

By Ross England

Have You Tried These Baits?

One of the things we all would like to find is one bait that does it all, every time. Who cares about versatility if you knew every time you fished your favorite water your super blaster magnum lure would put a twenty-pound plus limit or a giant bass in your hands. Bass fishing nirvana, sorry to report it here, but it doesn't exist.

The reality of chasing our favorite fish is that many of us are looking for something new to tease our fish. In the back of our minds we keep thinking we would catch more fish if we could show them something new. We hear stories, read about the hot new bait on an Internet forum, or visit our local tackle shop and get the sales pitch. I admit to being somewhat skeptical about some of the new baits because I think I can always do a better job fishing the baits that I already own and probably, like you, I do

have a box of baits in the garage that were bought and never were productive for me.

One of the pitfalls of the hot new bait syndrome is the built in expectation due to reports of other anglers "tearing 'em up" on the new bait. You buy it, tie it on, and fish it with the mindset that guys are doing well with this bait right now so I should too. After an hour or so without success, that rod does not get picked up again and after a couple of trips like that, the hot new bait winds up in the box in the garage.

In the old days, that meant a box full of \$4 to \$7 baits, no big deal right? Now that box probably holds hundreds of dollars worth of baits, maybe it is time to dust a few off and try them with a new enthusiasm.

I try to stay on top of new baits looking for an edge and also because clients expect me to

know. I have developed an approach to these experiments that at least gives these baits an honest shot to succeed, let me share it with you for your consideration.

It always amazes me when I find out about a bait that is working well and has been for a year or so. How do people keep stuff like that secret for so long? Whenever possible I try to track down someone who is having success with the new bait and ask some generic questions about their experience, this can really cut down the learning curve. I don't fish major tournaments anymore so it is easier for me to get some helpful hints and of course, if you receive information you have to give information, it is only fair.

I take that information and dedicate the time to make it work. You have to invest the time to learn the bait in order to have a fair shot at producing re-



**odZ Shank Chotto
Wacky Rig Head**



sults. I fish the bait in the appropriate location where I have a great deal of confidence in finding fish that will participate. If I can catch fish on the bait then my client can. If I can't catch fish on it, I will keep trying, sometimes it isn't the location, it is the time of day and I will switch things up and tinker until I get bit or give up. But that process can take a couple of full days of fishing. I have to catch more than one fish on a new bait to declare it a success, and just because I can't get bit on it doesn't mean the bait doesn't work; it just means it doesn't work for me.

Here is a list of last year's specialty baits that didn't work for me: Black Dog Lures Shellcracker, River2Sea's S Waver, Baitsmith swimbaits, a couple of soft bodied Fish Trap type swim baits, Gambler's Giggy Head (couldn't keep the fish hooked), and the Spin Trix underspin. Don't feel too sorry for these baits and their manufacturers, apparently others did well enough with them, and some folks did real well. In addition, it could just be the way I fish is not conducive to these types of baits.

Here is a list of last year's specialty baits that did work for me: Black Dog Lures Lunker Punker (I really want to get the bass color this year) and the ODZ Shank Chotto. For me, the list that works is always shorter than the list that didn't work. Based on my experience, no one should hire me as a lure tester, which is for sure.

Here is my list for this year's experimentation: Spro's BBZ, River2Sea's Kong, and River2Sea's Rover 230. That list of 3 baits should account for most of my experimental time on the water as well as most of my arm and shoulder problems. I have high expectations for all of these baits due to the fact they are so different in comparison to what the

average angler is using right now. Most of them I got towards the end of summer and early fall and didn't have time to work with them.

The reality of bass fishing today is it can be as simple as you let it be or as complicated as you will allow. If you are serious about improving your success on the water, it may be time to try some specialty baits. We have more bait companies making exceptional lures today than ever and the choices can be overwhelming. The other reality is that some of these experiments can cost \$50 and more.

I know some of you reading this article have tried none of these baits, some of you have tried a few, and some of you are already catching fish on a bait I have not seen or heard of yet. Some of these baits are going to stand the test of time because they just flat appeal to some pretty good sized bass, and some won't, that is just the nature of the business. Have you seen what a Pupfish goes for on Ebay? By the way, anyone want to buy a slightly used Shellcracker?

Ross England is a full time guide, instructor, and active tournament angler who resides on Clear Lake. He is a two time former Redman All American who has won several tournaments on Clear Lake and is a perennial team tournament fish-off contender. Ross owns and operates Clear Lake Guide Service, is sponsored by his wife of over 30 years Deb, his good buddy Keith Bryan of Powell Rods, and promotes products for Lobina Lures and River2Sea.

For more information or to book a trip with Ross check out his site: www.clearlakeguideservice.com



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