

On the Water: New Year, New Gear

by Larry Nixon

If you're anything like me, I'm sure that during the recent holiday season someone accused you of being a difficult person to buy presents for. Whether it's birthdays, Father's Days or holidays, no one seems to know what to get me. So, like many of you, I ring in the new year with a fist full of gift cards to my favorite sporting goods stores -- each entitling me to my own little shopping spree. But these thoughtful gifts do more than give you the ability to roam aisle after aisle of your favorite retailer, they give you a chance to load up your tackle box for the upcoming year -- arming you with the tools you need to make 2007 the year you catch the big ones. So before you cash in your gift cards on tacky shirts and talking fish, here's some of the things you're sure to need in your boat this year.

Larry Nixon is a former Bassmaster Classic champion with more than \$1.5 million in career earnings on the BASS Tour. Currently fishing the FLW Tour, Nixon lives in Bee Branch, Ark. A long, cold winter in the closet or the garage can be extremely damaging to fishing line. The normal wear and tear of scraping the line on rocks and stumps, the constant straining of the line as you wrench those big bucketmouths into the boat and sunlight all work together to weaken the structural integrity of the toughest, best-made fishing lines. Most pros respool their reels after every day of competition. Sure, it can be time consuming -- especially when you're tired -- but you don't want to miss the cut or a paycheck because a fish broke your line. At the store, look around and see which line best suits your needs. There are lines designed for every possible condition and technique. So start the year right -- fresh line makes a difference. There's a new Fireline for all you anglers that love this superline as much as I do. It's called Fireline Crystal, it's a white line that is just as good as the original line but with the lighter color it gives you more options with your presentation.

If you were really good this year, maybe you've got enough money on the gift card to get a new rod or reel. Abu Garcia released a new reel this year, truly the strongest, smoothest reel I have ever used. The Revo is a heavy-duty low-profile reel that is the best one Abu Garcia has ever put out. It's perfect for flipping jigs or retrieving crank baits and has all the features you need to land even the biggest fish. Pick one of these reels up and crank it one time -- you'll feel the difference. You'll want a new rod to mount your new reel on, too, so check out the new Berkley Series One rods. They're high quality and very affordable, so even if you don't have enough money on the gift card you won't have to dig too deep into your pocket to take it home with you. And finally, if you've got any money left over, this is a great time of year to pick up some really good deals on baits. Who knows where you'll be able to fish this year or what the fish will be biting when you get there. I like to keep some various sizes and colors on board.

A trip to the sporting goods store is a great way to spend one of the cold winter days that stand in the way of you hitting the water. Take your kids or grandkids with you and pick them up something, too, that way you're sure to have someone to share the experience with this year. So don't let those gift cards go to waste, turn them into something that will help you catch the fish of a lifetime in 2006.

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