

Ten Tips for More/Bigger Walleyes

Incorporate these tips into your walleye fishing arsenal to boost your success

by
Michael Veine

Walleye fishing on Lake Erie seems to be evolving at breakneck speeds. Today's consistently successful anglers use equipment and techniques unheard of twenty years ago. Many of those leading edge techniques can be chalked up to the proliferation of tournament angling, charter captains and super serious, recreational anglers. Today's anglers have driven a revolution of new and improved ways to catch more and bigger walleyes from the same old waters. Here are ten tips that will help any angler fill their livewell with lots of nice walleyes.

Trolling Speed

Perhaps the biggest mistake that I see trollers make on Erie are improper trolling speeds. I monitor the speed on my Lawrance Global Map 1600 GPS receiver. Water temperature governs trolling speeds more than

any other factor. When the surface of the water is below 47 degrees, I almost never troll faster

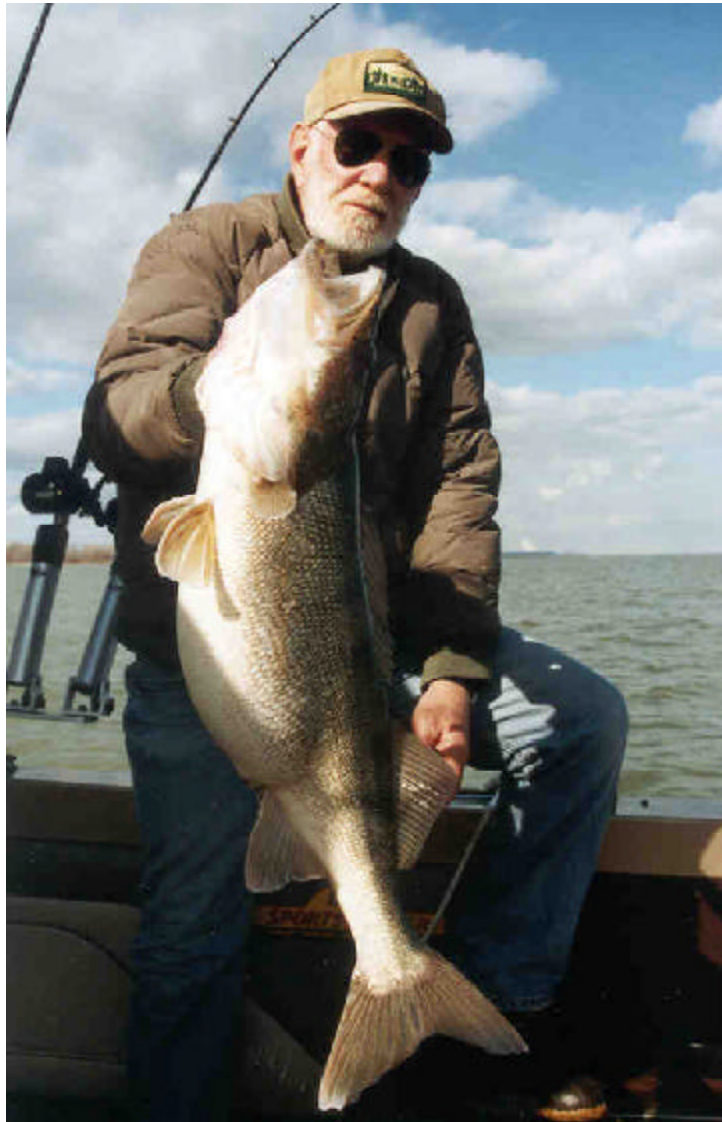
than one mile per hour: Usually much slower. When I'm trolling crankbaits in water 47-60 degrees, my speed usually ranges between 1.0 and 1.5 miles per hour. In warm water conditions, I usually troll between 1.8 and 2.2.

When pulling crawlers in cold water, my speed is always very slow. However when the water temp is warm, I like to troll crawlers faster, sometimes over 2.0 miles-per-hour.

To achieve those precise trolling speeds, most savvy pros rely on a 4-stroke auxiliary motor. I depend heavily on my Mercury 9.9, 4-stroke and couldn't even imagine fishing on Lake Erie without it.

With the Wind

A few years back, I spent the day fishing for walleyes with Gary Roach. I posed



This long and fat walleye was the largest one taken in the author's charter boat this year and was one of 145 walleyes that weighed 10-pounds or more.



Repeating precise setbacks with line counter reels resulted in this 33-inch monster. Photo taken by Michael Veine.

this question to him: If he only had one piece of advice to give anglers, what would it be? His response, “Troll with the wind.” He explained, “Walleyes typically feed facing into a current. They wait for bait to be carried to them and then swim around the unsuspecting prey and ambush it from behind. Winds and waves create currents. By trolling with the wind, you’ll be presenting your lures more naturally, the way walleyes want them. Besides, boat control is much easier when trolling with the waves and the surging action also puts a pull and pause action on the lures that triggers more strikes.”

