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## March to Your Own Beat!

*By Bruce Mirabella*



***“This is a story about going fishing  
and not following the crowd.”***

I went on a pleasure fishing trip last fall up in Escanaba, Michigan at the Bays de Noc. I had fished the water before in tournaments in the past with the Professional Walleye Trail. This time I wanted to relax and fish a little without the stress and pressure generated from tournament angling. The weather was good and I could not wait to get on the water.

The fish I was chasing way out in Green Bay in the summer were now located in the north end of Little Bay de Noc.

I stopped in at the local bait shops when I arrived and asked what the bite was doing? Every one said, “Go out in the early evening and pull

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## *Tip of the Month*

### Minimizing Line Twist

*By Tony Glynn*

Here are some tips I use for keeping line twist to bare minimum when fishing with spinners. First, when you're making your harness, be sure to keep the hooks going the same direction. Not doing this will contribute to line twist if you hook the crawler with both hooks. Lay your harness down on a flat surface, keeping your hooks flat and keep the point of the hook facing the same way.

Second, place your top hook in the meaty part of the crawler close to the nose.

I learned last summer from a good friend there is really no need to hook the crawler with the second hook because the force of the water will press the crawler against the hook anyway, thus eliminating the possibility of the loop that you sometimes get when the crawler stretches itself out. If the worm is limp, you get that loop that causes line twist as well.

Large Colorado blades and faster trolling speeds can both lead to line twist as well. Be sure to use a good

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crank baits with lead core until about 1:00 a.m.” Nobody was fishing during the day except on the weekends when the fisherman had no choice. I am not opposed to fishing at night, but I do not prefer it. Tournaments are not at night, and I thought if I can’t catch fish during the day what am I going to do when I need too. Plus I can see better, and it is warmer.

The next day I took a look at the waypoints I marked during the summer, and went to the spots I thought would hold the bigger fish. Well, I got to the first spot and nobody was near me at all. I saw about 10-15 boats way off in the distance. I was wondering what was going on. Why am I out in the middle of no-man’s land alone? I was fishing with local anglers and nobody was within a mile or two of me. After scratching my head for a bit, I decided to just do what I thought might work.

I pulled out my “go-to” baits and trolling rods spooled with monofilament. The first bait I rigged was a Mack’s Lure Wedding Ring Pro Series crawler harness. I then put out three more with a variety of color patterns. I was fishing in about 19-21 feet of water.

I used the 30-15 method with 1.5-ounce snap weights and planer boards. I let out 30 feet of line with the Mack’s crawler harness, and then added the snap weight. Then I let out 15 feet of line before adding the planer board. I then let out another 150 foot of line and put the rod in the holder. I was trolling .8 to 1.2 miles an hour.

It was not long before the first board went completely under the water surface. “Fish On!” I yelled to my partner and he grabbed the rod and started reeling. Once I got the board and snap weight off the line, I

could tell it was a nice fish. We got it in and the walleye measured almost 27 inches! I felt really good about my approach and started to focus on the boards, speed and wind direction.

My partner was not familiar with Walleye fishing so I was teaching as we went.

To make a really long story somewhat short, by the end of the day we had boated more than 30 pounds of walleye. I caught my personal best, and second best of my life on the same Mack’s Lure I started with. The picture at the beginning of this article is of two of the fish I landed. They both are over 30 inches long and more than 10 pounds! They are on my wall now and I can attribute my success to following my instincts and not the crowd.

***“That wonderful day I will remember for the rest of my life.”***

When I returned to the boat ramp, I told the locals at the dock, and the folks at the tackle shop about my experience and the next day my spot was littered with boats. I am glad I could help, but it was nice to know I found the fish and employed a technique that was overlooked by the locals.

That wonderful day I will remember for the rest of my life. I received the In-Fisherman Master Angler Award for the day’s catch. That patch is on my tournament shirt now, and when people ask I tell them the story. The rest of the week came and went with many, many nice fish being caught in my boat. The only baits I used the entire trip were the Mack’s Lure crawler harnesses.

Thanks to Mack’s Lure company for the awesome baits, and I look forward to a great season in ‘08.

