

by BUCK PERRY, Education Editor

Successful Fishing Is Not A Difficult Thing — Part 2

Editor's Note:

E. L. (Buck) Perry, of Hickory, North Carolina is the father of "structure" fishing. It is Buck Perry who gave modern day structure fishermen a "language" with which they could communicate. It is Buck Perry who first coined the words "structure", "migration route", "breaks and breaklines", and many more. It is also Buck Perry who correlated many of the basic facts concerning fish habits, their movements, and how they could best be caught. He later named these facts about fish and fishing, SPOONPLUGGING.

Each month Fishing Facts is introduced to new readers. For many of them the words "structure" and "structure fishing" will be totally new. For these new readers, we will continue to emphasize the basic concepts of structure, fish habits, instincts, etc. from time to time.

However, in this present series titled "Buck Talks Fishing", Buck Perry will be addressing those fishermen who have already studied their "BASICS" and are now ready to move on to additional knowledge. In order to gain the most benefit from the articles, it is important that the student have a clear understanding of the terminology and nomenclature.

If you are a new reader, may we suggest several steps which will allow you to "catch up" or achieve a better understanding of the articles.

May we suggest that you:

1. Study a copy of Buck's great new book, "Spoonplugging, Your Guide To Lunker Catches". This book contains all the basic facts of fish movements, basic structures, basic weather and water conditions, basic pre-

sensation of lures, and much more. This book was 25 years in the making, a quarter century of fishing knowledge put down on paper for the first time so that fishermen everywhere could share in better fishing. The book is on sale for \$10.30 postpaid and available on an unconditional money back guarantee from us, Northwoods Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 609, Menomonee Falls, Wis. 53051.

2. Familiarize yourself with our glossary of terms titled "Fishing Talk — Our Language of Structure Fishing", which can be found near the beginning of each issue of Fishing Facts.

No other publication is privileged to have Buck Perry on its staff. He has become a legend in his own time. As Fishing Facts Education Editor, this former Physics Professor from North Carolina State, has consented to share his vast fishing knowledge and experience with us. Many of today's successful fresh water anglers owe him more than they may ever realize.

The last time we talked we were discussing how oftentimes it is difficult to get a fisherman thinking for himself, and how he is often confused by differences of opinion pertaining to the same subject. We were discussing how to be successful when facing a fishing situation not likely to be the same as the last one encountered. We were pursuing the thought that successful fishing need not be as difficult as some would have us believe. It was pointed out that with the multitude of variables in

weather and water conditions, which are continually changing, it is impossible to say one particular factor (temperature, oxygen, color, pressure, light, food, etc.) could be used as any sort of guide as to where the fish are; or, how to get game fish to take the lure.

We said the fish's changing environment would also eliminate (as guides) things such as: skill in casting, size, color, action, elaborate rigs etc. Our talk should have made it clear none of these things could be used as ways and means of becoming great fishermen. Our conclusion was (or should have been), if we are to be consistently successful, regardless of the weather and water conditions, seasons, species, different waters, etc., you and I must use features (structure, breaks, breaklines) in a body of water, as our guides to where the fish might be, and then control the depth and speed of our lures to put fish on the stringer. The hope was our discussion would convince us our procedures in the presentation of lures must be done in such a way as to keep us learning — "getting better at the game". They must tie together the loose ends of movements of fish, structure, weather and water conditions, mapping, interpretation, depths, speeds, "tools", etc. The way we make our presentation of lures should eliminate all our concern about the fish's environment or what the moods of the fish may be. Our on-the-water efforts must not require untold methods, a multitude of gear, or untold years of experience.

Let's look at a typical fishing situation that should cover most of the things we have discussed in the past. As far as locating the fish and getting him to take the lure, this situation is no different from any other that you and I may run into. In other words *EVERY TIME we go fishing we are going to run into this situation in one form or another.* If this be true, it would appear to me we could boil all our "methods", "techniques" and "patterns" down to an absolute minimum. But at the same time you may be asking yourself, "What will it take to do the job?" "How do I go about getting the job done?"

Let us assume we have proper "tools" such as rods, reels, lines, boat, motor, etc. However, we will not assume we have proper lures. Since lures play such an important part in most fishermen's minds (and nor-

mally create the most confusion and concern), we will reduce them all down to a couple basic *types* which will give proper depth and speed control on the troll and on the cast. By doing this, our "needs" become very few, most of which could be carried in a small paper bag.

