

TURBO MOVES

For Walleyes

Many topnotch anglers have long suspected that the walleyes we catch while trolling represent but a fraction of the fish that follow our lures. The truth is, of course, that following fish are nearly always catchable fish. Still, when lures fail to change direction or speed and otherwise deviate beyond the basic straight swim, walleyes often do not react—are not compelled to make the kill move.

In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail angler Mark Martin knows about following fish. With an Aqua-Vu camera attached to his planer boards, Martin has been seeing things on his trolling passes that most of us only guess at. The built-in depth function on his Motorized MAV camera lets him lower the lens to the precise level of the fish, watching for activity. Often, he has been astonished by how many walleyes he was trolling through that would not bite. In recent years a few anglers also have been reversing their underwater cameras to face backward, attaching their line to the lens housing, then monitoring fish response to trolled lures.

Many anglers have adapted their presentations to try to convert these fish. We need to tweak the triggering aspects of our trolling runs in a big way, rather than just continuing to troll at a constant speed. The concept of “turbo-trolling” has been with us for years, but most anglers still neglect the signs and don’t take the necessary steps to trigger reluctant fish.

Consider these common situations:

- At the end of a trolling session, you shift the motor into neutral. Lures slow to a crawl. But as you begin to retrieve a line, a big walleye strikes.

- Upon cutting a turn too tight, you rapidly accelerate in order to straighten lines and keep lures from tangling. A heavy walleye whacks it just as the boat rapidly accelerates.

- Trolling through large waves, a planer board skips and skids, jumps clear of the water, and drags hard before finally tracking straight again. Behind the board, the lure reacts erratically. Immediately, fish on.

- Attempting to dodge an oncoming boat that might otherwise mow over your lines, you crank up the throttle, speeding from 2 to 5 mph. As soon as the rod loads under the increased friction of speed, the tip bounces from a strike, then arcs and shakes deeply under the strain of a hooked walleye.

If you’ve observed preyfish in the water, it’s apparent that they don’t swim like straight-running crankbaits. You rarely see baitfish move in a straight line for more than a few seconds without pausing and changing direction. Bottom-oriented fish dart here and there, poking along bottom, drifting up, hovering, and flitting away. Pelagic fish like ciscoes, smelt, and shad gather in tighter schools, and although they travel in open water, their movements are somewhat random. An entire school may move in tandem, jetting along then suddenly wheeling around and shooting off in the opposite direction.

In summer, even a fast straight troll at 3 to 5 mph might not trigger walleyes until you add occasional radical speed or directional changes into the mix. A bit of speed isn’t a problem for walleyes, which can move in bursts of up to 12 mph.

TURBO-TROLLING

In-Fisherman has often suggested that your boat is a vital part of the presentation package. In trolling, the boat in a sense becomes your fishing rod in charge of lure speed. You wouldn’t just cast a jig out and reel it straight back to the boat all the time. Yet, this is exactly what most trollers do with crankbaits. Certainly, depth control always is factor number one in trolling. But given proper depth and lure selection, the overlooked trolling factor is recognizing when to get radical with boat moves, as opposed to when to stay the course.

Openwater Basin Moves: The addition of short but intense jolts of speed is my key to success in open water. Some days the moves trigger a couple walleyes, providing dinner from what otherwise might have been a fishless trip. Most times, though, the moves consistently trigger not just more fish, but the biggest fish of the day, too.

