

# Simple and Subtle Equals Success

As we enter the early stages of yet another hardwater (ice) fishing season; many of us with a curious and experimental nature begin to ponder new and improved ways in which to put our intended quarry on the sunny side of the ice. Our thoughts quickly turn to finding a “hot” lure to help us with this quest. Unfortunately, these are truly hard to come by.

Most fresh lure innovations do not necessarily break the mold of existing products-nor are they of the earth shattering or ground breaking variety-but are generally a rather simple tweaking to maximize the effectiveness of known and accepted concepts. Of course, what has worked in the past will continue to work; we just need to be diligent in our evolution as anglers and try to stay one step (or fin) as the case may be...ahead of the fish. The vast majority of useful and productive variations I have seen in my fishing career have landed squarely in the “why didn’t I think of that category.”

A strong case to validate this point is a slight modification that I have made to the elegantly simple and ultra effective tactic of suspending a large chub below tip-ups along sharply breaking structure for low light walleyes. These fish will predictably move up into the shallows during feeding forays-particularly at sunset-and the walleyes find it hard to resist strategically located chubs. It’s quite common to be fishing an area that appears totally lifeless during the light of day...only to become absolutely wild when the sun starts to dip below the tree tops.

As good as this is...I have always thought it would be beneficial to add some additional triggering cues to the bait without impeding the natural movements that walleyes find so attractive. Flash and flutter is the basis for the majority of ice fishing presentations-but to date-we have not had a viable option in which to incorporate this into a stationary bait set. Anything added in the form a traditional metal flash lure with our bait attached is simply too much. The substantial weight in relation to the chub is overpowering and the poor fellow will quickly tire and hang all but motionless. The end result is no more movement of the lure, let alone the bait...thus we have sacrificed all of the initial appeal we had sought to gain.

The solution to this dilemma is to borrow an attractor that has proven itself deadly during tough bites while live bait fishing open water, and putting it to good use under winter’s hard shell of ice. Namely, Mack’s Lures Smile Blades. If you’re not familiar with them; what they amount to is a thin delta wing shaped blade made of extremely lightweight mylar material. Even the slightest movement of our chub will cause them to flip, flutter, and spin-creating flash, coupled with the appearance of an impaired minnow (easy meal) to the fish.

They come in numerous colors so you can easily find one that suits your personal preferences. I tend to go with the more metallic patterns as they reflect light well and create the impression I’m looking for. As for size, I would stick to the smallest model, a

.8 inch version that couples perfectly with a large chub. Simply tie a four foot leader of 10 to 15 pound monofilament and slide on a Smile Blade concave side down, directly above a large bead and a premium number 1 hook. Pinch on a size 3 or 4 split shot 12 to 18 inches above and you're all set.

I'm sure you and your buddies have come up with similar ways in which to enhance existing presentations and improve "out of the box" lure systems. The mental part of the game plays the most significant role in determining just how successful we will be on each outing. This is exactly what keeps drawing us to the sport of fishing and ultimately provides us with the enjoyment we seek. For many of us, trying to figure out what the fish want on seasonal, daily, or even hourly basis is the ultimate puzzle...one that we will never totally solve-but nonetheless-true satisfaction lies more in the journey than the destination.

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