

Still Time

Once March rolls around each year and winter shows sign of giving way to spring, most walleye fisherman's minds are on anything but ice. They'll spend their time perusing tackle catalogs, attending sport shows, or maybe even trying their hand at open water fishing below a dam on a major river system. More power to you, if this is your inclination. Many of us diehards prefer to spend the last days of March and at times even into April on hardwater and will not give up the auger until the last possible moment.

No matter what the evidence shows or how much this is talked about, few of you will accept this fact and we...the diehards, happily have no competition for the numbers of fish that will predictably show up in the same easily accessible places...year after year. Better yet, we will be catching larger than average fish with some trophies mixed in, while enjoying the warmest temperatures you'll ever experience on the ice. Downright comfortable and peaceful with a friend or two and not another angler in sight on a sunny 50 degree day.

Contrast this to what you'll experience while jockeying for position amongst the horde of boats from every state in the upper Midwest that congregate like vultures below each available dam. You'll have the honor of playing bumper boats while fighting for position to catch a few small male walleyes or skinny saugers. While you're freezing your butt off, we'll be quietly icing fish that individually can outweigh an entire limit of the "community" fish you're sharing with the multi-state boys. Knowing all this, the decision-for me at least-becomes very simple.

It's my job as an outdoor writer to pass this type of information along, but I'm somewhat hesitant as you don't typically want let the cat (lots of people) out of the bag only to have it end in up in your sandbox. I can take comfort in the fact that almost none of you will bother to take advantage of the opportunity. For the few of you that do, please exercise some restraint: release the big fish after a photo, and keep your spots to yourself. If not, *your* spot will quickly become *everyone's* spot. Once word is out, it will likely be decimated, as nearly all of the large fish will be removed to meet their fate in the bottom of a frying pan.

Presentation is extremely straightforward and can be summed up in two words: Fish Big. Big meaning oversized jigging lures and motions. Where you would normally employ a subtle lift-fall-hold routine: you can now go to the other end of the spectrum with swift, nearly violent lifts and instead of holding a bait in place, pound it. Make it shake and shimmy for a few seconds and repeat. These are not tentative fish and radical motions are the trigger. Realize, they are feeding heavily and aggressively in order to take on some major calories needed for the rigors of the upcoming spawning ritual.

JB Lures Holie Angel has proven itself extremely effective in this role the past couple of seasons. Interestingly, it has a unique vent cut into the body. This serves to force water down and through said vent on an exaggerated stroke, creating a great deal of commotion. This disturbance will call fish in from a long distance to investigate and the deal is sealed by tipping the treble with a large head hooked minnow, allowing it to flutter down seductively. Instinctive and viscous strikes result.

There's still time, if you can force yourself from the couch.

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