

Time for the Winter Sport Shows

By Steve Welch

My nine month season has come to a halt and this year I ended up doing 221 trips and ran another forty through my second boat so it was a successful season. I really don't do tourneys anymore but since Crappie U.S.A. was holding their classic at Paris Landing on the south end of Kentucky Lake I decided to try and qualify. I went to the Lake Decatur qualifier and did just that. Really didn't have that good of a tourney but qualified for the classic which was our goal.

I took a week off from guiding and went down to Paris Landing basically treating it like a vacation with my partner and buddies. If we did well that was a bonus. We finished 12th overall on the semi-pro division and had a ball all week. I lost two pigs on second day that would have jumped us about four spots but oh well that is fishing. The competition was very close second on through fifteenth and a pound would move you up a bunch.

Now it is time for my second season, the outdoor shows. I am speaking at several instate shows this winter starting with the Let's Go Fishing Show in Collinsville January 6,7&8. Then I am off to Bloomington for the Fish & Feather Expo January 27,28 &29. Then up north to the Tinley Park Fishing Show February 11 & 12 and finally to the Elmwood All Outdoors Show March 5 & 6.

I have a booth at each of these shows to sell my fishing products and DVD's and of course book guide trips for 2012. We kicked it around a couple of years ago to come out with some lures that really had their own identity. We developed a tail spinner lure called the Candy striper and we make it in three sizes for different applications. It has become a very good catch all bait and we use it for white bass, walleye and this year for crappie. It really shines on bridge pilings and of course what we designed it for was to cover a flat for white bass and walleye and to probe a deep drop off for summer white bass.

I am basically known as a crappie fisherman so I knew we needed a crappie jig a little different than anyone had. Thus the Deep Ledge Jig was born. This jig was designed to probe the deep ledges on Kentucky Lake and to target deep structure on Lake Shelbyville. With it's large aspirin head design and squared off edges it really shows up on your electronics. This is a must when you are trying to hit the top of a deep brush pile or a high branch on a deep down tree. It is like playing a video game just watching your jig bounce up and down on the screen. It has taken some time to get others on board, who would even think of using a 1/4oz. jig to crappie fish with. If you target the deep winter crappie this jig has no equal. For those still skeptical we also came out with a 3/16 , 1/8, & 3/32oz. All with the big aspirin head and the sunken prism eyes. Each jig is hand painted with four coats of very tough epoxy paint and a clear coat to both give them a brilliant shine and a rock hard exterior to protect the eyes.

Both of these lures the Candy striper and the Deep Ledge Jig have taken off as the go to bait for everyone on Lake Shelbyville and I am proud to say we sold about 18,000 of these this year just the wife, myself and a buddy of mine Dick Beals. We now have them in three retail outlets and those are growing as we speak.

The DVD's we started as a fluke to see if any would sell. They have taken off and I am always getting congratulated on a good job and how folks just wear them out watching them over and over. We now have four of them available and looking to add a walleye video this year as well as an electronic video on the Lowrance HDS systems. Each one we tried to make look home spun and try and jam as much fishing info in them as you can get and of course lots of fish.

Last year I was drug into the 21st century and we now have a very good powerpoint presentation just jam packed with info on the Lowrance HDS systems and GPS mapping and all sorts of info on seasonal fishing patterns. We always do a calendar year and what I do to catch fish in central Illinois and of course my winter vacation spot Paris Landing on the south end of Kentucky Lake. I have by far the biggest crowds in my seminars and thank each and every one of you for coming out

so I can continue doing something I love so much and that is the art of fishing.

I have been doing sport shows now for eighteen years and I still pick up a thing or two each year. I routinely set in on others seminars and love to fish for all species of fish. So please stop out and see my lovely wife and me. We have a booth called Crappie Specialties and now we are also including our new Illinois Fishing Forum and encouraging folks to become members. It is called Illinois Fish Talk and in just three months we have grown to 173 members and more are joining each day. We want it to become the most informative fishing forum in the state.