Figure 1 and Figure 1-A are side views of a fishing situation. In this case we show only one fish. This situation can be in the same body of water at the same time, or it could be two fish in two different bodies of water, or it could be the same fish at different time periods. The thing to note is the fact one fish is in conditions that are "good", while the other fish is in conditions that are "bad".

The fish in Figure 1 has good weather, good water color, good temperature, good oxygen, good food, good light — good everything. Figure 1-A is the same fish (or a different one) in a "bad" situation; bad weather, bad water color, bad temperature, bad oxygen, bad light, bad food — bad, bad, bad. In either case we do not know at what depth the fish may be, but we *know* both fish are related to features on the lake bottom (structure, breaks, breaklines). We could say he is either in the shallows, the deep, or some place in between.

Both fish have adapted to their environment. However, both fish have not reacted to the situation in the same way. It would be safe to say the fish in the good condition (Figure 1) is active, moving, feeding, etc., whereas the fish in the bad situation (Figure 1-A) is inactive, dormant, non-chasing, etc. It would further be safe to say neither fish has any discomfort, nor cares one way or the other what condition his environment may be in at the time.

You and I can get by with fairly sloppy fishing in the case of the fish under the so-called "good" conditions. We can "swim" the lure in the near vicinity and he will move to take it. We can "walk" or "bump" the lure not so close, and he will turn and go after it. We can "jump" the lure over him, and he'll rise and smack it. In either case our depth control (where he is) and the speed control (how fast the lure is moved) does not have to be "exact", or "right on the money".

This is NOT true in the case of the fish in the bad situation. We can "swim" the lure in the near vicinity, but he does not dart to take it. We could "walk" the lure by him in



Education Editor Buck Perry begins each day on the water by checking various features (structure, breaks, breaklines) for signs of fish life. A combination of trolling and casting is used in order to determine (as quickly as possible) whether the fish have moved shallow and are actively feeding, or are deeper and possibly in a neutral or negative state. Although fishermen cannot control the "moods" of fish, each angler can certainly control the manner in which he goes about searching for them. In actuality, it doesn't require complicated "tools" (equipment) in order to become a top-notch fisherman. Successful fishing is not a difficult thing.



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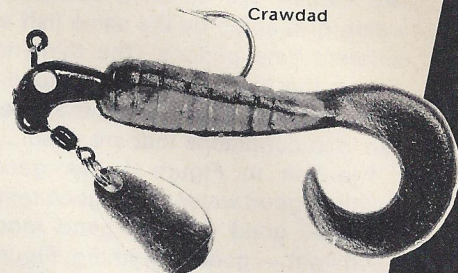
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several directions, but he makes no move to chase it. We can "jump" or "drag" the lure up, over, or by him, and he shows no interest. However, if we place the lure right in front of his nose (exact depth control) at zero speed, we can feel fairly confident he may "suck" it in.

If you and I do not look at depth and speed control in this light, we are going to miss many fish we should have caught. One thing is for sure. You and I had better be thinking all the time that "exact" depth and

speed control will produce. But, this does not mean we should position the boat north, south, east and west and cast the same lure, or a different one, at the same stick-up for an hour from each position. (Don't laugh, I see this type of "depth and speed control" going on all the time).

You and I shouldn't particularly care if the fish are under "good" or "bad" conditions. In fact, we really can't interpret the situation that well. We can use our knowledge of

weather and water conditions to help us know what to expect. But, in any body of water, at any time, there are simply too many variables in temperature, oxygen, color, food, light, etc., for us to say what the conditions might be — good or bad. By using structure (breaks and breaklines) as our guide, and by controlling our depth and speed, we shouldn't care if the fish has a so-called bellyache, feels good, dormant, or is up raring to go. I'd hate to think we couldn't control our presentation of lures to take

FIGURE 1
("Good" Condition)

