

would when fishing with spinners. When you feel the bite, drop the rod tip back to the fish and then set the hook by sweeping the rod forward. Since the bait is a relatively small target, short hits are rare. If you find you are missing fish, however; that's a good indication that the fish may not be very active and you may need to slow down and possibly go with a more standard live bait presentation.

On lakes where fishing with 2 rods is legal, I'll also fish a rig on what is often referred to as a "dead stick". This is usually a longer, 8-foot 6-inch to 12 foot rod, with a softer, medium light action. Fishing a dead stick has helped me put a lot of fish in the boat. The length of the rod allows me to cover more water than I can with just the hand-held rod, and the softer action of the rod allows a fish to grab the bait and feel little resistance until it's already hooked up. Keith Kavajecz and I have designed a full line of bottom bouncer and dead stick rods for the Walleye Angler Signature Series for Bass Pro Shops. These are rods designed specifically for these types of presentations.

There never will be a secret bait or tactic that will catch walleyes in every situation all the time, but the slow death rig is continuously proving to be a versatile and productive technique for me the more and more I use it. It's a tactic that fills a void between bouncers and spinners and the traditional live bait rig. I truly believe you could dramatically increase your walleye fishing success this upcoming season if you add this to your bag of tricks... I know I won't be hitting the water without it.



### The Hook's the Thing for Slow Death Rigging

The secret to the slow death presentation is in the hook. The problem was to get the hook-bend just right so the bait would spin consistently. In the past, we'd take a size #2 Mustad Aberdeen hook and between myself, my son Chase, and Keith Kavajecz, we spent a lot of time and experimentation trying various bends in the hooks to get the action we were looking for. Once we had the hook bend figured out, we took the idea to Mustad and asked if they'd produce a hook with the specific design we had developed. They jumped on the idea, and we now have a factory made hook specifically designed for the slow death presentation. Mustad's Slow Death Hook model 33862 comes in 3 finishes, red, bronze and gold, and has the perfect bend to give the action needed to make this presentation work.



One key element to the slow death technique is making sure your bait maintains a good spin at all times. One thing that tends to affect this is the crawler itself. A fresh, plump crawler will spin more readily than one that's been on the hook for some time. Therefore, don't be stingy with the crawlers, and change your bait frequently to ensure you're getting the best action from the presentation.

I'm often asked if the slow death technique will work with artificial baits like Berkley GULP! Nightcrawlers. I have had some success using the back 3 inches of a 6 inch GULP! crawler, a GULP! 3 inch Fry and the GULP! Extruded Nightcrawlers (the ones that come in a jar). The one thing I've noticed using the artificial baits is that it does take a bit more speed to get them to spin consistently compared to using live bait. Therefore I find this to be a good option when you're dealing with more active fish or in situations where the walleyes see relatively little fishing pressure, such as in many Canadian lakes.