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TROPHY MUSKY HUNTER

6 PIECES OF THE BIG MUSKY PUZZLE

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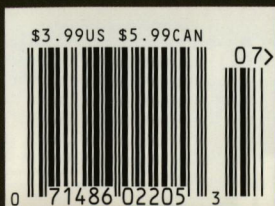
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JUNE/JULY 2003



North America's Musky Authority

- DILEMMA OF WORLD RECORD PROPORTIONS
- THE LESSONS OF GIANT MUSKIES
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# St. Clair Sliders

*Maximize your lines to  
maximize your musky  
catching opportunities*

By DON MILLER

There aren't too many musky fishing comrades who don't want to cover as many angles on the boat as they possibly can to increase the opportunity for success. I belong to that crowd, and I constantly evaluate and analyze things around the boat while on the lake fishing.

Water clarity, temperature, thermoclines, barometric pressure and fishing rod placement are included in this practice, as the day proceeds. As you re-evaluate your effort at the end of the day, have you wondered if you covered the water effectively enough, and what would have happened if you could have placed another bait into the water? This fits with the old cliché, "so many baits and so little time."

Let's look at a 4-rod scenario (Illustration 1). You are currently pulling a planer board on each side of the boat with about a 40-foot tow to the outside, and have a 40-foot lead on your bait, which is about 5 feet behind the board. You and your partner also have an 8- to 10-foot graphite or fiberglass rod on each corner of the boat, with a 15-foot lead on the bait. It's a pretty good spread for trolling, easy to use for covering water. But it could be better — there's no line in the center propwash of the boat, and the inside pocket between the planer board and the corner rod was not covered. With just a little ingenuity, other presentations can take place with the same amount of rods and reels, by using what St. Clair fishermen call a "slider."

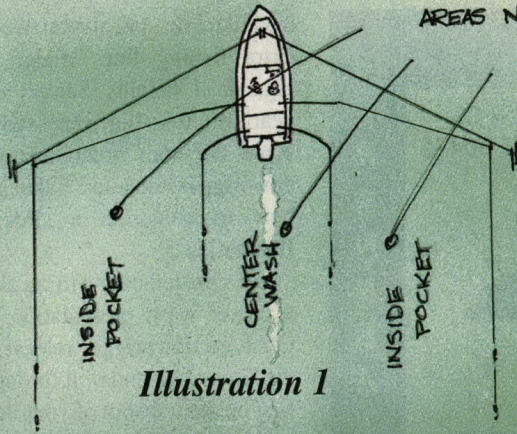
With the same set-up as previously mentioned, we could have six to eight baits in the water, broadening the opportunity, with just four rods. You might think this is absurd, but I refuse to leave a lake without knowing what is happening around my boat, and you won't chuckle about the results either. Muskies hooked count, and missed fish don't.