## *Cookin' Your Catch*

### Fish Fillet Pizza

*by Bernadine Ayres*

I wish I had a picture of this; it looks as good as it tastes. I took it to a potluck and it was the hit of the party.

#### Ingredients

- 1 chicken bouillon cube dissolved in 1/2 cup water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 6 flounder fillets (about 1-1/2 pounds total)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 8 ounces grape tomatoes quartered, or can of diced tomatoes
- 1/2 cup pitted black olives, sliced
- 2 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley

#### Directions

1. Heat oven to 350°.
2. Place chicken broth and olive oil in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan.
3. In a shallow plate, lightly beat eggs and salt. Place bread crumbs in another shallow plate. Dip fillets into egg mixture and then into breadcrumbs, coating both sides. Place in baking pan, overlap or crowd together as much as possible. Season with the pepper.
4. Sprinkle the tomatoes, olives and mozzarella over the top. Dot with the butter. Evenly sprinkle the parsley over the cheese.
5. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. I have used walleye and crappie; both turned out excellent.

## Catchin' Crappies in the Spring: Smile Blades Can Help

*By Hall of Fame Angler Stan Fagerstrom*



Springtime is crappie time.

This time of the year presents us with some of the best opportunities on the calendar to find crappies that are easy to catch. Where you hang your fishing hat will, of course, determine how successful you are early in the year.

For much of my adult life I lived in Southwestern Washington. A good bit of that time was spent in the Longview-Kelso area of the Evergreen State. In late February I could almost always count on catching crappies in the Columbia River sloughs west of those communities. I learned a good bit about these interesting panfish in the process.

You aren't going to catch crappie anywhere, unless you're aware of where they hang out. Downed timber, pilings, abandoned boat docks, sunken rock piles and brush clumps are all likely crappie hangouts. I've caught countless crappie from every darn one of these fish-holding spots.

Your boat's fish-finding gear can help you find these good eating panfish. I probably don't use mine for that purpose as much as I should. But I find, and you may also, that when I get into areas where there's a good bit of underwater cover my fish locators aren't all that dependable. The buggers lie to me as often as they tell the truth.

An approach that has always worked well for me once I find good looking crappie cover is casting or trolling a small spinner, fly and pork rind combination. Years ago I used to employ a small double-bladed Indiana spinner ahead of the fly. I cut down a bass pork rind strip for use as trailer behind the fly.

Today I take the same approach, but with a different spinner blade. Now I use one or another of the Mack's Lure Smile Blades ahead of the fly and its trailing rind. One of the keys to successful crappie fishing is to fish slowly. You want your spinner, fly and pork rind combination to work its way through and around the cover as slowly as you can.

Mack's Lure Smile Blades make this slow approach so much easier to accomplish. Sometimes the metal blades of the spinner I used to use fell far too fast. The Smile Blades are extremely light and add almost no weight. They also spin and flash with a minimum of movement. I've talked to anglers in the Midwest who've even use them ahead of their minnows while fishing through the ice.

I favor Smile Blades in a chrome finish for this approach to crappie fishing most of the time. I attach my fly and rind behind the smallest of the Smile Blades. Sometimes I use the Smile Blade directly in front of the fly. On other occasions I have better luck positioning the Smile Blade about six inches ahead of the fly and its pork rind trailer.

Use whatever weight is required ahead of the spinner blade. Go as light as you can where your weights are concerned. Why? Because as I've mentioned before you just can't work too slowly when it's crappie you're after.

Almost always this time of year, for that matter on into June, where

you find one crappie there is a cinch to be more. Sometimes the school will be concentrated in just one small area. More than once I've found crappies around a big downed log. Fish on one side of that log and I'd never get a bite, but if I dropped my lure or bait on the other side I had a fish grab it almost every time.

Lets look at some of the things you can do once you've got the school pinpointed.

For starters---s-l-o-w d-o-w-n! Being a slowpoke might not get you by for many of life's activities, but it is an asset when it comes to crappie fishing. As soon as you get a hit or two drop anchor and get a good grip on your patience.

I recall writing a magazine piece years ago. The title of the story was "Public Panfish Number One." The story dealt with crappie fishing. I still think the choice of that story title was a good one. The crappie does indeed rank right up there with America's favorite panfish. They're fun to catch and a delight in the frying pan.

