

Bold is Beautiful

Particularly, from later summer into fall: When our thoughts turn to attracting and catching large Walleyes.

I'd like you to take a leap of faith and throw out all of your preconceived notions of subtleties. What I am going to outline is definitely not a "Match the Hatch" or finesse presentation option. What we are looking at is getting as loud and gaudy as you can get. This is not meant to bring home a meal of pansized fish. These are tactics used in an attempt to stimulate as many triggering cues as possible in large to very large fish.

Namely: Pulling large, rattling crankbaits. There simply is not a better tool out there to cover ground and increase your odds of contacting mature fish. They allow us to combine all of the key elements needed: Profile, Sound, Feel, Contrast, and Taste/Smell.

Profile comes from the sheer size and hard wobbling action of a full-size lure. We want to present a target worthy of the response a good sized fish. Sound is achieved by using baits with internal rattles. Another overlooked source of noise is from the treble hooks shaking around. Feel relates to what the fish can sense through their highly developed lateral lines. By having a lure that displaces a lot of water the fish can find and subsequently eat our offerings much easier. Contrast is how the lure stands out against both the environment and how it looks "different" from what the fish are used to seeing. Taste/Smell is a quality not normally associated with artificial lures, but can be easily added.

Now that we have all the ingredients: We need to focus on what lures to use, color/pattern choices and how we can improve upon them. The big ReefRunners immediately come to mind. They are the size and profile we are looking for, in addition to having extremely loud rattles. An added bonus is they have several wild color schemes that aid in the standing out from the crowd aspect. Once again, we are going in the opposite direction from matching forage. We want our baits to scream out "Something's wrong with me- I'm vulnerable and thus easy prey"

As good as many of today's lures are right out of the box, there are some simple improvements we can add to supercharge them. The first place I start is by removing the factory split rings and replacing them with Ultimate Lure Savers SmartLinks. They excel at letting us retrieve our expensive crankbaits, minus the hook. But, I have found they offer an extremely valuable side benefit in that the unique teardrop design allows the hooks to swing freer. This causes a great deal more commotion and aids in positive hookups. They also make hook replacement literally a snap.

Which leads to the subject of red hooks: I replace the front trebles with Gamakatsu's Walleye Wide Bend in red. I feel that along with the added motion afforded from the SmartLink, they offer another element of contrast and an aiming point for the fish.

I had mentioned the adding of Taste/Smell. This can be done with liquid attractants, but due to how quickly they wash off, can be better accomplished by tipping your lure. The place to do this is on the front hook, and will not affect the action of the hard shaking lures we are talking about. In fact, in conjunction with the previously mentioned red hook, actually adds to the total package. A 1 to 2 inch section of nightcrawler works nicely and an even more durable alternative would be a small piece of Gulp crawler.

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