

Muskie Fever – Part Two

by Captain Don Miller

In my first article, I discussed the basic set-up for trolling for muskies. This article will discuss types of lures and water clarity.

I know, from my own experiences and from what I have observed from other muskie anglers, that there aren't too many of us that don't pack a whole arsenal full of big lures. An angler can become overwhelmed with all the different lures on today's market. It can be very discouraging to purchase a lure for about \$10 and have no idea of when or how to use it.

Several of today's lures are designed and painted to catch an angler and not the fish. I'm sure that many anglers have purchased and tried, without success, a new lure and have continued to carry it with them for years. They either never try it again, or, if they do try it, their confidence in its ability has been shaken.

I have found six types of lures to be the best. The first three are the three body type lures. They are the Believer, Swim Whizz and Wiley. I can't say enough good things about these body-style baits. I have trolled countless hours using these types of lures with great success. They range in size from six inches all the way up to 10 inches. They come in straight body or jointed style. I prefer the jointed style myself.

There are two types of spoons I use. They are the Ivanhoe and the original Lou Eppinger "Huskie Jr.", better known as the Daredevil. Make sure that "Huskie Jr." is stamped on the inside of the spoon, or throw it away. There are many imitations of this lure. Last, but not least, is the Mepps bucktail "Muskie

Killer". I don't care what you say, think, or have been taught, if you want to play hard ball with muskies, you better have this one on hand. There isn't a fish around from bluegills all the way to salmon and muskies that won't bite on a bucktail spinner.

I would recommend that you stick with these types of lures in whatever lake you would fish for muskies. I've had good success with them in lake St. Clair and also in other smaller muskie lakes.

Always use lures that are natural colors. For example, if you're fishing muskies in a lake populated with perch and bass, use a lure with a perch or bass paint job. If the lake is loaded with frogs, break them out of your box and fish with them. Always ask yourself what type of muskie food is plentiful in the lake you are fishing. Stay away from psychedelic or exotic paint jobs. All they do is hook your wallet. If you catch a fish with it, it's probably an accident. There are exceptions to every rule, but leave that to the pros. A novice does better to stay with the natural paint jobs.

I always start my day's fishing with a couple of perch painted lures, a couple of frog painted lures, a couple of wall-eye painted lures and a couple of bass pointed lures. Once I find out which one is hot, I switch them all to that type.

Don't make the mistake of trying to fish for two different species of fish at the same time. For example, I wouldn't recommend running a model 8A Bomber on one side of the boat for walleye and an eight inch jointed

Believer for muskies on the other. When your speed is correct for your Bomber, it's incorrect for your Believer. Anglers that mix lures aren't taking their fishing seriously. Stay away from that practice and you'll catch more fish.

Next, let's talk about water clarity. From my experience, I've found that water clarity is relative to the speed of trolling. Always remember that rule! The muskie is not a stupid fish. As I stated in my first article, big muskies, from 46 inches up to 55 inches, are 18-25 years old. They didn't get that age by biting the first flashy thing they saw.

I've seen lake St. Clair anywhere from aqua blue to stained green to chocolate milk in color. I'll explain how I would work any of the lures in each of the water conditions.

1. Clean water – Muskies aren't too interested in a big lure that is moving too slow in clean water. I always recommend staying around the 6-7 inch size lure and speeding up towards 6 mph trolling speed. Doing this will project an image to a muskie and should trigger a strike if one is in the mood. Always speed up and down-size your lure in super clean water.

2. Stained water – This is my favorite and usually occurs after a good wind-storm or in the fall when the lake is starting to turn over. In stained water I always slow up a bit to about 5 mph and pull the eight inch jointed lures. Since this water isn't real clear, it makes the lure profile appear as a swimming image. If you are able to find a spot at the mouth of a river where the water clarity goes from muddy to clear within a span of a couple of miles, work the

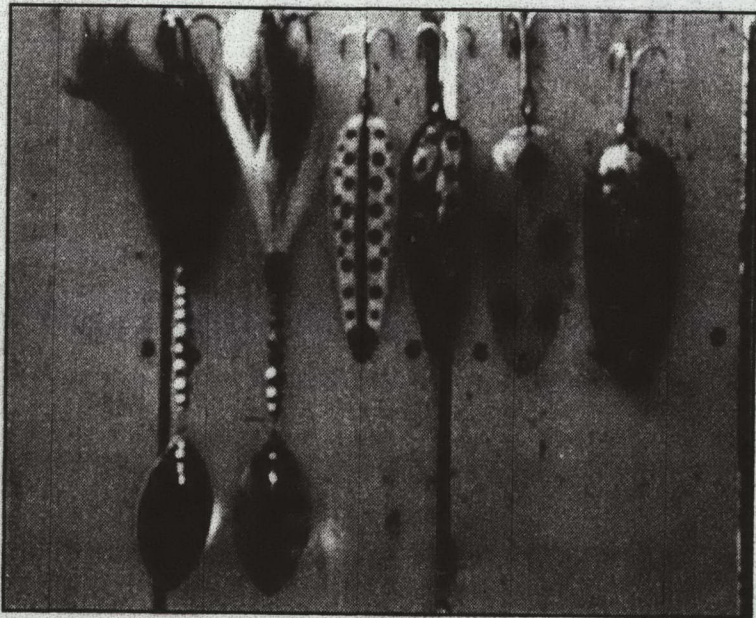
line that goes from stained to clean. I've hunted down big muskies in that type of water. The big ones hang to the inside of the stained water a couple of hundred yards or so.

3. Muddy water – This one is always difficult to fish even if you know what you're doing. I always stay low in speed, sometimes as low as 4 mph and pull the big ten lure. Sometimes the line between stain and mud you'll lay into hog sulking to the inside of the mudline. Drag the bigger lures a little slower when clarity of the water is not too good. Use the trolling set-up I mentioned in my first article and you should be successful.

For the spoons, I run the Ivanhoe in clean water. It has a twirling action to it that turns on muskies. I like the Huskie Jr. in the stained water because it has a tendency to have a little more side to side action and covers a little more area opposed to the Ivanhoe, which runs straight and twirls. For Bucktails, run those things anywhere and anytime when all else fails. If anything is around, you can bet they won't pass this one up. I've had tremendous success with it in all water colors.

I'm going to wrap up this article for now, as I am preparing for the opening of muskie fishing on the first Saturday in June. In my next article I will cover working structure for muskies, what holds them the best, and the effects of the barometric pressure on the muskie.

If you have any questions or would like information on charters, please feel free to call me at (313) 429-9551. Good luck and get a "BIG ONE"! ❧



Left to Right: Bucktail
Spinner, Frog Blade;
Bucktail Spinner, Perch
Blade; Ivanhoe, Lady
Bug; Ivanhoe, Dark
Green Frog; Lou
Eppinger Huskie Jr.,
Daredevil 700 Series
"Five of Diamonds";
Lou Eppinger Huskie Jr.
Daredevil 700 Series
Crackle Frog.



Left to Right: 6" Wiley
Bass; 6" Wiley Frog; 7"
Wiley Perch; 10"
Believer Perch; 8"
Believer Walleye; 7"
Believer Perch; 7"
Believer Frog.

