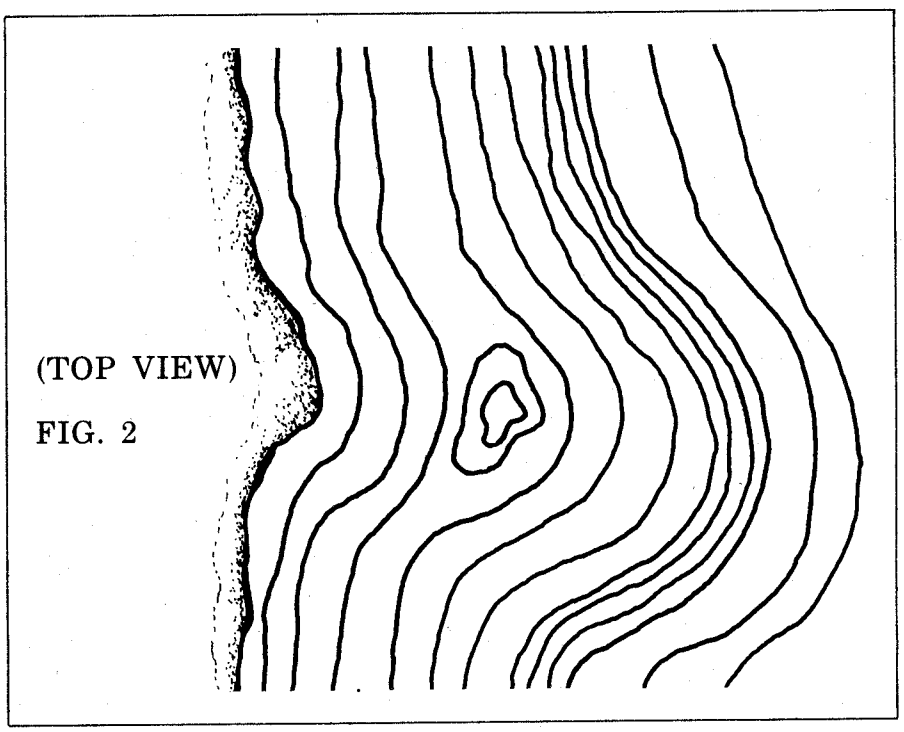
As I explained to Albert and his friends, they had forgotten one of the basic rules of structure fishing; that being that structure *must have immediate access to deep water* in the area, if it was to be productive for larger fish, such as the largemouth bass.

With the drawings which accompany this article, I tried to explain why this particular structure would be productive for roving schools of smaller white bass in Fig. No. 1 & No. 2, but would not produce lunker largemouth bass. But, had it contained certain needed characteristics such as Figure No. 3, it would



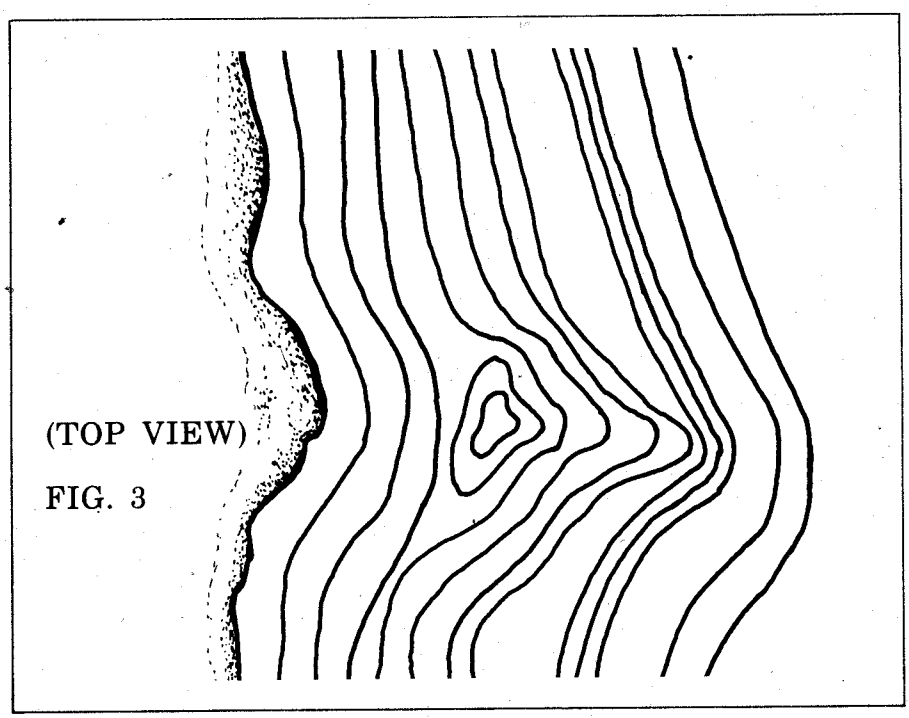
(SIDE VIEW)

FIG. 1



(TOP VIEW)

FIG. 2



(TOP VIEW)

FIG. 3

have been an excellent structure for largemouth bass.