You probably already have the tackle on your boat, if you

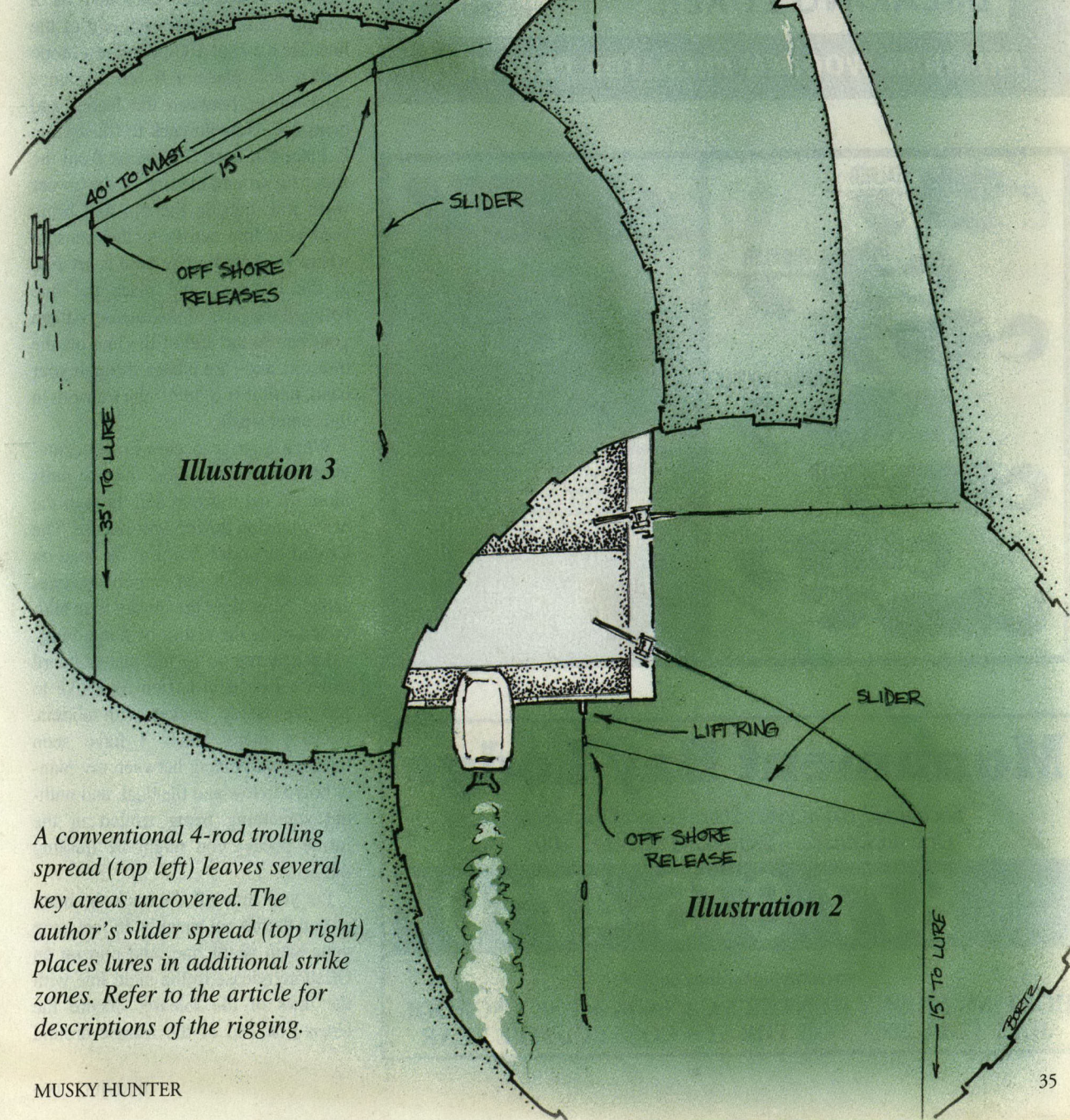
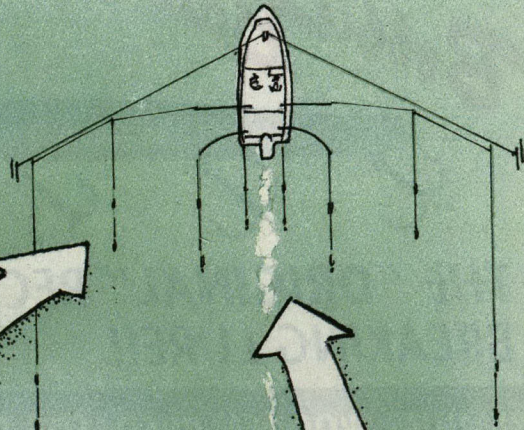
DON MILLER; ILLUSTRATIONS BY JIM BORTZ



AREAS NOT COVERED WITH CONVENTIONAL  
PLANER BOARD SET UP



*Illustration 1*



*Illustration 3*

A conventional 4-rod trolling spread (top left) leaves several key areas uncovered. The author's slider spread (top right) places lures in additional strike zones. Refer to the article for descriptions of the rigging.



troll like I do, and all you need is some extra fishing line, leader material, cigar lead weights, Sampo brand ball bearing Cross-Lok snap swivels, and some Offshore brand heavy tension downrigger releases. Take a look at how to construct a slider rig in Illustration 2.

