

## “HANDS-ON” SPOONPLUGGING



Warrens' first walleye

Whenever I am a **passenger** in another Spoonpluggers' boat, I find it **difficult to map and learn** much about the lake structures we are fishing. Conversely, **when I am running the motor**, feeling the bottom consistency with my rod, and glancing at the markers, depth sounder, and terrain, **I can learn a lot about the structure** in that lake. This fact was recently brought to my attention during a phone conversation with Terry O'Malley. Terry insists that his **on-the-water training students bring their own boat, motor, and Spoonplugging equipment**. With beginning students he will **show them first**, but those with some experience **run the boat** as he guides them through proper lure presentation and mapping procedures. Terry's results have proven that **“hands-on” experience is the fastest and best way to learn Spoonplugging**. Those students that he took out and just showed how to present lures did not advance or follow through nearly as well as the students who ran the boat themselves. Terry attributes this to the student realizing that “they can do it”.

The latest edition of “National Spoonplugger” contained a quote from Mr. Perry. “If I were to place the importance of knowledge on any one given area, the **highest degree of importance** would probably have to be placed on **your ability to read and interpret bottom conditions**”. I feel that this ability can best be developed through proper lure presentation procedures. Gaining skill in this area requires plenty of on-the-water **experience running the boat while presenting lures**. Many things are happening at once and they all must be coordinated to gain the most information. **Steering the boat, glancing at the terrain and marker, feeling**

**bottom conditions with your lure, and a quick look at the depth sounder are part of what is going on all at once.** Along with that, we are drawing the structure outline in our mind from the information gained. This skill can not be learned overnight, but **guidance from an instructor while you do it can be invaluable.** To get good at any skill **requires practice and help from others.** Imagine trying to learn how to play football by just watching football games!

**Spoonplugging Instructors** are not fishing guides; they **teach.** Some students may **wish it to be “proven” that these procedures will catch fish,** but each **instructor has many pictures** of big fish caught to demonstrate that. The greatest benefit to the student comes from **experiencing what needs to be done and getting suggestions on how to do it better.** An occasional fish caught by the student can be an added bonus, but we **can’t let tough fishing conditions distract from the learning process.**

When Terry called, I had **a beginning student,** Warren Richter, scheduled for a one-day class the next morning. He **had read the “Green Book”**, but most of his **previous fishing experience had been from shore.** I had planned to run the boat and show him about Spoonplugging, but then decided to incorporate Terrys’ concept in the training. Warren was somewhat reluctant, but gracious, and agreed to take over the motor **after watching me go through lure presentation on the first structure.** He had a good attitude, picked it up quickly, and soon was running the boat exclusively. He told me later that he learned a lot and **was glad I encouraged him to run the boat.** Warren was confident that now he could present lures on his own. An additional benefit was a **20 inch walleye (his first)** that he caught “on purpose” while running straight-line trolling passes on a bar.

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