



The ultimate in 'hosted' angling adventures throughout the Amazon

UK Agent and Promotional Management for Amazon-Angler.com

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Taking in one of our Amazon angling adventures? Let's talk tackle – Catfish & Arapaima

Without doubt, most anglers will have large Catfish or Arapaima on their radar whilst in the Amazon. The Catfish get big and unlike those that can be caught in contained fisheries spend their days battling the strong river currents a result of which is their immense strength and stamina. On whole or cut-bait, big Catfish like the Piraiba can be taken way in excess of 250lb and will strip line from your spool in a heartbeat. The Arapaima also behave differently than those within purpose-built fisheries, with extensive lagoons as their habitat, they too have developed incredible strength, and will test both the angler and their tackle to the limit. It is therefore imperative that you have the best and most appropriate tackle when targeting these incredible fish. The information contained within this publication will provide a guideline to the kind of primary and terminal tackle suited to this angling environment and is based on prior experience and 'what works well'. It should be noted that this is NOT an endorsement to any specific manufacturer / product and final selection will be down to the individual.

Rods & Reels



OKUMA 'Nomad' 20-60lb 7' 0"



PENN 'Rampage' 30-50lb 7' 4"



PENN 'Regiment' 30-50lb 7' 4"

Short 'heavy action' boat rods no longer than 7' 10" (2.4m) are ideal and are easy to manage on the boats. Whilst longer rods allow for increased cast distance, 'close to boat' fish management can be difficult. We have used several types of rod rated at 20lb – 60lb and have adequately managed fish way in excess of 250lb. We have seen clients with similar rods in a 1pc configuration, although multi-section i.e. 3pc or 4pc rods are far easier to handle on both international and local flights.



SHIMANO 'Thunnus' 12000



SHIMANO 'Oceanic' 12000BC



PENN 'Warfare' 20LW

For 'fixed spool' reels, go for 12000 (minimum) series bait-runners. Select one with a strong clutch and a smooth drag. You will need to ensure it can accommodate a line capacity of at least 250yds of 100lb braided mainline. Make sure the mainline is fully secured on the spool. For those preferring multiplier reels, again ensure the same line capacity and clutch / drag performance as the fixed spool reels. Type of reel is an individual choice, and both work well.

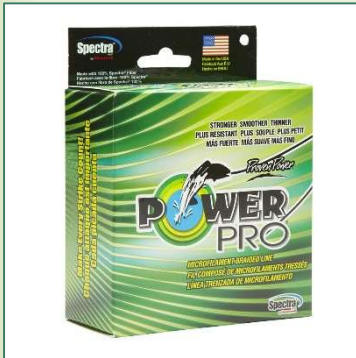


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Mainline



PowerPro



Berkley



Power Pro Max Cuatro (25% Thinner)

Most anglers will have their personal preference based on past use / experience, but the above are a few braided mainlines that we have used successfully over the years. In general, 'moss green' formats work well, although we have seen yellow, red, and other colours which have attracted Piranha!! For this environment, braid needs to be tested at 100lb minimum. Make sure that when loading your spool, there is either a 'mono' backing, or the braid is otherwise secured to the spool, we have seen free running spool packs in the past which is a serious problem and is difficult to fix easily whilst out on the boat.

Leaders



Several of the Catfish species, especially 'Jau' will try and take you into structure. In general, braided mainline is susceptible to damage through abrasion so you will need to splice a 10' – 15' leader onto your braided mainline to minimise the risk of line break. There continues to be debate on what provides the best in abrasion resistance, monofilament, fluorocarbon, or co-polymer. We tend to use monofilament rated at 100lb, although final selection will be down to individual preference.

Knots

Along with the 'usual suspects' there are a couple of knots that you really need to be proficient at: the 'Haywire Twist' and the 'FG'.

The Haywire Twist is a fabulous and almost bulletproof method when using single strand wire (*see section on hook links*) and is the 'go to' knot for that wire link between the swivel and the hook. We are not going to try and explain this in narrative, so would suggest you do a quick google search which will take you to a wealth of YouTube tutorials, providing help and assistance with this.



The FG is one of our favourites, and here's the reason. Like other Catfishing techniques, we do not use a captive lead, mainly due to fish welfare in the event of a break in the braided mainline/leader. So, a running lead is the best way of keeping the bait on the bottom whilst allowing good bite registration and the classic 'run'. With a running lead it is vital that the 'run ring' can easily pass over any knot between the braided mainline and the leader and the 'FG' is an ultra slimline knot widely used within the big game fishing side of the sport.

Again, we are not going to get to *deep into the weeds* with this knot, as YouTube will provide all the tutorials that you need. It's not easy, so practice will make perfect.