I mention that business about being a slowpoke with good reason. I bring it up because slowing down is one of the keys to success when it comes to consistently putting crappie in the boat. Once you've got them located, I don't care what the lure is, you simply can't fish too slowly.

One of the most successful crappie anglers I ever met did most of his fishing with flies. The way he went about using those flies was unlike anything I was familiar with at the time. I met this fellow, his name was Tom, a half century ago. Watching him fish, which I had opportunity to do from time to time, was a super learning experience.

Tom hung a float on his line and attached his fly to a length of leader beneath the float. He often had his boat anchored over a sunken rock pile. He'd cast his float and fly 20 or 30 feet from the boat, then just sit back and relax. Long minutes later he'd raise his rod tip and slowly take a turn or two of his reel handles. Then he'd sit back again and just wait.

It would have driven me buggy to fish as slowly as Tom did, but I can't



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argue with the results. He caught more and larger crappie than anyone I've ever met. One of the reasons his approach was so effective was that Tom knew where the fish were. He didn't get serious about slowing down until he was positive the crappie he was after were there.

Mack's Lure Smile Blades hadn't

been invented yet when I knew my crappie-catching friend. I know Tom would have used them if they had been. My guess is they would have been his first choice when it came to determining where the schools were located in the first place. He'd have trolled these dandy lightweight blades until he started getting hits. Then he would have anchored his boat and gone to work.

It takes a minimum of movement to cause Smile Blades to go into their light-reflecting and fish-attracting spin. As I've already pointed out, this can be a big help in searching for crappie.

I usually fished for bass on the lake where Tom did his crappie fishing. Now and then I'd set my bass rods aside and run out to the sunken rock pile to see how my friend Tom was making out with the crappie. I never found him without fish. Sometimes he had more large crappies than I'd have believed the lake held if I hadn't had a chance to see them myself.

I asked Tom once why he used the float along with his flies. "I get just about as many hits when the float is just dead in the water," he said. "I learned a long time ago that I had to slow down if I wanted to catch crappie. In fact, sometimes just the slightest movement of the fly is the best way to make the crappies want to grab it."

As I said in the beginning, it's not a bit too early to do some serious planning for your early crappie fishing. Try to catch a time when the water temperature in your favorite lake or pond is rising. Sometimes even the slightest rise triggers a crappie-feeding spree.

Save me a spot at your dinner table when that happens!

**Tip... from page one**

quality swivel before and aft of your diving device. The Mack's Lure USA chain swivel comes in handy in this case.

Instead of tying these directly to your harness, just pinch the loop end of your harness and slide it through one end of the chain swivel. Pull the opposite end of the chain swivel through the top of that loop then pull it snug. This allows you to change Smile Blades without having to cut and retie your harness.

I use at least 15 to 20 pound test fluorocarbon leader material to tie my harness with. The leader material has less stretch and is a bit stiffer than regular fluorocarbon line and is almost invisible in the water.

*Welcome to our new monthly question feature! Feel free to contact us at [bernie@mackslure.com](mailto:bernie@mackslure.com) if you have a question you would like to see featured!*

**Q:** Many Mack's Lure products have interesting and/or unusual names, such as the Ch-Cha spinner rig. How did the Cha-Cha spinner get its name?

**A:** The Cha-Cha is a good example of how some lures get

**Question of the Month**

their names in an unusual way. The folks at the office also felt that the word Cha-Cha was a good way to explain the way the Cha-Cha spinner moved in the water, with a kind of dancing motion.

Additionally, there is a cat that hangs out at the Mack's Lure warehouse in Washington State whose name is Cha-Cha; named after the spinner!

**Photo of the Month**

*We want your photos! Send your photos to [bernie@mackslure.com](mailto:bernie@mackslure.com).*



*Wilber "Willie" Otero of West Richland, Washington was fishing the Columbia River around the Hanford Area of Richland, Washington on February 2, 2008, when he hooked up with this huge walleye. The remarkable fish bit a Mack's Lure spinner and weighed over 13 pounds. The Columbia River remains one of the best places to catch a big fish before most walleye waters of the nation are ice-free.*

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