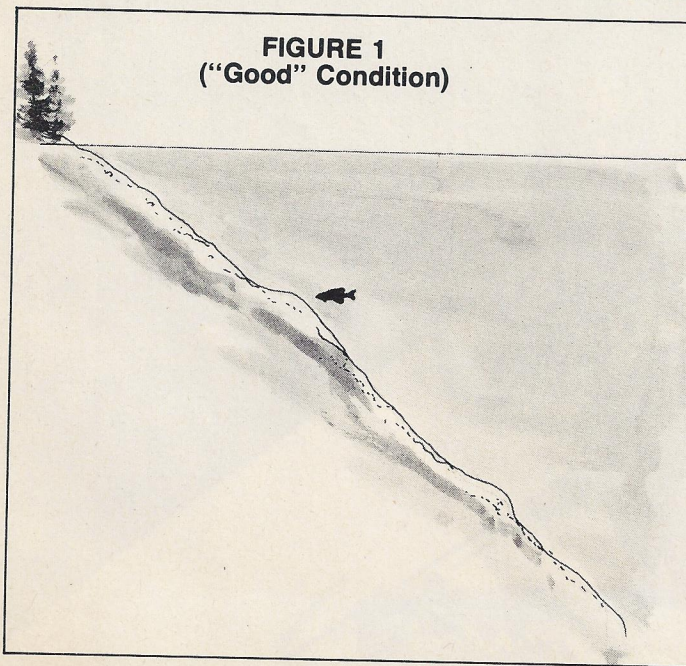
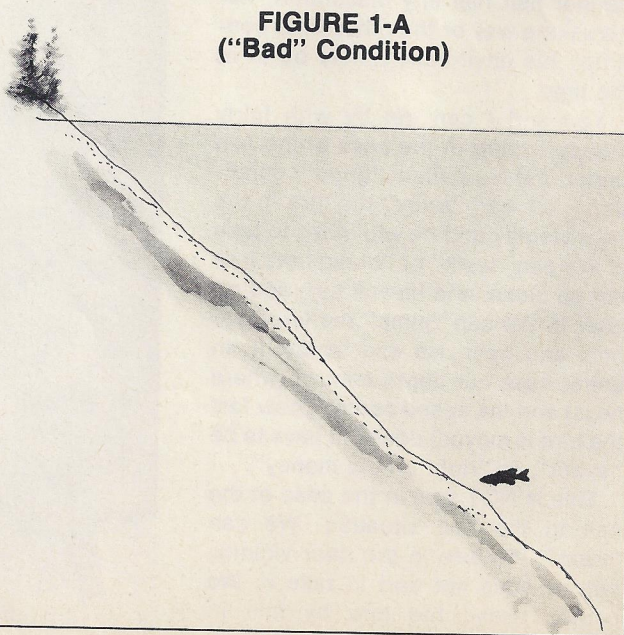


FIGURE 1-A
("Bad" Condition)



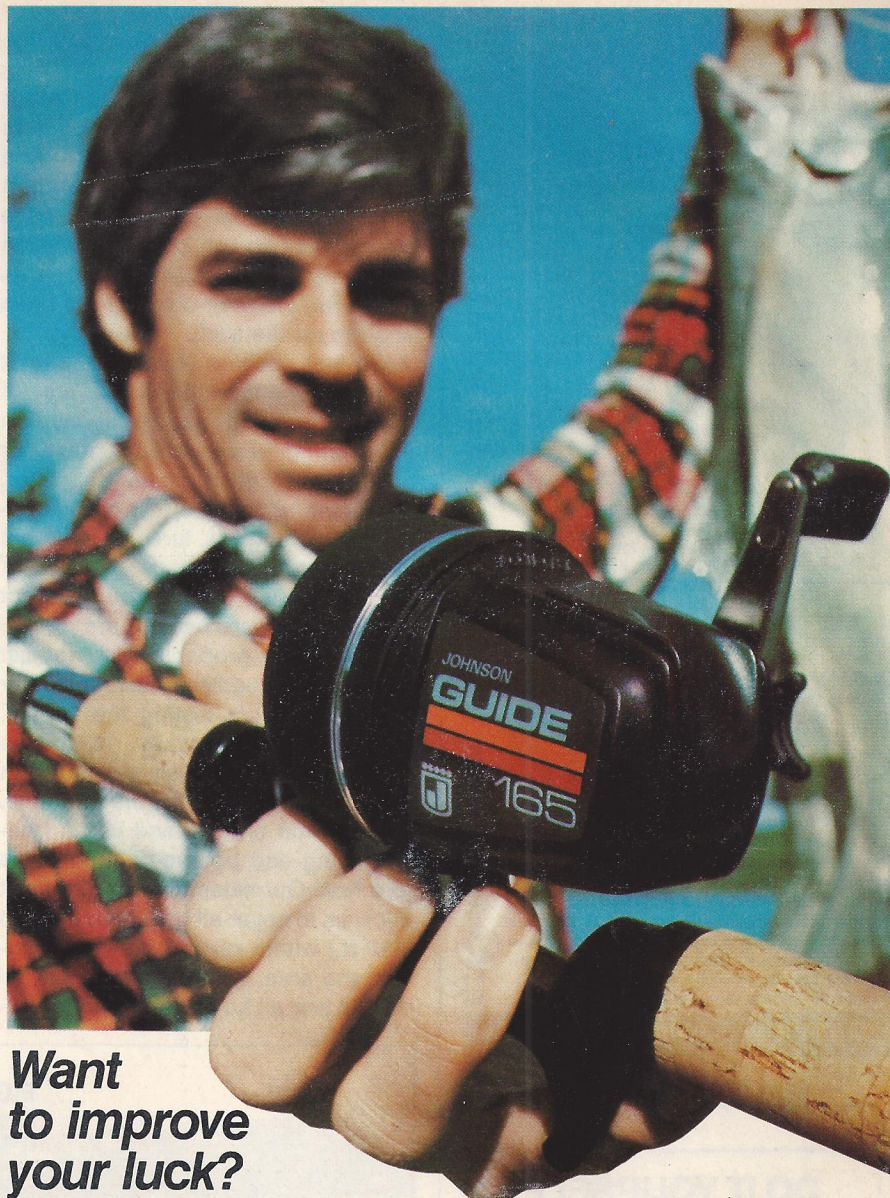
care of all the variables in weather and water conditions. As stated before, I can see no way we could use things such as temperature, oxygen, size, color, action, etc., as any sort of guide as to where the fish might be, or how we might get him to take the lure.

