



## CCA STAR Tournament insiders share tips for the most exciting saltwater fishing events in the country.

With the approach of summer, CCA members are coming up on one of the most exciting times of year – the STAR Tournaments in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and South Carolina. Although this year’s unfortunate deep freeze in Texas resulted in significant changes for the inshore divisions in 2021, the challenge for all prize-seeking anglers remains the same – figuring out where to be and when to encounter a fish that could change a life.

With millions of dollars in prizes and scholarships on the line, we asked STAR Tournament insiders for any tips and knowledge they could share from previous years to improve the average angler’s odds of catching one of the legendary STAR-tagged redfish this year. And while not one of them gave the tip we all wanted – the GPS coordinates of those released tagged reds – all of them had something useful to share to up the odds of hooking up with a redfish, tagged or not...



## Dylan Sassman, CCA Texas STAR Tournament Assistant Director

*"Often times people tend to focus too much on fishing a "spot," such as a certain flat, reef, shoreline or cove. While effective, in order to catch fish more consistently you need to understand the "spot within the spot." The best way to learn this is by wading and learning the bottom contours of an area with your feet. Not only can you find small drains, ledges or points in an area that are invisible to the naked eye above water, but during the summer you can easily feel the difference in water temperature as an incoming tide pushes into an area.*

*That little drain on an expansive grass flat may only be six inches deeper than the surrounding area, but fish may use it as a highway as well as a feeding area, especially on a moving tide. It could even be a tagged red feeding on that new underwater point you just found!"*



## Leiza Fitzgerald, CCA Florida STAR Director

*"In 2020, the CCA Florida STAR had 24 iHeart Radio Tagged redfish recaptured, so anglers must have been doing something right. Right? Well.... Not so right as no tagged redfish boats were won. In order for anglers to get it right for 2021, they must get registered for Florida STAR and be a CCA member before they hit the water to catch a tagged red and win prizes. That is the critical first step!*

*Using the right bait, is the first tactic for catching STAR reds and shrimp was clearly the best bait for the 2020 recaptures. Seventeen of the 24 recaptures were caught on some variation of shrimp, live or dead on a jig head or knocker rig, three were caught with Gulp! shrimp on a jig head, with only four caught on lures; a MirrOdine, gold spoon and jig head with jerk shad.*

*Another aspect to getting it right in 2021 is making sure the tide is right when targeting redfish. Moving water is key in Florida for catching reds and different regions get the right bite on either the incoming or outgoing tide. To learn which tide is right for your area, do some online reconnaissance for that region.*

*Finally, find the right structure for your planned fishing areas by using charts and Google Earth. Look for oyster bars, grass potholes and mangrove edges - they will hold redfish, maybe not all the time, but definitely a high-probability area. If you are fishing this summer, let's get it right, get registered for CCA and STAR, catch some reds and win some boats."*



## **Rad Trascher, CCA Louisiana STAR Tournament Director**

*"If you want to win the Louisiana STAR, you will dramatically increase your chances if you go to one of the great marinas on the coast and get live bait especially if you are targeting one of the trout divisions. All 12 trout division winners were using some form of live bait and so were the six places in the Ladies Division. And yes, there were a few caught on large, self-caught pogies but most winners used the old reliables - live shrimp or croaker. Almost all of the anglers were free-lining them at rock piles or platforms along the coast.*

*Now if you can't get live bait or chose not to use it like most of our kayak division anglers, the one name we hear the most is Matrix Shad. For example, Mike Malone who caught the largest trout in the kayak division was using the Matrix Shad finger mullet on a quarter-ounce Death Grip Jig Head. The color you chose will be based on water*

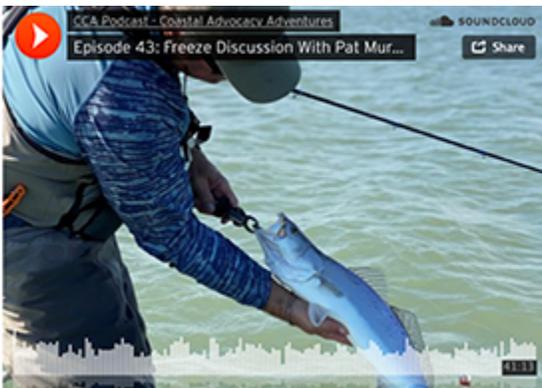
*clarity and other bait in the water, but Matrix Shad is by far the hottest artificial bait in coastal Louisiana right now. It has produced winners in the kayak division, flounder and even the sheepshead division."*

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Get the  
STARS  
Aligned!

Marilyn Monroe caught a 2020 Texas STAR tagged redfish, winning a \$25,000 scholarship, 23-foot Haynie Bigfoot boat, Mercury motor and Coastline trailer package. After the shift to an all-release inshore format after the winter storm, this year an angler in Texas will just clip the tag and release the fish to claim a prize!



## LISTEN NOW: Coastal Advocacy Adventures Podcast, Episode 43: *Recovering from the Texas Freeze, a discussion with CCA President, Pat Murray*

Pat Murray and CCA Texas Advocacy Director Shane Bonnot discuss the impacts of the February 14-19, 2021 freeze event on Texas coastal fisheries, conservation ethics and the responsibility we have as individuals to participate in the recovery of spotted seatrout populations. Pat also provides some historical perspective from his experiences working as a fishing guide through freeze events in the 1980s. **Tune in to the very end to hear the**

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latest news from Texas Parks and Wildlife regarding emergency rule changes. *photo credit: John Blaha*

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time again!*

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