

Change It Up

By DJ Muller

There are times when you are fishing the beach and you are on a particularly a good-looking stretch of water or structure, and you just know that there are fish there, the problem is, you just can not figure out why the fish won't hit your presentation. As a surfcaster, sometimes I get caught "sleeping" a particular lure. That is, I caught one fish on it earlier in the session, or last year, or ten years ago, something crazy like that, so I believe that it is the only lure that the fish like or will take. Please keep your mind and options open!

I am an avid baseball fan, I have either played baseball or have watched it all of my life. I liken young pictures to young surfcasters. They throw hard, they throw far, and they can be over zealous with their newly found ability. It is the same routine every time, fast ball, fast ball, faster ball. Then you watch the old veterans that have like 500 wins and an 88 M.P.H. fast ball and they have more strike outs than the fireballer. Why? Because they vary the pitches and change it up a lot. If you throw a 90 M.P.H. fast ball followed by a 80 M.P.H. change up, you fool people. As a surfcaster you need to do the same. You throw a Bomber, a lure that you have had reasonable success with; you throw it over and over and over again, to nausea. You get one bass on it and then you become frustrated because you have not got another in an hour and a half of casting. So you decide to go home and ponder your next move. Mean time you walk away from bass in the rip.

Last fall during one of the decent runs of bass on the beaches, I watched a fellow standing 30 yards off a jetty catch a nice striper at let's say about 30 inches. It was a 'right place at the right time fish,' as there was no structure or hole at his spot. I kept an eye on the fellow as I continued to fish. I proceeded to watch the guy stand in the exact same spot, throwing the exact same lure for more than an hour, with no result. What was he thinking?! Fish...swim! Meanwhile I put up three more bass to the one I already had on the beach. I kept moving and I kept changing my offering.

Change It Up. When I work a stretch of beach, I begin at one jetty and then work down the beach, two or three jetties, or a stretch of a quarter mile or so, before I turn around and work the same area on the return trip. I work each spot until I feel good about my effort at that spot. When I plug an individual spot, I "change it up" a lot. I first throw the lure that I feel most confident in, I fan about eight to ten cast in the vicinity, and then I change my lure and try the same area again. If nothing, then I may change it again, a third time, before I move on to the next good looking area.

For example, I will start with a shad to cover distance and depth. Then I will try a popper to call fish from afar or to stir interest. Lastly I will go to a steel lipped swimmer. The lure selection and order depends on the bait present and conditions of the water and wind. When I feel that I have exhausted my efforts I will move and begin the process anew at fresh water.

Sometimes, simply changing the color of the lure will work. I was working a very good pocket and rip along side a jetty in November a few years back. The peanuts were present but not concentrated. I took turns hitting bass and blues with regularity with a steel-lipped swimmer. In this case, I stayed with the wood swimmer. First I would get a bass on a

white 5” and then nothing for ten minutes, then I would switch over to the same lure in yellow, and then nail a fish on one of the next two or three casts, then nothing for a spell, and then switch, and then bang! It worked like a charm! There was a pattern and I fortunately figured it out.

Bass or blues are not blind, and they are not ignorant. They are animals, and they react instinctively to movement. They react instinctively to a wounded or lone baitfish. It is how they feed. They are opportunists. They see your offering when it swims through the water...every time it swims by. Animals also adapt quickly to change. When you throw the same lure in the same spot 57 times in a row, don't you think the fish down below sees it and say, "Naw, looks weird." If and when you change it up, it may some how conjure up the instinctive reaction for a fish to charge or attack. They will usually do it on the first or second cast after the "change" is made. This is more the rule than the exception. Keep changing it up and never let a fish see the same offering more than twice.

Well with the upcoming fall run; don't focus on only the blitz conditions. Go out and throw a change up or two and put some linesiders on the beach for yourself. To catch a bass when they are not blitzing is so much more gratifying than knocking them senseless during a time of easy pickings. The confidence you will build for yourself will amaze you and lead you to many more fish. See you out there!