To answer your question of "what will do the job?", let's go into some detail to more fully explain the depth and speed control in the situation just discussed with the fish in the "bad" conditions. This fish is the one we should talk about primarily, as this is the fish we are likely to encounter when we go fishing. It is not likely we will often find things completely "ideal". Let's carry this discussion (on presentation of lures) to the extreme. If we don't catch the fish, he can't be caught at this time.

We will assume the fish are using a "structure" such as an underwater "bar". We know (from past experience) the fish are using this particular bar in their movement and migrations; or, our interpretation is so good we know they are here, if anywhere. There is plenty of deep water available in the area.

Our first approach to fishing the area is to troll it with free-swimming and bottom-bumping lures, making trolling passes and keeping the lures in position. We make our trolling runs in the shallows first, and then in the deep. Our final passes in the deep water may require the use of wire line in order to reach as deep, or deeper, as an average sanctuary (30-35 ft. when such depths are available). We know if we do not go at least this deep (if available), we have not fished the area as thoroughly as possible. Our depth control is fairly thorough as we use various lure sizes, various line lengths, and enough trolling passes to be sure few depths are missed. We make certain we vary the speed of the trolling passes. Some passes are made slow, and some faster. We are all set to go to the cast, if at any time we latch onto something that swims.

Though we work the depths (as deep as we can go) and check the speeds, we do not make contact with the fish. (As we changed lures to work the depths, we checked the "aids" of size, color and action, so you can forget that thought). Since we are confident the area (structure, breaks, breaklines) is potentially productive, it becomes obvious that



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something is wrong. It doesn't take long or much thought, to figure the speed was probably off. Most likely the speed on the troll was too fast for the conditions present. With this knowledge we spend no more time trolling, but immediately position (anchor) the boat for casting, so a more thorough job can be done on the speed (as well as the depth — maybe we didn't or couldn't get deep enough on the troll).

We first position (anchor) the boat so all the shallows in the near area of the structure (bar) can be reached on the cast. If heavy weeds, grass, or bushes exist in the shallow water, we might work for a few casts, top-water or weedless lures at different speeds. However, since we did not locate any fish on the troll, it is not likely any fish are back in the weeds, etc. So, it is probably wise to just forget the weedless and topwater lures, and begin testing the "open" water. We can always go to the weeds, etc., if any fish are found in the near vicinity outside the weedline.