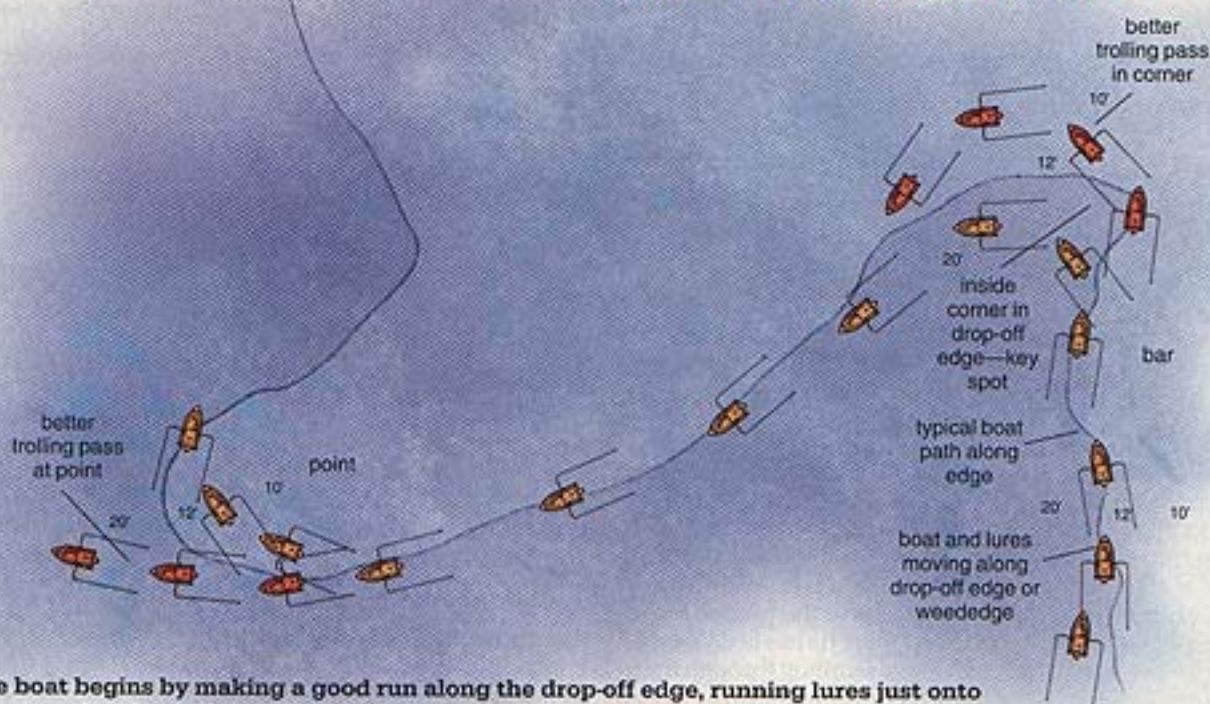
The openwater game in most inland lakes and reservoirs is all about keeping your lure spread within roaming pods of walleyes which are relating to larger schools

A “G-FORCE” TROLLING PROGRAM

PHOTO | JEFF SIMPSON

BY CORY SCHMIDT*

Trolling A Contour—The Traditional Way



The boat begins by making a good run along the drop-off edge, running lures just onto the edge, then just off the edge. At the inside turn, most anglers turn gradually toward the main part of the point as they reach the turn, but lures never reach that critical spot. Meanwhile, at the point, most anglers turn sharply in order to bring lures over the tip of the point. This maneuver often triggers fish but misses the big fish that often lie in the open water just beyond the point. To reach fish in the corner or beyond the point, continue trolling into the corner and out beyond the point.

of baitfish. Given that you can track these schools on sonar, you typically know when lures are running within the right zone. In smaller waters, some of the better openwater zones lie in proximity to structure, such as the end of an extended point or hump. Walleyes and other predators apparently travel between the structure and the adjacent confined open water as food becomes available. As each trolling session develops, anglers enter GPS waypoints when fish strike. Over time these points combine to reveal "sweet spots" within an open basin.

Knowledge of where these spots lie allows you to know when to add a turbo move. As you approach one, rapidly accelerate and make a fairly sharp (say, 60-degree) turn. You might also try this at the end of a trolling pass. The change in boat speed and direction compels following walleyes to strike: Outside lures speed up, while inside lures stall. As you straighten out of the turn, shift the engine into neutral and coast forward

for a three-count. With the boat now pointed directly toward your destination, shift into gear and crank the speed immediately up to at least 3 mph, better to 4 or 5. Maintain this speed for another three-count, then slow to the initial trolling speed.

That trolling sequence is the most effective trigger I've ever used for walleyes in warmer water. Many variations on this basic maneuver exist, of course. Regardless of variation, use the moves judiciously, like a well-placed change-up in the midst of repeated fast balls. Inject them into trolling runs whenever your lures are near groups of walleyes, when you've gone some distance without a strike, or when you believe that walleyes are following lures but failing to commit.

