

SCHMERBACH, GLYNN TOUGH AS EVER



By Doug Newhoff

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DUBUQUE -- From hour to hour, day to day, month to month and year to year, you can count on the mighty Mississippi River to change.

Here's something that doesn't change: If you fish competitive walleye tournaments on the big river, you're going to have to deal with Maury Schmerbach and Mike Glynn.

It's been that way since the beginning, and the Dubuque friends and angling partners are showing no signs of slowing down.

Schmerbach burst onto the scene by winning the first walleye tournament he ever fished when the Masters Walleye Circuit paid a visit to the Mississippi River at Dubuque in 1989.

A couple of years later, he joined forces with Glynn to form a partnership that has been among the most successful in the sport at any level.

"We've been fishing together for probably 30 years," notes Schmerbach, who was a tournament bass angler for some 20 years before the lure of bigger events and bigger paydays convinced him to try competitive walleye fishing. "We've lasted longer than a lot of marriages."

In 1994, Schmerbach and Glynn won the MWC World Walleye Championship on the Mississippi River at Red Wing, Minn. In 1996, they won the first Walleye Anglers Trail event ever contested. In 1998, they were crowned the W.A.T.'s first Team of the Year. In 2005, they claimed the Cabela's National Team Championship on their home waters at Dubuque.

This season, Schmerbach teamed up with Marty Berns of Dubuque for a Masters Walleye Circuit victory on the Illinois River in March, then made a run at a win in the Cabela's National Walleye Tour event out of Prairie du Chien, Wis., before settling for third place.

Nothing has been able to sidetrack their success. Both have won battles with cancer in recent years. Schmerbach is 70, and Glynn is just a few years younger. They admit they can't keep up the pace of their younger days, but they are still one of the top walleye fishing duos in the Midwest, as they proved again last year by winning the W.A.T. Team of the Year honor for the fifth time and second time in three seasons.

"I told Maury I want to keep doing this as long as I can," says Glynn, a pilot and flight instructor by trade. "Obviously, we can't go as hard and as long as we used to. I just don't have the stamina I used to have. But it's still enjoyable. I love it."

Both men grew up fishing the Mississippi. Schmerbach used to walk to the river and fish for catfish. As he grew older, he'd "borrow" his father's truck to get to his childhood playground.

"He'd didn't mind too much as long as I had a stringer of catfish," he jokes.

Glynn's father introduced him to fishing and it quickly became a focal point in his life, too.

And while they've enjoyed more competitive success than most, they've also had to work to stay on top. Today's anglers are better equipped and better educated than ever.

"We've had some success," admits Schmerbach. "It's like everything you do, some years it goes well and some years it seems like you forgot everything you learned.

"But to this day, I really enjoy it. I don't know what it is, but rigging with bait and rigging and pulling Raps, I just love doing it. There are so many different patterns you can fish. It's kind of an art trying to follow those fish and figure out what they're doing."

Since 2004 (earlier records aren't available), Schmerbach and Glynn have recorded four W.A.T. wins, six runner-up finishes and four thirds.

Clearly, they've still got what it takes.

"Persistence and experience," Glynn says of the keys to consistent success. "You've got to do the little things right."