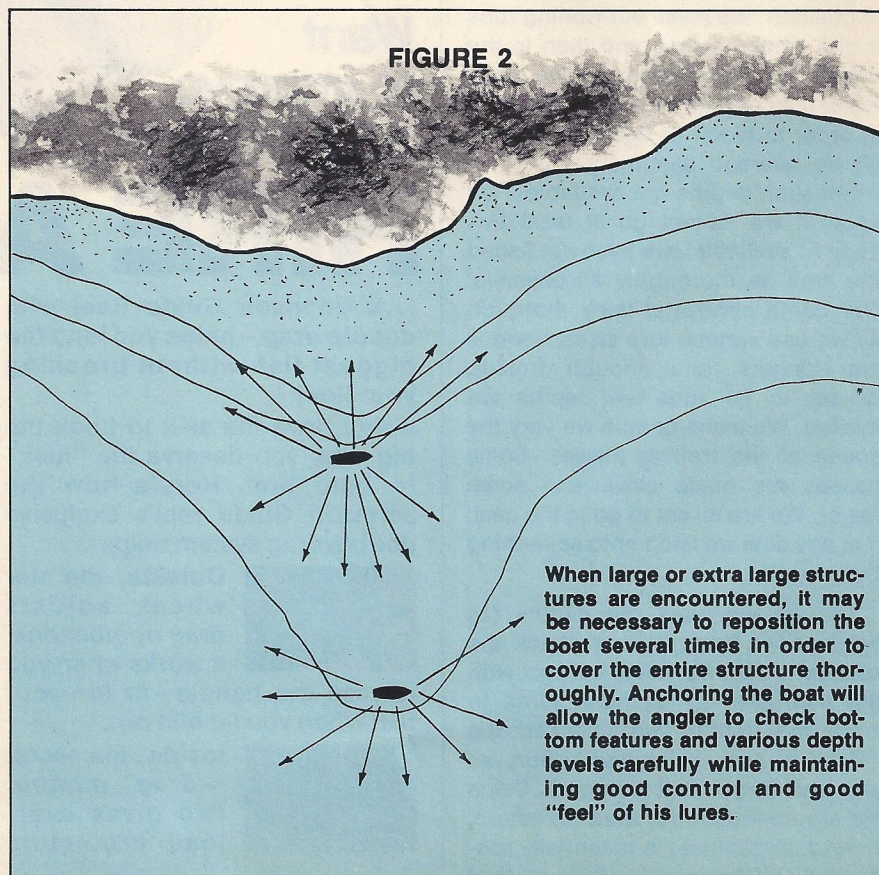
We would choose and use a free-swimming and bottom-bumping type lure first. Our selection of sizes must allow us to cover all the shallows (0 to 8-10 ft.) within reach. We would fancast the area, being sure to work all depths and all bottoms (bumping bot-

tom with our lures). Some retrieves (steady cranking) would start soon after the lure hits the water, while others would not start until the lure has sunk a distance, or all the way to the bottom. Some retrieves would be made slow, and some faster. Just a few casts (5 or 6) should check out the area. (See Figure 2).

If the casts with the free-running, bottom-bumping lure doesn't produce, we switch lures and go to a "jump" type lure which will allow us to check out the slower speeds. Most likely I'd go to a basic jump type lure, such as a leadhead jig. You might prefer a weighted hook dressed with a soft plastic combination (plastic worm, plastic grub, etc.). Again we would fancast the area. In this case, after the cast is made the lure is allowed to sink to the bottom. With rod action the lure is "jumped" and then allowed to sink back to the bottom. When it hits the bottom, we would "jump" it again, and let it sink back (to the bottom). We continue this process on each cast, until the lure is near the boat.

During these casts (with the jump lures) we could check out the speeds thoroughly by moving the rod fast or slow, with little movement or great movement. The speeds could be checked still further, by changing the

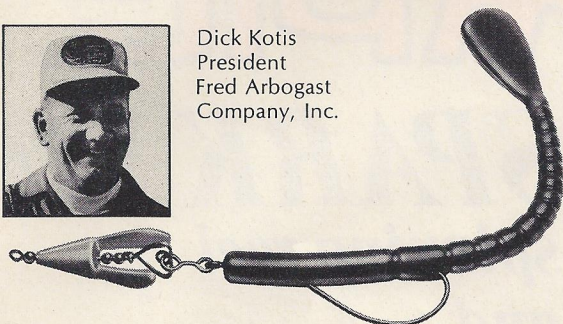
FIGURE 2



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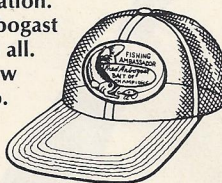
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weight of the lure, or by adding various dressings. Regardless how slow or how fast we moved the rod, or how much dressing or weight is used, each "jump" would give us a number of speeds. It would commence with zero speed (no movement), through a variety of speeds on the "jump" and as the lure is sinking. As in the case of the free swimming and bottom bumping lure, a few (5 or 6) casts should check the water fairly well. We can assume this to be true, for if the fish are in this water (depths), they are most likely active and would move to take the lure.

The two type lures used in this manner would check out the depths and speeds necessary for the area. If no fish "took", we MUST assume there are no fish there.