Following Contours: Another good trolling move can be employed when you're contour-trolling downwind along the edge of an extended point, two plugs in tow. One key area along the edge is at any sharp inside corner. But how do you effectively

troll plugs into a tight corner? In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail angler Doc Samson offers this advice: "When trolling an inside turn at the base of a point, most anglers turn gradually in an effort to keep lines from crossing. But then the lures never reach the key corner of the break that usually holds walleyes, because the boat pulls the lures off the break before they get there."

Rather than turning at the inside corner, Samson trolls straight over the top of the spot for another 120 feet or so—the distance his lines trail behind the boat. This assures that his crankbaits swim through the key spot.

"Using the chart-plotter feature in tandem with the digital sonar on my Lowrance LCX-113C HD," Samson says, "it's easy to follow a contour on most mapped lakes. The slick part is that I can make adjustments to boat speed and direction before the contour even changes, because I see my boat icon on the background of the lake map relative to structure. I can

Trolling A Contour—The Turbo Way

Continue trolling at increased speed for an additional 120 feet or so beyond the inside turn, in order to tuck lures into the corner. Begin turning the boat out toward the breakline, then shift into neutral to stall lures momentarily.

After holding in neutral for several seconds while turning the boat out, immediately crank up the speed again (3 to 5 mph). Hold this speed for several seconds before throttling back.

Continue pulling lures well beyond the tip of the point before turning back toward breakline. If fish have been caught somewhere along the edge, it may be best to pack up and retreat to make another pass along the edge.

Rapidly accelerate as the boat reaches the tip of the point, shifting back into neutral as lures reach the tip of it. Hold for several seconds, slowly drifting forward, then accelerate again.

Rapidly accelerates from about 2 to 5 mph as boat gets into corner.

Approach inside corner at normal trolling speed.

120' of line behind boat

anticipate how to run through inside turns, because I can see them coming."

As you master the ability to place lures into those tight spots along a contour, once again the next step is to inject jolts of speed into the mix. As lures reach the key zone, kick up the throttle from 2 to 4 mph—not a gradual acceleration, but a jolt of speed. Depending on the angle of the drop-off, the boat should now lie on top of the shallow flat, lures jetting through the good water. Immediately shift into neutral, turning hard to face the bow back toward the edge of the contour. Using a chart plotter, this maneuver is easy because you already know where the boat is positioned relative to the structure.

If you've done the first part of the move properly, lures should be slowly wobbling within the inside corner. It's often a good idea to pause here for a few seconds if the boat's in a good position. Now immediately crank the throttle back up to 3 mph or faster. This is the moment when strikes usually occur.

Continue at this frenzied speed for another few seconds. Immediately throttle back to regular forward speed.

Maintain this constant speed until just before the boat reaches the next key spot, such as the tip of the next point. Repeat the turbo-to-neutral hover, then slip into blast-off mode on this spot, too.

"On points, keep trolling well beyond the point out over deeper water," Samson says. "Bigger fish often hold in the open water just out past the tip."

"If I've hooked a few walleyes on a given trolling pass—particularly if they struck in the same general area—I might not troll any farther but instead quickly retrieve my lines, motor back upwind from the spot, and start again. I often troll crankbaits and consistently catch fish from small spots that seem better suited to jigging or rigging. I'm convinced these fish often react only to erratic crankbait trolling moves. These are fish jiggers, and riggers just don't trigger."