Figure No. 1 shows a cross section of the area with a hump located quite some distance from shore and, also, some distance from the channel. Figure No. 2 shows a top view of this structure. Note very carefully the contour lines surrounding this hump. The contours show that the hump suddenly emerges from a big flat area. The section toward the deep channel drops off gradually, has no crown or bar that extends out from the hump, and there are no breaks on the flat area. A fish would never know this hump exists. There are no 'signposts' leading to it.

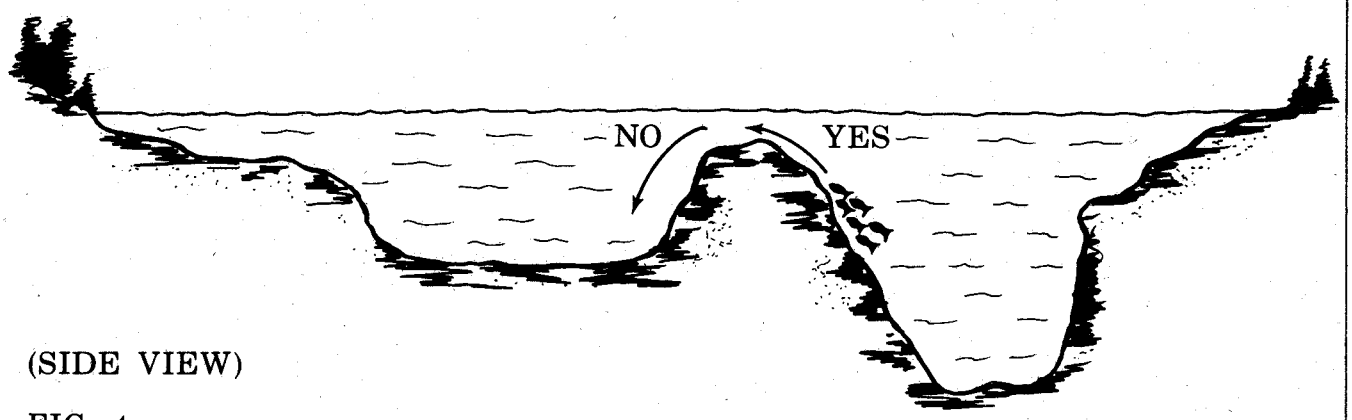
Figure No. 3 is an entirely different matter. The contours show that a nice ridge-like structure (bar) extends all the way to deep water, and has a nice break at the end. This structure would produce.

In looking for good structure in a body of water, a fisherman should always be conscious of the fact that any type of underwater hump or island can be highly productive water. These are structures, breaks and breaklines usually of the first order.

Humps are further important due to the fact that fish are reluctant to go downhill on the backside and strike out across a flat. Thus the hump would be the last stop toward the shallows. (See Figure No. 4)

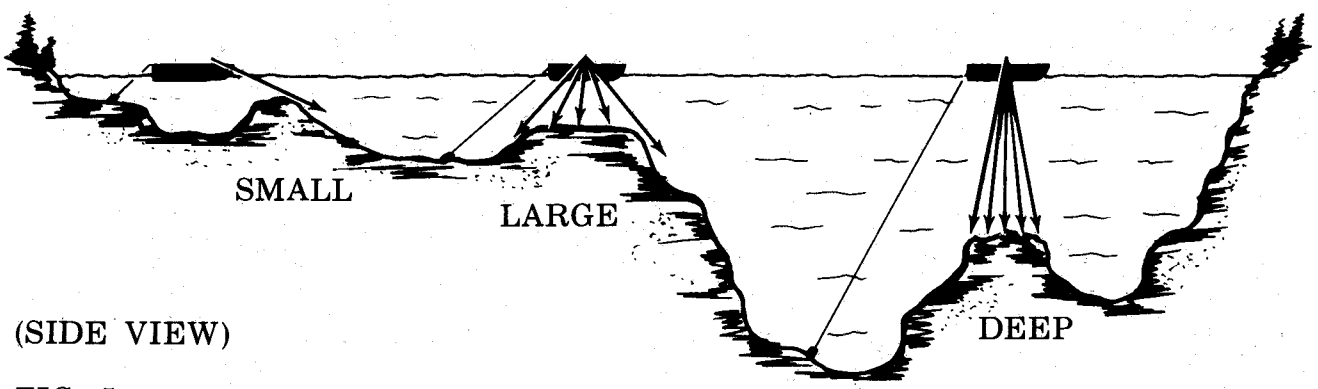
A hump on a shallow water structure is a very important "break" on the structure, and the fisherman should realize that this break will most likely be the concentration point of the fish after migration occurs.

