

BOAT POSITIONING SYSTEMS

By Jack Baggette

It is frustrating to chase redfish on the flats and see nothing but muds (silt kicked up by fleeing redfish). What can you do to avoid this all too common problem? Obviously you have to detect the fish before they see you. Tuck Scott had suggested that Jack try poling up slowly to a suspected pod and stop to fan cast the area before moving further. With a following wind, stopping can be problematic and a challenge with only a push pole. You should continue to stop and fan cast until the fish are located or the area proves fishless. This technique worked pretty well but it has one drawback. Only one guy is getting to fish and the other is getting frustrated watching and getting muddy hands from the push pole. There has to be a better way.

Jack's first solution was the popular Cajun anchor. This stainless steel rod was used to harpoon the bottom and tie off the boat, hopefully short of a pod of nervous redfish. The Cajun proved to be inconvenient and very noisy and it did not always hold when thrown at the bottom. With just one anchor point this tool did not give us the boat control needed to fish effectively. The boat never seemed to be pointed correctly and much fishing time was wasted adjusting its orientation.

Why not install a Power Pole? For around \$900 Jack got a hydraulically powered fiberglass spur that easily halted the boat in shallow water. It left the poler free to fish, with clean hands. Both Ric Brown and Al Crowther had installed homemade stripping baskets on their poling towers, to allow both fishermen to fish together. Jack flattered this idea with his own imitation and began trying to fish from the tower along with the angler on the bow. The same problem with the Cajun anchor soon became evident. One anchor point was not enough to position the boat for optimum effectiveness. An eight foot manual fiberglass pole was added to the mix and this worked fairly well. Its main drawback was the inconvenience to the forward fisherman from setting and readjusting the pole. There still has to be a better way.

Boats with twin Power Poles on the stern began appearing in boating magazines. Was a second Power Pole the solution? Negative, said the budget committee. What about a \$150 manual version, the Wang Anchor, which Ric Brown found? The Wang features a metal sleeve that would permit a manual spur rod to be used to stake off at the stern. This too was expensive, so it was back to the drawing board for Jack.

For less than \$30 Jack came up with a manual way to stake off at the stern with his fiberglass pole. The picture shows the fixture, a triangle braced PVC structure to control the manual pole. The PVC is one and a half inch stock, to match the diameter of Jack's tower frame. PVC tees are cut and anchored to the towers vertical members with hose clamps. The sleeve housing the rod is installed off the PVC tees in a triangle for strength. Notice the foam pipe insulation inside the sleeve, to minimize noise. Jack

elevates the rod in the tube when underway, secured with a spring clamp. After setting the Power Pole he orients the boat relative to the target with the push pole, frees the rod and pushes it into the bottom. Both fiberglass spurs, Power Pole and Jack's manual pole, can withstand considerable lateral force from wind and tide and still keep the boat positioned correctly in skinny water. Using this system, both fishermen can safely fish while staked off. It is relatively easy to retract both spurs and move quietly to the next location. Perhaps Jack has discovered the solution to his frustration of seeing all those muds and no fish.

John Gribb has written many magazine articles on Lowcountry fishing. For those of you who fish alone, his article "Flying Solo" in Oct/ Nov 2006 issue of **Salt Water Fly Fishing** will be very helpful regarding boat anchoring tactics.

The Bottom Line If you want to catch redfish in a boat you have to be able to avoid spooking the pod. Come up with a way to control the boat so that you are hitting them with the fly before they detect your presence. Find your own solution or copy Jack's.

