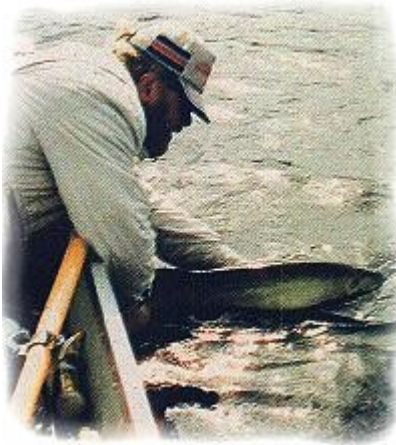


QuickStrike Rigs...

Good For Anglers & Better For Musky

By John Myhre © 2004

For many years the use of live baits such as very large suckers has been an accepted method for fall Musky. Along with this tradition came the idea that Muskies caught with live bait should be killed, since they were most often "gut hooked".



The catch and release concept has made a real improvement in our Musky fisheries over the past few decades, and the technology in quickstrike (QS) rigging live-bait is totally compatible with this line of thinking. Quickstrike rigs allow for an immediate hook set with near 100% hookups. Most live-baiting for Muskies is done in the cold water periods of the year when a Musky's metabolism is slowed way down. Since Muskies are almost always mouth hooked on a QS rig they are very releaseable. Live bait fishing with QS rigs can add a whole new dimension to your Musky angling, especially during the cold water periods when fishing gets extra tough.

Sucker harnesses and other types of live bait rigs have been around for many years. QS rigs, a generic name, are the new generation of these live bait rigs. Things like finer wire, smaller hooks, and perfect hook placement in the bait make these rigs very productive.

MATCH THE HOOKS TO THE BAIT SIZE

For many years the consensus was that one should use as large a hook as possible for Muskies, but in actual fact the bigger the hook, the harder it is to drive home into a Musky's bony jaw. Smaller hooks set much easier.

When rigging, use treble hooks that are just big enough to have exposed hook points after being rigged on a sucker minnow. Here is a list of treble hook sizes for corresponding bait lengths.

BAIT SIZE	Hook SIZE
8" - 10"	#1 or #2
11" - 15"	#1/O or #2/0
16" - 18"	#3/O or #4/0

My personal preference is for 12" to 14" size suckers. The huge size, 18" and over suckers usually don't work very well with quickstrikes because their body is too thick to get good hook exposure and they are so strong that they often tear the hooks out of themselves. When using the smaller size hooks I always use heavy duty models to prevent straightening or crushing. Remember needle-sharp hooks are a must, so always sharpen them.

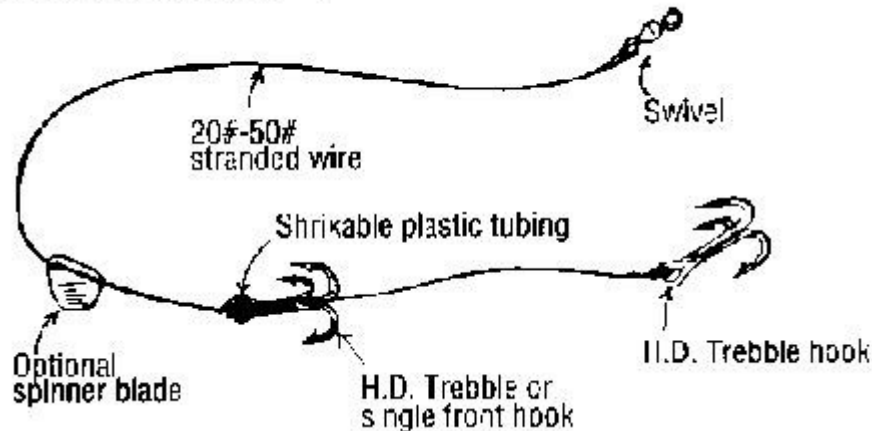
RIGGING FOR 100% HOOKUP

Hook placement in the bait will make the difference in hooking percentages. I have found that a sucker hooked through the nose with one hook, the traditional method, will get 50% of the fish that strike. The other 50% wind up getting no hooks and just letting go of your sucker.

In order to get good hookups, the hooks must be positioned properly and move in the Musky's mouth to penetrate. Hooks just don't tear out of a sucker's nose that easily. When I started hooking the front hook through the soft flesh on the cheek of the sucker so the hook could easily tear free, my hookup percentages jumped incredibly. The best placement for the rear hook seems to be low on the side just behind the dorsal fin. This usually puts the hook in a good position to nail 'em.

QUICKSTRIKE RIG CONSTRUCTION

QUICKSTRIKE RIG



The basic rig construction consists of a 24-inch length of uncoated bronze stranded wire, 20 to 50 lb. test, a heavy duty rear treble hook, and a smaller front treble or optional single front hook. The front hook should contain shrinkable tubing around the shank so it will slide on the wire making it adjustable. A strong black swivel should be attached on the opposite end of the whole rig. An optional small spinner blade should be added in front of the front hook making it legal for use in states where a multiple hook rig is illegal. The whole thing can be assembled by using either crimp-on sleeves or twisting the wire to make a good connection. You can easily make your own rigs or they can be purchased from most Musky tackle outlets.

PRESENTATION TIPS

When fishing with quickstrike rigs it is often better to freeline the suckers instead of using bobbers. Use a 1/2 to 1 ounce sinker on the line just ahead of the swivel. The additional weight will keep the bait in the productive zone nearly all of the time. In the fall, work your suckers over the deeper areas that have stumps, logs, cribs, and or rocks. When fishing on clear natural lakes concentrate on bars and areas of shoreline that have sharp breaks into deep water with cover and bait-fish present. When a Musky picks up your sucker, try to get directly over it right away and set the hook very hard.

So there you have it. Some new twists to an old idea that may help you to boat a few more fish. The next time you're going to fish live bait for Muskies, try a quick strike rig. They're the answer to many problems

associated with live bait angling, and most importantly, they rarely damage the Musky.