In-Line Planer Boards

Using inline boards is the only way to go when making trolling passes with the wind. Not surprisingly, inline boards are the choice among most of the top walleye pros. Keep in mind that tournament pros

can use any planer board system they want, but in the past ten years, I’ve never seen a major walleye tournament won using the large, tethered board systems. Inlines allow for precise depth control, quick setup, constant tension, easy storage and awesome fish catching action. They also provide a lure spread that covers water very efficiently.

Line Counter Reels

If trolling for walleyes is on the agenda, then outfitting yourself with some quality line counter reels will put more fish in the boat. Just about every time I fish for walleyes, precise setbacks are necessary to catch fish consistently. Line counter reels, like my Daiwa SG47LC models, allow me to quickly repeat those productive trolling patterns that fill the livewell fast.

Bottom Bouncers

When the going gets tough, the tough put down bottom bouncers with crawlers. This past May and June, all of my charters managed to limit out in short order despite the general lack of success among other anglers fishing around us. Our secret: Plain bottom bouncers fished with spinner/crawler rigs. When Mayflies are hatching during late spring, there is no better presentation than a big bottom bouncer and crawler. By big, I mean at least 3-ounces. I sometimes use 4-ounce bouncers and would probably use larger ones if they were commercially available. Those large weights actually attract fish by kicking up silt, wigglers and other goodies. The walleyes are literally jolted into a feeding frenzy at times and it’s not uncommon to catch multiple walleyes on the same harness when they’re going good.

Net Enhancement

Good netting starts with a quality net. I prefer a long handled (10 foot) net with a medium sized hoop and a deep, rubber coated nylon net bag. My preferred brand is the Cummings. I attach an Offshore release clip to the net handle close to the hoop using a small bolt and lock nut. The release is attached to the bottom of the net bag to keep it from trailing into the fish during the netting process. This net enhancement prevents the net bag from catching on hooks and losing fish. When the weight of the fish slides into the net, the release lets go of the net bag

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securely engulfing the fish in the mesh. Incidentally, Cummings is now starting to offer nets with an offshore release already installed.

Pack Mentality

It seems like the vast majority of Lake Erie anglers like plenty of company, because most folks fish among packs of other boats. While it's true that fish can be caught in the huge armadas, keep in mind that the best fishing is usually found elsewhere, especially if you're after bigger walleyes. I almost never fish in the packs, preferring instead to find my own fish away from everybody else. In fact, when too many boats start to cluster around me, I usually move elsewhere. If you want to catch big fish, then you need to fish away from the packs. Besides I hate the stress of all the boat traffic.

Rubber Core Sinkers

Whenever I fish with crankbaits, I always attach a rubber core sinker one rod-length ahead of the lure. Those sinkers function by stopping debris from sliding down the line to the lure. They also allow a shortened setback, which increases hook-setting efficiency, reduces tangles and quickens the line setting and retrieval process. Rubber core sinkers will not damage the line and they can be easily changed when different weights are needed to target varying depths.

Sharp Hooks

One of the keys to consistent

hookups with tough-mouthed walleyes are sharp hooks. Most baits, out-of-the-box, have rather dull hooks. I've tried just about every method for sharpening hooks and have settled on the sharpening stone as the best method. The stone I use has narrow slots where the hook is gently pulled through. A few passes on the stone and the hook is ready for business. I also replace my hooks whenever they get bent or damaged. By keeping a supply of hooks and my stone ready to go in the back of the boat along with needle nose pliers, I'm ready for action.

Get Out Fishing

The one thing that stops more anglers from catching walleyes is simply not getting out on the water enough. Many folks list fishing as a low priority that ranks behind just about everything else in their lives. Several friend of mine never seem to have enough time to get out on the water, so it's no wonder that they are stressed out all the time. You won't be doing yourself, your work or your family any favors by not going fishing if you succumb to a stress related illness that could have been prevented by more time relaxing on the water. Do your health a favor and schedule your fishing times as top priorities and stick to your guns on your fishing dates. Also, when the weather is stable for several days in a row during early spring and the temperatures are mild, get out on the water at all costs. The reward of big walleyes will be worth just about anything. Send questions or comments to veinemr@aol.com.

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Since timing is everything, call the area first to determine when to come. A few helpful choices are the Erie County Chamber of Commerce, 419 625 6421, The Huron Chamber of Commerce, 419 433 5700; Ottawa County Visitors Bureau at 800 441 1271.

These numbers can help you with motels, charters and local bait shops. If you don't have a good sized boat the best way to get in on this fantastic walleye fishing is to secure a local full timed professional guide. These charters are usually set up to accommodate up to 6 anglers. Get a few of your friends together and call or search the web at lakeeriecharters.com. You can also e mail me at capt.phil@cadez-charters.com for information. Good fishin.

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