

Macho Tactics for Icing Macho Walleye

By: Tony Roach & Ron Hustvedt

Drilling holes and finding fish is what an active ice angler is all about. Macho ice anglers walk several miles in a half-day of fishing drilling hundreds (if not thousands) of holes. Figuring out how to trigger reactionary bites is a skill that goes hand in hand with this style of fishing. Being macho is not just about being strong and tough, it's knowing how to react quickly and adjust even faster.

When you are searching for walleye, rather than waiting for them, it's too cumbersome to slow down and bobber fish or even use any sort of whole minnow tactic. It just slows you down. Nine times out of ten when you are trying to locate active fish, you need an arsenal of lures that will provide that reactionary bite. Essential lures are those you can simply tap, keep above the fish, generate some flash, give a little flutter up and down and then hold.

My favorite lure for providing this style of action is the Buckshot Rattle Spoon but I'm very excited about the new Macho Minnow hitting the market this winter. It is made out of brass and has a beveled edge that creates an erratic tumbling, darting action imitating a crippled minnow. It also includes a jointed KickerTail that flickers, flashes, kicks and clatters to lure fish from a wide radius.

During early ice, my jigging technique is more aggressive and walleye will often hit the lure on the fall. Those aggressive biters can show up from time to time in the heart of the winter, but those walleye are few and far between.

Late January and February is the heart of ice fishing and jigging is still the way to go when covering a lot of ice but you have to adjust your jigging style. No matter what time of the year it is, I'm moving around from location to location, drilling lots of holes and actively searching for the most aggressive biters. My Strikemaster Lazer Pro gets an extensive workout throughout the hard water season and when the walleyes aren't showing themselves at one depth or location, I crank up the auger and do some more ripping.

When the ice is thick and the walleye are moving slower, I find myself tailoring my jigging style to each individual fish. I read their reaction to my lure on my Lowrance IceMachine and then adjust accordingly. Sometimes I scare a few fish away and miss a few before I get them figured out, but once I find a technique that works with a few fish I keep it up until the game changes again. Don't think that it won't. It doesn't fail to amaze me how the conditions above the ice seem the same from day to day but the way walleye act under the ice changes hourly. If walleye are reacting to the macho minnow on the fall, then do that more. If they are reacting on the rise then adjust to a twitch-twitch raise. Give your macho minnow a few twitches and then slowly raise it up away from the walleye. More than any other lure I've used, that macho minnow really gives a lot of flutter on the twitch.



Pay careful attention to your electronics. When the walleye started going after your lure what were you doing? When that walleye dropped back to the bottom without biting, what did you do to trigger that? It's not the walleye's lack of cooperation with you; it's the other way around.

Midwinter I tend to hit midlake structure but I always start in high-traffic walleye areas including inside turns, points, sharp to flat breaklines, structure breaks and even weedlines. I'll start in those locations and then work out from there. If I'm not marking fish I'll



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pick a different structure. My style of walleye fishing is a look-fish-move approach. Walleye move up and down a piece of structure based on the time of the day and the time of the year and the key is to figure out where they are at that moment. In the morning they can be up and then slide back out so zigzag along the break and vary your depth until you find them.

Once you lose them it's time to go back on the hunt drilling more holes and moving frequently until you find them. The walleye didn't stop biting like some anglers claim. They just moved. I've been out there and I'll see them on the side and bottom of a structure early in the morning and then they slide back up which is the opposite of what you'd think. Keep drilling!

Water clarity is always an issue and I use metallic flashy colors on high sunny days. In low-light conditions I might use something with glow but I always favor metallic colors because that's what reactionary bites are all about. Walleye react to a wide variety of colors but a high flash, with a flutter, is the most consistent producer of a reaction. As far as minnows are concerned, I like using big fathead minnow heads and then downsizing to midsize fatheads and then the smallest ones. Other minnows can work like shiners and crappie minnows but a good mix of fatheads is what I almost exclusively use. I keep my minnows in a bait bucket so I can keep them alive when I'm not fishing and maintain a steady supply. Once I park my vehicle, however, I'll take a scoop of minnows and put them into a bait puck. They only need to be fresh until you pinch their head off and I hate having to walk to rebait my hook.

Macho ice anglers cover lots of ice in pursuit of walleye knowing that success is just around the corner. Those walleye can only hide so long.

