

Sweet Home G-Ville



It doesn't get any better than fishing this lake in February, and Chris Lane, Guntersville's favorite son, is certain the 2014 Classic will prove it

It's not whether an angler wants to take a three-day mancation to Alabama's Lake Guntersville, it's simply a matter of figuring out how to get there. After all, the 69,000-acre impoundment was ranked No.3 on *Bassmaster's* 100 Best Bass Lakes list; has broken records with 100-plus-pound four-day limits in B.A.S.S. competition; is the site of the 2014 Bassmaster Classic; and is credited for helping Chris Lane win the 2012 Classic.

"I moved to Lake Guntersville in 2009 for a lot of reasons, none more important than using the lake to make me a more versatile fisherman. Had I not made that move and spent countless hours on this lake, I don't know that I would have that Classic trophy on my mantle right now," Lane admitted. When asked how the Elite Series pro would tackle this gargantuan reservoir in mid-February, he was a little timid



to offer details because he plans on adding a second Classic title to his résumé in 2014 and didn't want to offer his competitors additional insight. However, Lane couldn't help but offer some advice.

"This lake is special to me. And if someone drives all day to get here, I want them to experience just how special it is."

That said, here are the Top 3 baits Lane would use in mid-February, the area he would target and how he works the lures.

1. DEEP CRANKIN'

"The fish are going to be staging to spawn," the Classic champ said. "So, focus solely on staging areas such as drops, channel swings and points."

When asked if one part of the lake was better than another, he said absolutely not.

"That's one of the great things about Guntersville, you can catch 'em in the north, east, south and west. You just have to identify the type of water they are using and fish it."

Specifically, Lane looks for 3- to 5-foot flats, and then targets the drops off these flats.

"The fish will stage in 10 to 30 feet of water near a spawning flat. So, the first thing I do is fancast a Luck "E" Strike Freak deep crank, which dives to about 20 feet, to get 'em

stirred up."

If the fish are on the crankbait bite, you'll know it fairly quickly. Lane likes shad colors for clear water and chartreuse shades for dirty water.

2. JERKBAITS FOR SUSPENDERS

If the fish are suspending around these staging areas, Lane opts for a jerkbait. "I never fish a jerkbait with a particular cadence in mind. I let the fish tell me if they want aggressive jerks, or long sits with twitches. Try all types of retrieves until you get bit," he says.

Lane really likes the jerkbait when there's a lot of bait-fish working the drop. His color selection mimics his crankbait choices.

3. THINK PLASTIC

When he thinks his jerkbait is too deep for suspending fish, or his crankbait doesn't dive deep enough for lethargic bottom-huggers, Lane opts for plastics.

"I really like a weightless stickworm, rigged either wacky style or Texas, when the fish are coming up to feed. I let that worm slowly wiggle through the water column. If I see that the fish are on the bottom, I Texas rig the same lure with a 1/4-ounce weight and do a superslow drag."

Lane opts for green pumpkin in clear water and black-and-blue when it is stained.

"One of these techniques will work, I promise," Lane said. "And you can't come at a better time than February through April. This is when the 25- to 30-pound bags are caught. I expect the 2014 Classic to break every Classic record that exists. Every bass angler needs to experience this place."

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before paying a visit to Guntersville, go online and visit the following websites. Here's why:

www.alabamabasstrail.org:

This site offers a lake map, fishing reports, lodging, local guides and TVA dam water release info. You can plan your whole trip, plus buy a fishing license.

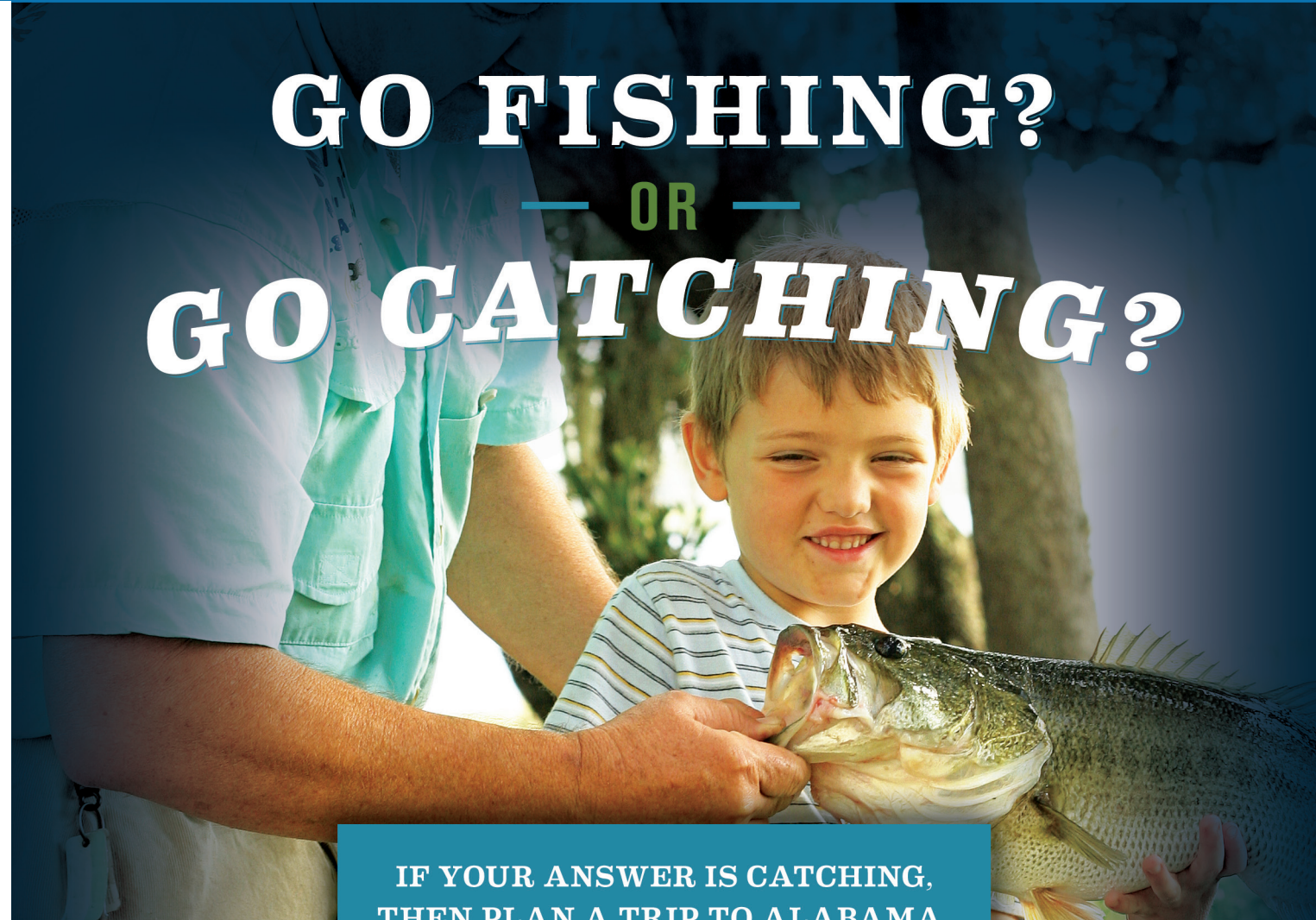
www.chrislaneresort.com:

Chris Lane's tackle shop carries everything you need to be successful on the water, and has anglers in-the-know willing to share fish-catching tips.

www.facebook.com:

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