

MUSKIE MADNESS, DEPTH CONTROL



40 inch, 23 pound Muskie, Lake Macatawa channel

I think I've been bit by the musky bug! John Bales introduced us to great musky fishing over in the Detroit River just this summer. After hearing about his great catches, Don Stephens, Brent Robbins and I went there before the Northern Indiana Spoonpluggers outing on August 12th and tried it out for a day. One nice musky hooked and lost at the boat was enough to get us interested. This type of fishing is not for the faint of heart! Lost lures, cut lines, and handling heavy current can be quite a challenge. There is much to learn about rocks, current, and the proper presentation of lures in that type situation.

On Sunday August 29, 2005 my wife joined me for a fishing trip on Lake Macatawa. All the favorite spots were tried both trolling and casting with nary a bite. This has been the story around here for quite a while! One Guideline from Buck Perry seemed to keep returning to mind: "If you aren't catching fish (and are properly controlling depth and speed) you are not fishing deep enough". It was decided to troll deeper in the channel and breakwater basin with a #800 Spoonplug (20-25 feet). This was a challenge as a current of about 5 mph was going into Lake Macatawa. Accurate bottom bouncing can best be done with the proper Spoonplugging tools. A nice musky, 23 pounds and 40 inches, was hooked. It leaped completely out of the water and put up a powerful fight. It

was a beautiful fish with a small head and heavy girth. A lengthy fight while drifting through the Holland channel even brought some applause from bystanders when the fish was landed!

This was a good learning experience in the catch and release of big muskies. I was fortunate to have a good-sized net where the fish was kept upright in the water next to the boat and the lure removed. A yardstick was placed in the water next to the fish to measure him. Then the net and fish were picked up on the scale hook for a few seconds to weigh him. The net weight can be subtracted later. With the fish resting in the net in the water, cameras were made ready. The fish was grabbed with one hand under one side of the jaw, and the other hand under the belly to support and subdue him. It took less than a minute to take the pictures, and the fish was released. It was gratifying to see him swim away and dive on his own without any resuscitation.

The primary lesson learned on this trip is to not be afraid of going deeper. Fish all structures as deep as you can read them if you are not getting results shallower. Every one of Buck Perrys' Spoonplugging Guidelines is important. It takes more than a lifetime of fishing to read, study, and experience them all. What are you waiting for?

Chase Klinesteker