

Drysuits Make Sense for Prize-Winning Kayak Angler Comfort, Confidence Help Win *Kayak Wars* Multi-Species Tournament

by Bob Holtzman, President, [Mythic Gear](#)



Daniel "Pondboy" Byrne shows off a nice one on a cold, still morning

Daniel Byrne is a recent convert to drysuits. An accomplished kayak angler and fishing guide in DuPage County, Illinois, who goes by the handle Pondboy, he previously relied on traditional warm clothing, unaware of the danger he could be in.

"For a long time, a wetsuit was the only kind of cold-water protection most anglers could afford, but I knew from research that a drysuit was the way to go," says Byrne, noting that many drysuits cost \$1,200 to \$1,400 – as much as a high-end fishing kayak. "I'm not going to spend that much on an accessory. Most kayak fishermen are pretty economical types. If we weren't, we'd probably be in powerboats," he adds, laughing.

But a Farmer John wetsuit left a lot to be desired, from Byrne's point of view. Just getting into the boat at the put-in, he explains, they just are not effective, as your feet and lower legs get wet. Then, as you paddle, your arms get wet too, and in cold weather that presents a problem: as you sit fairly still while you're fishing, that dampness creeps up and makes you cold.

And it's not just a matter of comfort: it's a question of security. Kayak anglers stash most of their gear behind them, on the rear deck. Reaching it requires twisting the upper body around, which can easily throw off one's balance. Even with a fishing kayak's wide beam, just a moment's carelessness can result in a capsized. Another common capsized scenario occurs when you're fishing in current with the anchor down. Should the kayak get sideways to the current, the anchor line can "trip" the boat. "There is also the danger of wave and boat wake combinations as well as fast current and log jams to avoid," says Byrne.

"I do a lot of fishing in water that's just two to four feet deep," he continues. "But even if you capsized in shallow water, you still end up totally wet." On a cold day, that can result in inconvenience and lost time as an angler may need to return to the put-in to dry off and change into dry gear – or maybe stop fishing for the day. "The farther away from your vehicle the more problems you're likely to have," he says.

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Byrne got a Enki model drysuit from Mythic Gear at the beginning of 2015 – just in time for the start of the Kayak Wars team kayak fishing tournament, an international derby that lasts for most of the year.



“The neck gasket took some getting used to,” he says, “but after a while you no longer notice it.” Overall, he soon found it more comfortable than the bulky outdoor wear he had been wearing, whether sitting in the kayak or wading with the boat along shorelines or over shallows. “You’re dry, so you’re warm,” he says.

But Byrne finds the biggest advantage in the realm of confidence. “You feel much safer in a drysuit,” he says. “I’m not worried about falling in, so I can pay more attention to fishing.”

Seeing the advantages that Byrne enjoyed with his Enki drysuit, Trout Mafia teammate Tom Harris bought Mythic Gear’s Kiwa model drysuit. Being able to fish longer hours in comfort and confidence, the two of

them caught the highest number of fish among the five-member team, and the team went on to win the Kayak Wars worldwide freshwater fishing title for 2015, beating the second-place finishers by 39 percent on points scored. While skill and determination were certainly the biggest factors in Trout Mafia’s huge win, some small part of it might be attributed to the comfort and confidence that a drysuit confers on kayak anglers.

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