

Hail the tail-spinners!

Innovative lure combines old, new techniques to fool bass

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Years ago, long before I ever heard the phrase, "Texas-rigged worm," people used "harness worms."

Adapted from a rig used in northern states to tempt walleye with live nightcrawlers, these prerigged baits came with two or three hooks protruding from the belly of a soft-plastic worm and linked together with fishing line. Some hooks came with wire guards to make them snagless. On the nose, a straight wire held several colored metal, glass or plastic beads and what looked like a miniature aircraft propeller.

Early one July 4, Dad took me fishing in a pond everyone called the swimming hole. By mid-morning, the sun began to beat down on us and a few swimmers arrived. Dad said, "We haven't caught anything. Let's go."

My natural response to that was always, "One more cast, please?"

I tied on a bright red harness worm, the first time I had ever used any kind of soft-plastic bait, and tossed it over a sandbar where we sometimes stood to rest from swimming. I let the bait sink to the bottom in the trough between the bar and the vertical shoreline. Then, I reeled steadily to turn the propeller. As the lure came up the back side of the sandbar, something grabbed it.

After quite a fight on light tackle, I finally caught a bass weighing nearly six pounds. Instantly, red harness worms became my new favorite bait! That fish remained my personal best largemouth until I visited Mexico nearly 30 years later.

Few bass anglers still fish with harness or prerigged worms, if they can even find them. However, anglers can use something similar, only in reverse, a tail-spinner worm!

To make a tail-spinner worm, add a spinner blade to the tail of a straight worm, slug-type bait or similar soft-plastic lure. Rig it weightless with a 5/0 extra-wide gap hook inserted into the plastic to make it snagless. It can slip through the branches of fallen trees, brush piles or practically any other cover that might attract a bass.

"I like a straight worm or stickbait with a little weight to it," advised Keith Poche, a professional bass angler from Pike Road, Ala. "To the back of the worm, attach a Number 1 or 2 spinner blade with a swivel and a split ring. The blade is just big enough to give off some flash, but not too bulky to chase fish away. The spinner draws attention to the bait and allows a person to fish it a lot faster."

A tail-spinner worm almost combines the action of a spinnerbait with the ability of a worm to go through cover. Anglers can work the rig many

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Photo by John N. Felsher

Keith Poche, a professional bass angler from Pike Road, Ala., shows off a bass he caught on a tail-spinner worm. A tail-spinner worm has a spinner blade attached to its tail to attract more fish.