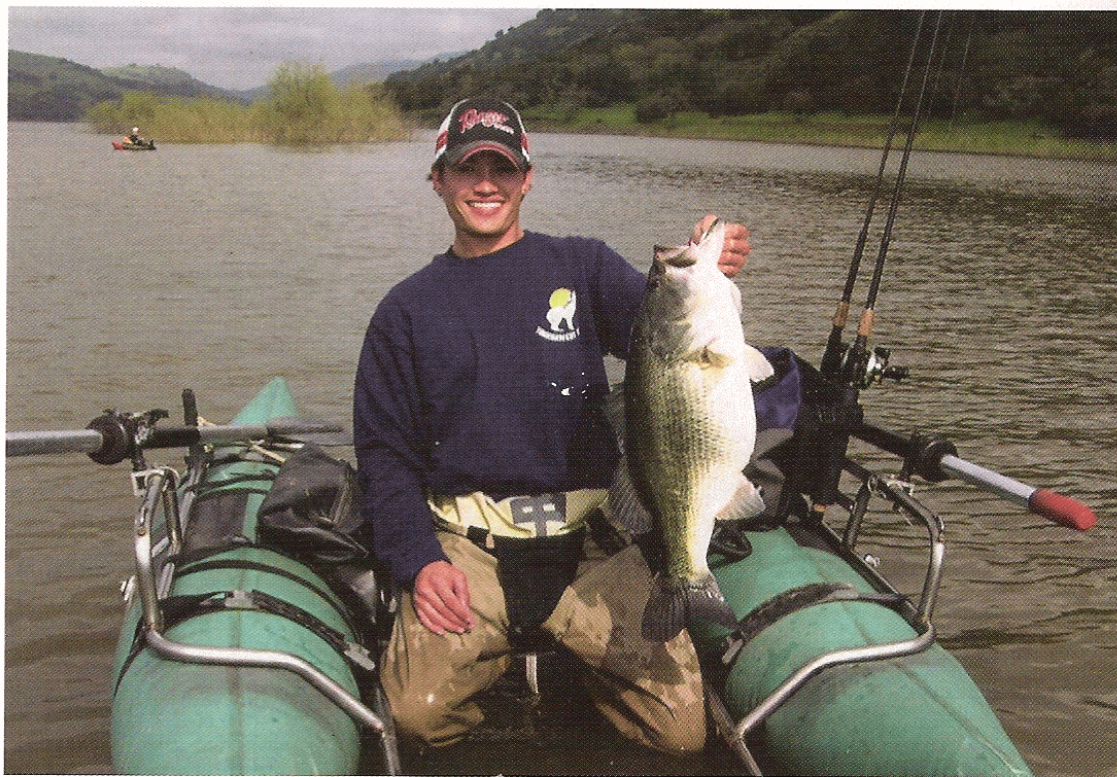


PEOPLE ■

From Kick Boat to Kicker Fish

As a lifelong resident of San Jose, Calif., Chris Zaldain was just a short drive from the Delta, one of the country's hottest bass fisheries. He grew up fishing, but he admitted he knew little about bass. So Zaldain turned to the Internet and landed on the Web site of Bass-N-Tubes, a Bass Federation club that consists entirely of anglers who fish out of belly boats, kayaks and one-man pontoons, also known as kick boats.

"I just liked the idea of fishing out of a kick boat," he said. "I didn't have to fish with a partner, and I could make all the decisions myself. A kick boat is a lot cheaper than a bass boat. So that was a big part of it, as well. It just seemed like a lot of fun."



Turns out, he was right. The club held tournaments on the Delta and Clear Lake, as well as smaller waters that were more suitable to man-powered watercraft. While many of the club's members had a competitive streak, they didn't take their bass fishing too serious, and they were generous with information, especially to a new angler like Zaldain. He was a quick study, and a few years after he joined Bass-N-Tubes, he started fishing major tournaments as a co-angler and won a bass boat in 2005. From there, he turned into a highly-competitive angler and placed third, ninth, and 18th in three out of four Wal-Mart

FLW Series National Guard Western Division events last season. Those high finishes earned him a berth in the Wal-Mart FLW Series East-West Fish-Off held on Lake Amistad in February. He beat Andy Morgan in the Fish-Off to advance to bass fishing's most lucrative event, the 2008 Forrest Wood Cup – not a bad run for a 23-year-old with just seven years of bass-fishing experience.

He credited his fishing skills to his kick-boat days. Because his kick boat was powered only by oars and a pair of flippers he wore on his feet, Zaldain was forced to fish slowly and methodically. He blanketed short sections of shoreline with cast after cast and picked apart any cover he encountered. But he won't have to do that anymore. Since he owns a full-sized boat now,

Zaldain fishes faster than he did when he was married to a raft, much faster.

"I like to run up and down the lake and hit lots of water," he said. "Instead of flipping every stick and tule I see, I've got my trolling motor on high and I'm throwing a crankbait, a spinnerbait, a rip bait or something else that lets me cover a lot of water. It's worked well so far."

That's not to say he doesn't revert to the slower tactics he honed in his club days. He sometimes drops to his knees and eases his boat's nose close to cover, giving him the

same view he had when he was fishing from a pontoon. It's a tactic that gets some odd looks from his boat partners.

Will Zaldain ever go back to a kick boat? He's only been in it twice since he won his bass boat, but he's still a loyal member of Bass-N-Tubes.

"I don't miss the kick boat, yet," he said. "All that rowing was hard on the arms. I'm sure I'll get back into it in the future, but right now, I really enjoy going fast."

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