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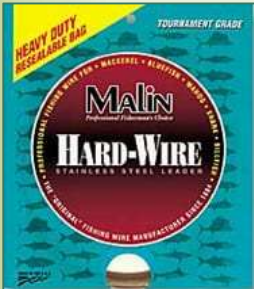
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Leads



In the UK, we have a vast range of leads available to us from the Carp / Catfish & Sea Fishing worlds. A lot of the waters in the Amazon are fast flowing, that's where the Catfish will be, so its important to get your bait down as quickly as possible and then keep it there. We tend to favour leads around 4oz-5oz and flat grippers are ideal. There is an argument that 'pear shaped' leads are easier to get out if stuck in rocks, but 'grippers' have always worked well. Additionally, most of the river bottoms are either rock or sand, so picking coloured / textured leads is also a good move. Make sure you have an appropriately sized run ring, preferably ceramic lined and that the lead has a swivel, to help avoid line twist.

Hook Link Material



One thing to remember!! Depending on the depth you are fishing, there may be Piranha, and they will attack anything that is shiny, so for your hook link, try and get a dark / burnished colour. The 100lb single strand from Malin (left) comes in a coffee colour which is ideal. If you are confident that at the depth you are fishing at the presence of Piranha is unlikely, then a high strength braid is an another option, being more supple than wire and less likely to 'spook' the fish, go for one at 200lb+ such as Kryston Kraken (right).



Hooks – The Business End

As with all tackle, select the best quality that you can, this particularly applies to hooks, swivels, and hook-link material. Hooks from Gamakatsu, Owner and VMC have been proven to be strong and maintain their sharpness in these harsh conditions. Catfish hooks come in differing patterns and the 'J' is one that consistently performs well. Select sizes between 4/0 to 10/0 which will provide a range for all conditions. *It is also wise to carry some smaller hooks, in sizes 1, 1/0 & 2/0 should you wish to target some of the smaller Catfish.* Maintain the quality in swivel selection, these should be rated at 120lb -150lb and the 'ball bearing' type are ideal.



For SS wire hook-links, use the 'Haywire Twist'. Length of hook link is an individual choice, however 10" -15" has proven to work well. For braided hook-links, again roughly the same length, and use knots such as the Palomar, Uni, or Snell.



As the basic setup is similar to that often used in UK Carp or Catfish angling, albeit on 'Steroids', the use of a hair-rig should not be discounted. As this is not widely used on the rivers, if hook-ups are proving tricky, this may provide the edge!! This should be tied using the same 'knotless knot' technique.



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Arapaima

Whilst the standard 'running rig' set up works perfectly for the Catfish, the Arapaima need to be approached differently. The principal change is that the bait is free-lined, so there will be no requirement for a lead weight. Mainline will still be braided, at 100lb minimum with a 10' to 15' Monofilament / Fluorocarbon or Co-Polymer leader, spliced to the mainline via an FG Knot (*Note that the Albright can be used, however it is slightly more bulky than the FG*). As with the Catfish, a braided hook-link should be used, again with a strong swivel. The fundamental difference in the set up however is in the hook, **barbless circle hooks** are mandatory. **But Why?**



Well, despite their large size and prehistoric looks, Arapaima are actually a very fragile fish and can be easily damaged if mis-managed. Over the years we have heard many stories of fish being lost through being gut-hooked and therefore we mandate barbless circle hooks. The specific and unique shape of the circle hook allows the bait to be safely withdrawn from the fish, until it reaches its mouth, where the hook's acute point turns, catching in the corner of the mouth, minimising the risk of a gut-hook and the damage caused through trying to remove it...

The 'take' from an Arapaima is usually very gentle, differing significantly from the screaming runs often experienced with Catfish. In general, once an Arapaima has been spotted and cast to, the reels bail-arm is left open, and the line is held lightly, to feel the fish moving with the bait. Once a level of confidence has been reached that the fish has firmly taken the bait, the bail arm is closed, and the fish is wound into- slowly until the circle hook turns and connects, at which point, a little more vigour can be applied. Note: a conventional 'strike' is not necessary... As for hook sizes, bring a selection i.e. 6/0, 8/0 & 10/0. Also, make sure they are strong, a big Arapaima will easily straighten weak or poor-quality hooks...

Miscellaneous



Another few items to consider taking out with you, L to R, **Permanent marker** pens (black), useful for dulling down any terminal tackle that might have a 'shine' or be otherwise attractive to Piranha. **Tape measure**, for estimating weights, fish dimensions in inches – length x (girth x girth) / 800 = lbs. Not as exact as scales but provides for a good estimate and can be used for Catfish & Arapaima. **Hook file**, the fast flow over rocks and sand will dull your hooks. Take a check before each cast to ensure its still sharp. **Predator floats** are often used when freelineing baits for Arapaima, set them up as you would do for pike in the UK, these do help with bite recognition and allow for baits to be presented throughout the water column.