



File
McNary sophomore Kyle Hooper finished sixth at the district meet in the 500 freestyle as a freshman.

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A key factor in this siege of salmon fever, is what happens to the salmon as it moves closer to spawning.

In the ocean they have that sheen or brilliant nickel color that anglers dream of. As they move through tidewater and enter fresh water, color changes.

First, nickel fades and becomes a copper or light bronze. At this point quality of the meat begins to deteriorate. Deep orange/red meat becomes pink. Purists will release this fish, some will keep them and be happy. After a few hours in the fish box, or on the bank, the fish will become darker, possibly ugly.

Next come darker shades, then black, maybe some red. Now the flesh is pale pink or white. Flavor is gone. These fish should be released.

"It's a smoker," is a source of laughs and many stories. Angler lands a 20-pounder, obviously well into the color change. Seasoned anglers would release it immediately. But, this is the first fish he has caught. It's big. His family and friends will be impressed. He has heard all the talk about keeping dark fish. He feels the need to justify keeping the fish. "It's a smoker." Implying that smoking will assure the fish is good to eat.

Seasoned salmon anglers say, "If it's not good enough to eat fresh, it's not good enough to smoke."

After an hour or so on the bank, the fish is ugly. He quietly slips it into a bag and heads for home.

Salmon fever hits its peak with both bank anglers and driftboaters.

Bank access is severely limited on these rivers, forcing bank anglers to concentrate at these holes leading to entertainment if you are an observer, challenging experiences for anglers.

To grasp a view of salmon fever at its peak, picture a deep, wide pool on the river, a strong current flowing in. Al-

der and willow limbs provide cover along the bank.

A convenient parking place on both sides of the river provide easy foot access.

Every available spot on the bank is filled with an angler.

The water is alive with salmon. Mint-bright fish cartwheel out of the water accompanied by big "Ohs and Wows" from the crowd. Fish of all sizes and colors are performing acrobatic stunts.

Huge vees, like scenes out of *Jaws*, stream across the pool. Big fish. Excitement is electric.

A guy walks up, sees all the activity, dashes to his car, grabs rod and reel, comes back and wades into 50 degree water up to his waist, without waders or boots, and starts casting. Salmon fever claims another.

Crowded conditions, inexperienced anglers, lack of river etiquette, improper gear, greed, and lots of fish, equals a recipe for bedlam any minute.

These salmon are fresh out of the ocean and powerful. A hooked fish takes off like a charging bull. With all those lines so close together, 4-5 other lines are tangled in a matter of seconds. At least three guys feel something, set the hook and yell "fish on" and reel frantically.

Now we have a spider web of tangled lines and lures, thirteen people reeling and jerking, some colorfully describing another combatant's ancestry.

Then, things get bad. Driftboaters and "Bankies" have a colorful history of rock throwing, lead slinging and swearing over perceived violations of river etiquette and personal space.

Two unsuspecting driftboaters, rounding the corner, racing to the next hole, are swept into the middle of the chaos by the powerful current.

The ambient temperature rises a few degrees from all the swearing, exchanging of insults and implied blame.

Cooler heads eventually prevail, and after some serious cutting and retying, fishing resumes.

In October, fishing buddy Tom Gerald, of Keizer, and I decide to give it a try. Figure we need all the help we can

get and book a trip with Travis Mattoon, of Adrift Angling. Mattoon is known as one of the top guides on the Nes-tucca.

Mother Nature smiled down upon us. Rain comes, the river rises and begins to fall. October 26 is a beautiful, sunny day.

We meet Mattoon at the Three Rivers parking lot. Boats are lined up waiting to launch.

Mattoon informs us we will make a long drift. We will go upriver and launch at Farmers Creek, float down past here to Cloverdale.

We get in line at Farmers Creek in the dark. Three/four boats are ahead of us.

Mattoon was on the river yesterday. He wants to zip downriver to a hole where he hooked five.

With the electric motor we quietly ease by boats anchored in someone's chosen spot, dark images against the shimmering river surface.

We reach the "hot spot" and there sits another guide and two clients battling a salmon. Disappointed, we move down to the next hole and immediately land a nickel-bright 12-14 pounder.

We are now the first boat to fish these holes.

Before the first boat catches up, we have released two coho, (protected species) and one deep bronze chinook in the 25-pound class.

By 9 a.m. we have three beauties in the box, chrome bright with sea lice. And we have missed two more good bites. We have had a good day.

By now boats are drifting past at a steady pace. Going to be interesting ahead. Mattoon's truck and trailer are five miles downriver.

Three Rivers launch is the only area with easy bank access. Both banks are crowded with anglers. Boats are lined up waiting to take out.

We round the corner below Three Rivers and "Wow!" It looks like Buoy 10 on the Columbia, stuffed onto a river 20 yards wide. Boats are fishing only a few yards apart while multiple boats are trying to work through the maze.

This confirms all that I have read and heard, has to be salmon fever.

Mattoon seems to know at least half of the boaters. We bask in the sunshine and visit our way downriver. To our surprise, we actually see a couple of fish hooked in all of that traffic.

Tom and I keep looking at each other, in some stage of amazement or shock. How could you fish like this?

At Cloverdale we patiently wait in line to take out. Back at Three Rivers to our truck, the parking lot is packed. Late comers had to park boat trailers along the county road.

Three nickel-bright salmon in the box, three released, (one a smoker) thanks to the cooperation of Mother Nature and the skill and guile of our guide.

Checked with Tom recently, no signs of salmon fever. Yet!

SWIM, continued from Page 10

"I think we can really set the standard high this year by pushing hard and continuing to practice really hard."

Sophomore Kyle Hooper, who finished sixth in the GVC in the 500 free as a freshman, returns. Brock Wyer and Harrison Vaughn, who swam on the fifth place 200 medley relay with Biondi are also back, as are Jabez Rhoades and Wyatt Sherwood, who were on the sixth place 200 free relay team. Sherwood, Vaughn and Hooper also swam on the 400 free

relay squad that took seventh.

"The boys will be much stronger than last year," Lewin said. "We have a handful who hadn't swam club before but after last season, they started to swim club. They saw what it takes to get to that next level they were going to be. We'll have a lot more depth than in the past."

McNary opens the season on Thursday, Nov. 30 at 3:30 p.m. in the Kroc Center against Forest Grove.

"I'm just excited to see how we're going to swim in the first meet," Lewin said. "I'm just really excited to see where we're at."

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