The next area to check with the cast is the deeper water. Let's assume that our casts will reach a depth of 20 feet from the position of the boat taken for checking the shallow water. Again we would use the same two type lures to work the deeper water on the structure (bar) by fancasting (See Figure 2). Our first lure would be the free swimming and bottom bumping type. In this case it would be very important that the lure chosen is one that sinks. In this case we do not have to "swim" the lure in the "open" water. We would allow the lure to sink to the bottom before the steady retrieve is made. And, we would make the lure bump or walk the bottom as much as possible during the retrieve. If the lure left the bottom, we would stop the retrieve and let it sink back to the bottom before starting the retrieve again. Here again a few casts (5 or 6) should cover and check the area. If no fish are found, we would then switch to the jump type lure (jig, etc.) again, and make the casts as before. After the lure sank to the bottom, on each cast we would "jump" it, and then let it sink back (taking up the slack line as the lure sank back). We would continue this procedure until the lure is near the boat. Here again just a few (5 or 6) casts should test the area.

If we find no fish, we can (and must) assume there are no fish under the 20 foot depth. This means we must go deeper. We already know if we do not check at least to the 30-35 feet (if available), we haven't thoroughly fished the area regardless of the weather and water conditions or whatever the mood of the fish.

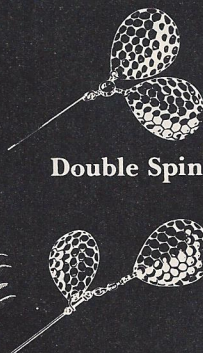
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Our next step is to reposition our boat so we can check out the greater depths (before we are through it may require additional repositioning of the boat). Again we will fancast the area using the same type lures used previously.

In this case (position) our boat may be anchored so deep we find we have trouble working the sinking, free-running and bottom-bumping lure properly on a steady retrieve. We may let it sink to the bottom, but when the steady retrieve is started the lure immediately leaves the bottom and starts swimming up toward the boat. The steep angle of the retrieve will not allow the lure to walk the bottom. However, we must try the walking lure first. It is possible our casts may go beyond a breakline or the drop-off (see Figure 2) and the lure sinks into a hole or channel. If this happens, then we will be able to "walk" the lure up and over the breakline (drop-off) without any trouble. The lure may leave the bottom shortly after walking over the breakline, but this matters little because we have already tested the "fishable" spot. If we are unable to get a good steady walk along bottom with our bottom bumping lure (or we do not catch a fish), we should lose no time going to the jump type lure. This time we'd probably choose a slightly heavier one so we get the lure "down" in a reasonable length of time; and so we could "feel" better what the lure is doing.

We are at this time working deeper water, and we must assume that our speed will be slower than in the water previously fished (under 20 ft.). We must assume that the fish are more dormant and non-chasing, and that our lures must be "exact" in both depth and speed. Therefore, when covering the area, instead of making a half dozen casts, we may have to use more casts and place them closer together. We may have to fancast the area several times if conditions are very bad. Our "jumps" (with the lure) will be slower and shorter. On the first set of casts we would probably not desire to "dress" a jig. But, on the second fancasting of the area, we would probably "dress" the lure with dead or live bait, or some soft plastic such as a worm, minnow, lizard, etc. This is done so that the fish has a better shot at picking the lure up (or sucking it in).

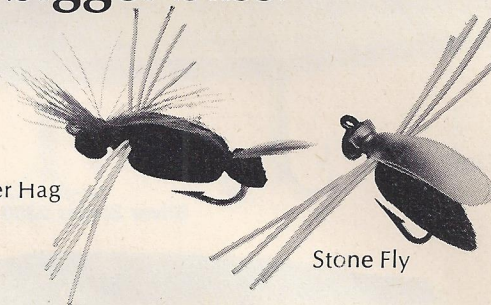
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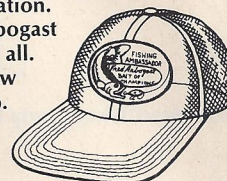
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that is, letting the lure sink back to the bottom after each short jump. If this first set of fancasts does not produce, we would then go to our final depth and speed control. The only difference being, on the SECOND go 'round (with the "dressed" jig or whatever combination used), after the lure sinks back to the bottom we PAUSE for a few seconds before the rod tip is moved again. What we are actually doing in this last and final speed control is to say (when we jump the lure) — "Hey, fish, here I am!" Then we wait for him to pick it up (zero speed). If a fish does not pick the lure up, we jump it again and wait a few seconds (10 to 15 seconds at extreme depths). You can bet, if we cover the area thoroughly and get the lure close enough to the fish and long enough, he will take it in. We must keep in mind, after each jump of the lure, we must take up slack line and *keep tension against the lure as it sinks back to the bottom.* If we do not do this, the fish may suck our lure in and spit it out without our even being aware it happened.

