

Late-Large, and Larger

By this I respectively am referring to Ice, Chubs, and Oversized Predators. Late ice is great ice, this most of us are keenly aware of. And, it goes hand in hand with fishing big chubs for the heftiest fish any body of water has to offer. I generally target walleye's, but you will also undoubtedly encounter some huge pike as well. This system works equally well for both, just need to beef up your leaders if you target the slimy ones.

You probably recognize the term BBW, well I apply it to a passion that goes far beyond the pursuit of voluptuous women. Namely; Big, Beautiful Walleyes. While walleye's of this proportion can be as elusive as a good woman, they are after all female, distinctly displaying many of the same characteristics. Dangle something big and flashy in front of their insatiable noses and sooner than later...you will have a taker.

First we need to find them and just as important-entice them with something too seductive to pass up. At late ice the finding is generally pretty straightforward and can be summed up in one word-shallow. Yes complex structure is all good and fine, but these fish are genetically programmed to do one thing right now and that is to feed and spawn. We need nothing fancy, just areas with extensive shallow shelves, flats, or even big bays, with access to the comfort of moderately deep water relatively nearby. This provides the big girls with plenty of forage in the form of age 1 panfish along with fully grown minnows and chubs. A few of these quickly slurped down provide a substantial meal.

Northern shorelines are a good starting point as they receive the most amount of direct sunlight and hence warm quicker. Any form of newly introduced water is of major importance as well. Doesn't need to be in the form of dangerous current areas, something as simple as snowmelt seeping in along shoreline and even entering through old holes is sufficient. You can be assured your timing is right when you see the little rivulets entering your fishing holes.

This will kick the walleye's into gear and although increasingly active...they still remain amazingly efficient. Meaning they are not going to scurry around slashing at every little thing they encounter. But, put something big and bold in front of them and you can be certain it will not go unnoticed, or unmolested. Fishing with a group, you can easily lay out an all encompassing trapline from the edge of the first break and right up to the shoreline lip-perhaps from 10 feet on into just a foot or two of water under the ice.

I have relied on HT's Magnetic Polar Tip Ups for years in this duty. By far the most hassle free option available. Rigging is simple yet elegantly effective. Mainline consists of 30 to 50 pound

superbraid tied to a snap swivel and completed with pre-tied lengths of 4 feet of mono or flouro leader (makes accurately resetting after a pike break-off or damaged line a breeze). A number 4 split shot pins a good sized bait in place above a size one or two premium hook with a .08 or 1.1 Mack' Lure Smile Blade placed on top for attraction. Another option is to use a JB Lures Lunar Grub in size two for the same purpose and its' ability to glow for added attraction in stained water and after dark. Enjoy the warmth, sights, and sounds of impending Spring while stroking a few jigging, and wait for the inevitable flags to fly.