TURBO TACKLE

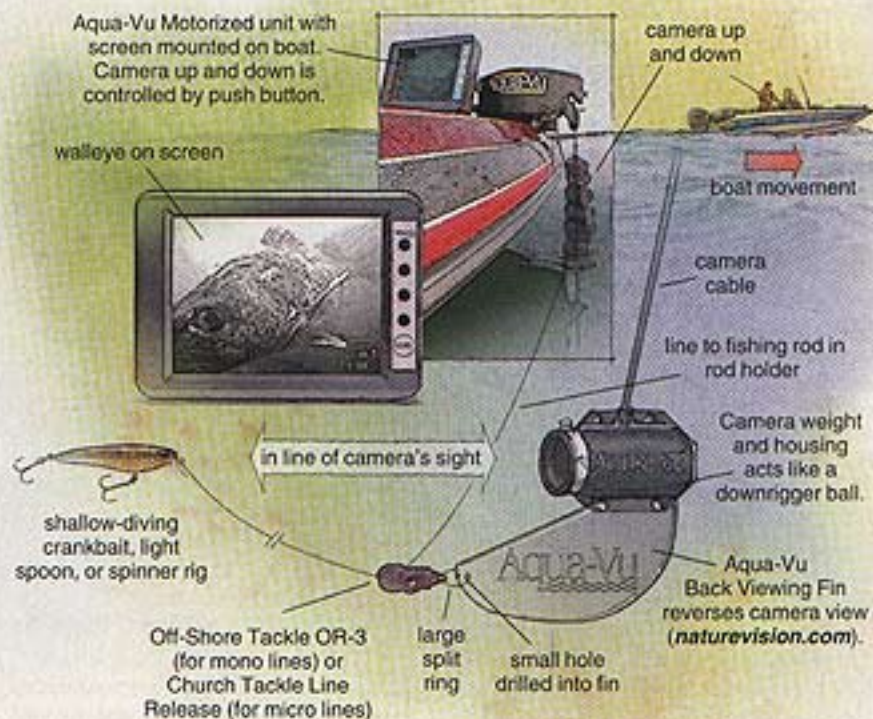
Getting any lure—crankbait, spoon, or spinner rig—to really pop requires low-stretch line. The speed boost must be delivered directly to the bait without

being absorbed into the line or rod, so low-stretch microlines such as Berkley FireLine 10/4 or Power Pro 15/4 make lures zip during speed surges. On the terminal end of my micro line I often use a 4- to 6-foot leader of monofilament such as 10-pound Berkley Trilene XT just ahead of my lures. This adds a measure of "give" at the terminal end when a fish actually takes. But it doesn't negate the effect of speed burst.

Turbo moves are just as important to anglers trolling with leadcore line. Due to the weight of leadcore—combined with the intense speed surges—rod power needs to be heavier than that of a typical trolling rod. A Shimano 8-foot Talora TLA80MRG-2 is one good leadcore rod that holds up to intense speed bursts.

Many trolling rods are made of fiberglass, but the stiffness of graphite works best here. Glass rods are just too soft and sponge out the "zip" that turbo moves deliver through the rod, down the line to the lure. Rods should be just soft enough to absorb some of the shock of striking fish, but fast enough through the lower two-thirds

Rigging a Camera for Video Fishing



of the blank to keep baits reacting to speed changes. The new 8-foot Mr. Walleye Series rod, which handles superline, leadcore, and planer boards, is another good choice.

Boards are an important tool in trolling applications. Trolling with the wind, add a quick burst of speed just as a board rides the crest of a large wave. The board digs in, then catches air at the top of the wave, crashing back down into the following wave and skidding to a halt. Each part of this little stunt does something different to the lure—surging, stalling, and occasionally ripping it forward. These erratic moves often get fish to eat.

LURES

Crankbaits need to track straight at high speed. A good test for a lure is to run it behind the boat at 5 to 6 mph. If the plug continually pulls right, left, or skips out of the water, tune it so it runs right, or get rid of it.

Durability is important, too, as strikes at high speeds can stress some lures. Two of my favorite options are the Magnum Rapala models CD14 and CD18, sinking lures with metal lips. I like the Magnum's action during pauses, wobbling as it swims a little deeper—a great triggering maneuver.

The 3-inch L&S MirrOLure Crankbait is another good lure, overlooked by most walleye anglers. Again, it's precision-tuned and durable. It's also a jointed bait, providing a little extra shimmy—sometimes a plus for trolling in warm water. Longtime producers like Shad Raps, Wally Divers, and Rebel Spoonbill Minnows are good choices too. So are Rapala Tail Dancers and some of the bigger muskie-style cranks like the Suick Cisco Kid.

I also use spoons like the small Dreamweaver DW, a lure that's recently been hot on Lake Erie's Western Basin. Spoons work well trolled behind Dipsy Divers at up to 4.5 mph. Finally, spinner rigs dressed with a 6-inch Berkley Gulp crawler work at speeds up to about 3.5 mph. Indiana or willowleaf blades of a #5 or #7 size excel for high-speed trolling.

Turbo trolling is all about pushing the envelope of speed and direction—a timely jolt here, a timely pause there. It's all about injecting a little "catch-me-if-you-can" into trolling moves for walleyes. ■

*Cory Schmidt, Nisswa, Minnesota, is an avid multispecies angler and freelance writer who has worked with *In-Fisherman* for over a decade.