

Walleyes Anytime

by
Norb Wallock

The ability to catch walleyes consistently, on a wide variety of waters, requires a certain amount of versatility. Versatility can help you overcome tough fishing situations, or make the most out of a good one. The lack there of could result in fewer fish boated, and may seriously dampen your chances for a nailing a real hawg.

Top tournament anglers know just how important it can be, and the most successful have made becoming more versatile their number one priority. When you travel the country competing in tournaments on waters ranging from the Great Lakes to natural lakes, and from rivers to reservoirs, you quickly learn where your shortcomings are, and where you might need some work.

During the early years of big time

walleye tournaments you could pick who was going to do well on certain waters by their background. If they came from Ohio or Michigan there was a good

chance they would dominate an open water trolling bite, while the Midwest anglers were a safe bet for doing well in a rigging or jigging bite. Western anglers

excelled at rigging, jigging, and trolling contours with crankbaits. However, it didn't take long before the local advantage disappeared as the rest of the field got up to speed, and became much more versatile. They also learned that the knowledge gained on the trail helped to unlock a few more secrets on their home waters.

Once you achieve the ultimate level of "being versatile" your confidence level will explode, and confidence is the most important element of overcoming a tough angling situation. When you possess all of the tricks in your bag, you'll have the confidence needed to

handle any situation that you may be faced with, which can open up a whole



Being versatile in your approach to walleye fishing is the key to catching 'eyes during the different seasons and conditions.

new world of opportunities.

Being versatile isn't something that comes easy, and is achieved by spending a good deal of time outside of your comfort zone. Getting outside of the comfort zone means letting go (or at least putting aside) what you already have confidence in, and getting into the experimental mode.

The experimental mode will likely cost you some time, time that could be spent doing other things, like catching walleyes using the usual methods. But that won't help you grow as an angler, as there is a price to be paid to get to the next level.

Before an angler can claim the title of being "versatile", there's a certain set of criteria that must be met. The criteria includes becoming proficient using a variety of methods under varying sets of conditions.

With so many different methods available to the modern walleye angler, it's easy to get confused and maybe even lost. Rather than spreading yourself too thin trying to learn it all at once, you'd be better off concentrating your efforts on one specific presentation and mastering it before moving on to the next.

If you're starting from scratch you might as well start at the beginning with the most basic of techniques, like jigging. Jigging is one of the best ways to extract walleyes from a variety of situations as they can be cast, jigged vertically, and even trolled. Take a jig like the Blue Fox Foxee Jig and maybe tip it with a minnow, leech, or piece

of crawler and you're in business.

Next on the list of basic presentations is rigging, which has a number of options available, including sliding sinkers and long leaders, a simple split shot and a hook, or a bottom bouncer and live bait combination. It's all designed to deliver live bait as naturally as possible, and what you choose will depend on the area you happen to be working.

A twist on the standard live bait rig is a spinner harness, which will allow you to present a natural bait like a night crawler and give it some added wiggle and vibration, as well as a good measure of speed.

Crankbaits are next and have a higher difficulty rating than rigs and jigs but are definitely worth the time and effort needed to learn their uses. They can be either cast or trolled along structure from shallow to deep, or out in the middle of nowhere when the fish are found suspended.

Whether you're casting or trolling, it would be a good idea to stick with a bait that is a known producer, like a Shad Rap or Down Deep Husky Jerk. That will allow you to spend more time concentrating on exactly where you're running the bait, and less time wondering if you're using the right lure.

While there are several trolling options like using braided or leadcore line, it would be a good idea to get comfortable with monofilament first. A good pick would be a low stretch line like Rapala's Tough Fishing Line,

which will give you more vibration in the rod tip from a clean running bait.

The thing is, even though there are variations to just about everything, you're better off keeping things simple.

By keeping it simple, you'll master the basics more quickly, and get you closer to the goal of "being versatile".

Editor's Note: Norb Wallock passed away on September 15th, 2002. This article was submitted to us by Norb, shortly before his death. Norb will be missed by friends and fellow walleye anglers from all across the country. See Ron Anlauf's tribute to Norb on page 27.

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To Friends of Norb Wallock

On Sunday September 15, 2002 Norb Wallock lost a hard fought battle with cancer. He was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in the spring of 2002, and learned that the disease had spread to other parts of his body. He knew that he was in an uphill battle but never gave up (his nature wouldn't allow it), and kept a positive attitude through it all.

One of the most important accomplishments to Norb was actually becoming a full time Professional angler, and was a goal he reached after a twenty year career with UPS. The step was a big one and a dream he was able to finally realize.

Norb's accomplishments as a professional angler are impressive to say the least, and include numerous major tournament wins. An unprecedented four year winning run began in 1997 when Norb won the NAWA Lake Erie Qualifier and finished the season by earning the coveted NAWA Angler of the Year Title. He won a major pro am event in the next three consecutive years. More info on his tournament finishes and bio are posted at the walleyeconnection.com.

He has always been willing to share the secrets of his success and has done so through seminars, written contributions, TV and radio segments and interviews, as well as one on one conversations.

His success didn't come by accident and was the result of a lot of hard work. His work ethic

earned him the nickname of Sarge (compliments of close friend Keith Kavajecz) as he abided by a discipline that was almost military. That characteristic may have been the direct result of some time spent in the Army, or an energy system that was permantly cranked up on high, as Norb seemed to be in constant motion even when he was standing still. That energy got things done and helped get reels re-spoiled, or spinners tied, or needed maintenance performed even when he was dog tired from the trials and tribulations of tournament angling. Anybody that has spent time in Norb's boat knows that he kept his equipment in tip top shape, and always came prepared.

Norb's work ethic didn't get in the way of his enjoying himself though, even when things didn't go the way they should. For example, during an earlier PWT event on Lake Erie one of the other competitors (Joe Miller) had the bright idea to plant a live snake in Norb's boat. Joe left a dandelion on Norb's live well lid which was his calling card indicating something was up. The snake found a place to hide and didn't show himself until later on when Norb and his amateur partner George Fredin were hard at work trying to put fish in the boat. Norb's partner was deathly afraid of snakes and was a fact that Norb was well aware of. Norb noticed the snake poking his head out of a pedestal base hole and kept the information to himself, while he tried to nonchalantly grab the thing.

The snake would drop back down the hole before Norb could get a hand on him and kept the game of

cat and mouse going for quite a while before he finally subdued the snake.

When George finally realized what was going on he got a little frazzled and ended up in the front of the boat. The whole thing was serious at the time but Norb had a good laugh about the ordeal after it was over.

Besides his passion for fishing, Norb was an avid archer and especially loved the time he spent searching for monster whitetail bucks. Taking a big buck with a bow and arrow takes a lot of skill, patience, and a never give up attitude. Norb was made for the sport and his successes were many, although he never did get that buck of all bucks.

As well as being an accomplished professional angler, Norb was a father, husband, and friend to many. He had a positive effect on all that knew him, and his never give up attitude was contagious. A short conversation with Norb could bring you out of a depression and quickly give you a new improved outlook on life.

In his passing the angling world has lost a real player, the effects of which will be felt for years. The void created will not be filled, and there is no other choice but to go on.

To go on fishing, hunting, and celebrating life. We must, and know that Norb would have wanted it that way.

.... Ron Anlauf