Let's examine how to rig a slider for a center wash presentation. Take an Offshore downrigger release, and put the Cross-Lok end of it through the lift ring on the transom of your boat. Next, build your slider rig (Illustration 4, Page 37). Cut off roughly 15 feet of main 40-pound test line, and tie a Sampo Cross-Lok on each end of the line. Tie a 5-foot 100-pound test mono leader, and place a 6- or 12-ounce cigar sinker between the leader and main line. Now go back to Illustration 2. Place the open Cross-Lok from the slider rig around the line of the corner wash rod, outside the tip, and bring your new line across to the transom where your offshore release is secured to the lift ring, and place the line between the jaws of the release. Attach your bait to the end of the line off the transom, and ease it back through your hand, until it is tight off the transom in the center wash.

When a strike occurs in the center wash using this method, the line pulls loose off the transom and through the heavy tension downrigger release. The Cross-Lok slides down to the lead on the corner wash rod, which becomes active. Now, fight the musky to the slider and bring the rest in by hand. Fun!

Let's move on to the planer board slider set-up (Illustration 3). I like to fish the inside pocket with sliders, because many times I have seen muskies porpoising between my planer board in tow and the boat, and without something being trolled in the inside pocket you might be missing out.

Let your line off the back the boat; as you thumb out roughly 35 feet, stop your main spool line, and clip on an Offshore release to the main line with the jaws of the release. Secure the Cross-Lok end of the release around

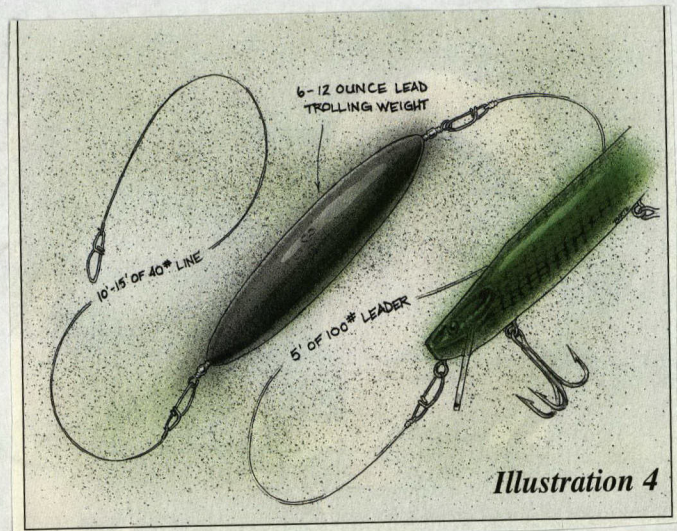


Illustration 4

the planer board tow line, and let out 15 to 20 feet of line from the rod and reel in your hand, and then stop it right there. Now put another offshore release on the same way that you did previously. This will look like you have double clipped your main line to the planer board tow line.

Next, let line off your reel until your outside release is about 5 feet away from the board in tow. Now, take a slider rig (line, leader and bait) and place the Cross-Lok around the 40-pound test main line that is double clipped to the planer tow line. Let your bait into the water through your hand, easing it out, and let it slide down, up against the inside downrigger release. When a strike occurs from the inside pocket, the primary downrigger release will slide down the 40-pound test main line to the secondary outside release, which pulls free of the main tow as the fish continues to run with the bait, and the short line, off the inside pocket line, slides along to the lead on the outside line which is connected to the fishing rod and reel on the boat.

This practice allows you to fish two lures per rod, and with a 4-rod set-up

you now have eight lures covering all areas around the boat. Check the regulations in your area before doing so, however.

I'm sure there are plenty of variations to what I've just explained and illustrated, depending on the type of boat and fishing set-ups and regulations you have.

But this works great on Lake St. Clair, and if applicable to your waters, it will work there, too.

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