Normally, this last slow depth and speed control presentation is not necessary until we get into the deeper sanctuary zones, and under bad weather and water conditions. [Note: I have to insert a comment here regarding bad weather and water conditions, as there are situations where the fish do not have access to extra deep water. In some cases, the sanctuary (deepest water) may be less than 20 ft. in depth. However, in these cases, the depth and speed control may have to be even MORE exact, as these fish do not have sufficient water over them (depth) to help offset some of the ill effects of the weather and water conditions.]

When working extra deep water (30-35 feet or better) we can assume, up to a point, the fish are dormant and non-chasing and our presentation must be right on the money (extremely accurate). However, this may not be true at all times. We have to keep in mind that fish become active periodically (with no migration shallower) and many times a trolled lure at extra depths is highly effective. (We checked this out before we went to the cast.) However, we can normally feel when our efforts are directed toward extreme depths (40-80 ft.), our speed control will be slow or slower.

You and I will probably locate and

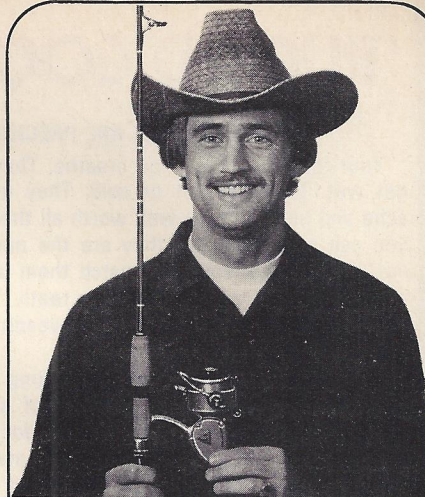
catch the fish (most of the time) long before we are forced to probe extreme depths or long before we must use a final slow and exact control. In fact, in most situations we will run out of recognizable structure before great depths are reached. But, we must work (learn) to put the lure in front of the fish's face at 100 ft. depths if need be.

When we move into the deeper water, our presentation (both casting and trolling) should be "pinpointed". We cannot just haphazardly cover an "area" such as a long breakline, ridge, line of bushes, large underwater hump, etc. In deeper water we must concentrate our efforts *exactly* where the fish will be. If this is not done, it is not likely our lures will be exact enough to make contact. However, if we have a specific "spot" we are shooting at, proper control is not overly difficult to obtain. We compensate for some error by fancasting. We use maps, floating markers, shoreline sightings, depth sounders, trolled lures, or anything else necessary to pinpoint the spot.

We can assume that when the fish are shallower than 20 feet (when deeper water is available) lure presentation does not have to be quite so exact. But, when the fish are deeper in the sanctuary depths, our interpretations and lure presentations must be exact; and, the deeper we go, the more exact (and difficult) it becomes. If you and I can't interpret the SPOT where the fish will be or, if we are unable to control the depth and speed of our lures at that spot, we have no business spending much time in deep water. It would be a far wiser course to wait for the fish to come to us. This we are forced to do in many instances, for as stated above, we run out of recognizable structure (drop-offs, channels, etc.) the deeper we go.

This does not mean we should not work deep and deeper water. The on-the-water procedures will "teach" us, and make us better fishermen, and tie together things such as interpretation of structure and proper presentation of lures. It is in the area of deeper water interpretations and presentations that we can always improve. It is in this area where the boys are separated from the men. Our basic presentation of lures as given, will put us in deep water, and after some experience we can work as deep and spend

Continued on page 47



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Continued from page 43

as much time as we desire there. We can work in stages: first the shallows, then to 15-20 feet, then to 30-35 feet, then to the deepest. This could take some time, but in all likelihood we will be catching fish from the very beginning, and we will be *improving* all the time.

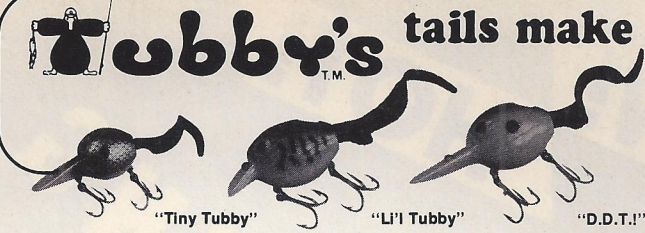
You and I never know for sure what the ACTUAL conditions may be when we go fishing; nor, at what depth, or how dormant the fish might be. But, what difference does it really make — so long as we use structure (breaks and breaklines) as our guide, and check thoroughly the depths and speeds? We cannot expect success if we limit, restrict, or go about our presentation of lures in a haphazard manner. This need not be the case, for in the long run, doing it correctly is usually the quickest and easiest way. *I have never seen much difficulty in securing good depth and speed control in most any fishing situation.*

Your thoughts at this time (and probably several times in the past) may be: *"Yeah, your presentation of lures, casting and trolling, sounds pretty good. But, what about all the other structures and features found in lakes? Some of the waters I fish don't even have underwater bars. I fish some lakes where motor trolling is not allowed. I know some places where no boats are permitted on the water — etc."*

Of course there are different type features found in bodies of water.