Underwater humps or islands that occur in the deeper sections of a body of water normally come in two categories: (1) Those that come



(SIDE VIEW)

FIG. 4



(SIDE VIEW)

FIG. 5

within a few feet of the surface; (2) Those that lie in, or near, the channels or holes and are 30 or more feet below the surface.

In the first category (1), we will be concerned with fishing primarily AFTER movement or migration. Normally, these will be good structures, not only for presentation of lures and bait, but will also be good because they are surrounded by deep water; and, in most cases, are the only available migration route toward the shallows. It is best to throw a marker buoy on the crown of the hump so as to have a reference point for finding out the shape and direction of the hump. In the case of a rather long, crooked, ridge-type hump, several markers should be thrown at the ends and any place where the hump takes a turn. Outlining an underwater island or hump with markers is important for casting and trolling. Only in this way can proper interpretation be made and to determine how to properly present lures.

Underwater humps or islands that lie deep under the surface are important for those times when weather and water conditions are such that little, or no, migration toward the shallows occurs. If the water is clear, or if there are adverse weather conditions, there could be no migration toward the shallows. And during the winter and cold water conditions, these deep water humps are important and should be worked. Remember, the home of fish is deep water and 30 to 35 feet is always an important depth.

There are several ways to find if humps or islands exist. If they occur in the shallow shoreline water or on structure where the fisherman is working his normal fishing procedures he will find them.

If they are located out in the lake, below the surface, or below the workable depths of the average fisherman, they can be found by checking a contour map; using depth sounders, and (or) deep running lures. Making inquiry of local fishermen or observing any concentration of boats in open water is, at times, helpful. The lay of the land should help determine the possibilities. A deep gorge-type lake is not likely to hold any underwater islands; yet with a flatter, spread-out type with some exposed islands, there is likely to be additional humps or islands that do not come above the surface.

In many reservoirs the water level will change greatly during a season. The fisherman can make it a point to study the lake at these low water periods, noting all good bars extending out from shore, and all humps that would be under water at a higher water level.

In many cases, where the water level varies, markers such as poles have been placed on them to point out they are possible hazards to boaters. The humps and ridges found along old river channels, in many of the delta-type lakes, are marked by navigation buoys. This is also true in case of long bars that extend out into waters that carry heavy boat traffic. In these cases, the fisherman doesn't have to carry many markers of his own as these areas are already marked.

The drawing in Fig. No. 5 shows three types of humps found in lakes and reservoirs. Presentation of lures to these areas can be made both casting or trolling.

In trolling a shallow hump, it would be no different than working any other shallow structure. But if the hump cannot be reached with

A two man limit of walleyes taken from a "hump" in Lake Wisconsin. This was far out in the lake and unknown to most fishermen. The fish, obviously, were quite familiar with it!

conventional gear, due to its depth, then lures will have to be taken down by weights attached to the line, or pulled down by leaded or steel lines. Trolling speeds from fast to slow should be thoroughly checked.

Lures used in casting the shallow humps or islands would be the same as those used on a bar; but on the deeper humps a jump-type lure, such as a jig, weighted worm, etc., would be more suitable for the average fisherman. Speed control would be limited, but better depth control could be had.

Many times the crown of the hump is small. Normally, these smaller humps are located in the shallower water, and in many cases on a good productive bar. In casting them, it is not wise to anchor the boat directly on the hump. The boat should be located off to one side with the anchor in deep water. The casts can be made with most any type of lures suitable to work the depth at which they are found. When working the bottom on a small hump, make the casts across the hump and walk the lure over the top. The same thing would be done if a jump-type lure is used.

When an underwater island or hump is quite large in area, then the boat should be anchored on the crown, and by fan-casting around the boat all sections will be worked.

When working the islands or humps found in deep water, the boat should be placed directly over the structure and, most likely, the lures would have to be fished directly under the boat. If the hump is too deep for anchoring and casting, drift fish it. Go up wind and slowly drift the boat across the area, using the rod tip to produce jumps or action in the lures. Let the drift, or movement, of the boat take up the slack in the line prior to the next reel or rod movement. Allow the lure to sink back to the bottom after each rod movement.

When humps or underwater islands are found in a particular body of water, the fisherman should get "married" to the area and do everything in his power to present lures correctly, both casting and trolling. These are prime areas for fishing, whether shallow or deep. And wise is the fisherman who makes it a point to find whether or not any exist, and who can interpret if they are good or bad and is able to present the type of lure needed with correct depth and speed control. Because if he is fishing one that is no good, or is not getting good depth and speed control with the lures and method of presentation being used, he should expect to catch no fish.