Not all situations allow fishermen the advantage of both casting and trolling. When close quarters are encountered — such as the tight pocket or cove shown here — casting would provide better and more thorough coverage than trolling. An angler should note all features in a body of water; then decide which procedure will provide the greatest control of his lures — casting and/or trolling.





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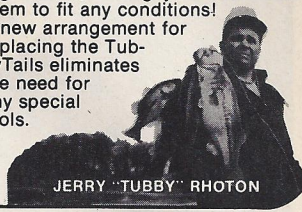
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We are aware there are situations we will encounter where our presentation of lures may be limited to casting. I'm sure we all were thinking about this when discussing earlier a way to learn the proper presentation of lures. This must have been especially true where we talked about

not passing up the trolling process in becoming a good fisherman. There are situations where we would pass up the trolling, as we may be able to secure better control by casting. There are instances where we can't always reach the area on the troll (such as the head of a deep pocket). But, in most instances, you and I can troll. If trolling is restricted in one place, we can go to another where it isn't. If our "rig" (boat, motor, etc.) does not allow us to troll properly and effectively, we can always rent or borrow one that will.

All of these things and thoughts do

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not change the facts of the case one iota. If you and I are limited in our lure presentations in any manner, it means we have to work that much harder, or take steps to eliminate the restrictions. When thinking about various lakes, various features, etc.

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found in bodies of water, the basic presentation of lures, casting or trolling, does not change. In fact, the type lures used need not change. The basic presentation of lures (as discussed), is simple, easy to perform, and it will give you the depth and speed control to consistently catch fish, while at the same time keep you learning and becoming better all the time.

While you are at it, why not state the other thing that has been bugging you? You might ask, "*Why not dispense or eliminate the free-swimming, bottom-bumping lure? Why not just use jump type lures?*"

We cannot eliminate the steady, free-running and bottom-bumping lure. This would be like "cutting off one of your arms." In fact, your right arm. (The left for those who are left-handed.) Too many times the fisherman eliminates this lure and the important depth and speed control it provides. I found out 40 years ago I needed a "tool" like the bottom bumping lure because of the control it provided. I already had every style "jump" lure you can imagine.

Quite often (more than you can guess) "jump" speeds will not pro-

duce a fish, while at the same time the bottom bumping lure will load the boat. The fish may never know the quiet jump lure is around, but you can bet they become aware of the bumping, walking lure. At times, some good catches can be made with a jump lure, but in no way like the GREAT catches that can be made with a bottom-walking lure. If you catch five large fish out of a school on a jump lure, you should catch two or three times this number on a fast, steady, bottom-bumping lure. Give it some thought, and you should see why this is so. The jump lure won't keep the fish in a frenzy. If you eliminate ANY of the steps discussed here (about depth and speed control), you are cutting down on your chances to catch a fish.

We have been trying to simplify our on-the-water procedures, and at the same time make us consistent fish-getters. On an average day, we may not be successful right off the bat. Therefore we must repeat the steps, both shallow and deep, all through the day. This experience will sharpen our attack. Most of us are saved by the fish who become active and may accept sloppy lure presentations anyway. However, if you and I work a stretch of water (casting and trolling), controlling our lures correctly (depth and speed), and these procedures produce no fish, we MUST assume there are no fish there. This thinking will have us doing the things that must be done. *Have no fear, in time the fish himself will prove our assumption was correct.*

Most of us do not have the knowledge nor the skill (thank goodness) to make contact with the fish on each and every fishing trip. However, we must go about our fishing in such a way that we can expect to get them all the time. We must use features in the body of water (structure, breaks, breaklines) as our only guide as to where the fish might be. Then, we CONTROL our depths and speeds to put him in the box.

Next time we will talk further about using structure as our guide, and the proper depth and speed control. As I said way back yonder, this subject requires a lot of discussion from several directions. Probably a better way to end this section is to say it — next time we will talk further on how proper presentation of lures is not difficult nor complicated, and how it will take care of the different fishing situations we face.