

# The Serious Tackle Box

Experienced Fishing Advice To  
Make Fishing Great Again

With Chris Gonzales

## The Belly Up Rig

**T**he Belly Up Rig is another way of rigging a whole dead or alive baitfish which greatly increases its chance of triggering a strike by a predator fish. Another point is that it doesn't have any added costs associated with it....free is a good thing. Belly Up rigging works with either a mono or wire leader and can be freelined or fished with an egg weight above the swivel. It generates strikes from a variety of species - ling, kingfish, wahoo, groupers, and red snapper, to name a few - from the near surface area to the bottom.

I first saw this way of hooking a baitfish aboard the Royal Polaris out of San Diego in 1989 while on a seventeen-day trip to Mexico's Revillagigedo islands where we fished for wahoo and yellowfin tuna. The yellowfin readily struck the Belly Up rigged, caballito bates that are similar to our cigar minnows. I've used the belly up rig successfully since then on an assortment of offshore gamefish from the near surface to the bottom. It can be used with whole baitfish such as cigar minnows, Spanish sardines, sand trout, tinker mackerel, etc.

The signature feature of the belly up rig is the hook placement in the baitfish. The illustration has the 7/0 Daiichi D84Z Bleeding Bait Circle Chunk Hook on its 3 to 4 feet of fluorocarbon or dulled mono leader passing through the Spanish sardine's mouth and out through one of its gill plates. The hook is then pushed through, then out the top of the sardine's body at around the front of its midsection. With the circle hook, as shown, the hook point must be exposed to that approximate position; this will ensure a positive hookset at hook rotation as the line comes tight. With a "J" type hook like an 8/0 Mustad Ultra Point 10829BLN, less hook bend and point exposure would be okay. With this hook location, its weight will cause it to roll downward and the sardine to do likewise...going belly up. This belly up position of the sardine along with an occasional rod tip twitch "activates"



### The Belly Up Rig

CAMO BLUE OR DULLED EGG  
WEIGHT FOR DEPTH CONTROL.

FLUOROCARBON OR DULLED  
MONO LEADER

80# SPRO POWER SWIVEL

ROD TIP TWITCHES ACTIVATE EVEN A DEAD  
BAITFISH, GIVING IT THE LOOK OF BEING  
ALIVE BUT INJURED

LOCATION AND WEIGHT OF THE HOOK  
MAKES YOUR BAITFISH GO BELLY UP

DAIICHI D84Z BLEEDING BAIT  
CIRCLE CHUNK LIGHT HOOK  
SIZE 7/0



even a dead baitfish. This gives the illusion of the sardine being alive but injured and vulnerable - which triggers the strike.

The leader is described as 3 to 4 feet of fluorocarbon or dulled mono. I came up with dulled mono leaders and have used them for years. I like to call it poor man's fluorocarbon. The shine on the mono's surface can at times make it appear like it's chromed wire from this reflected sunlight. I believe this reflected sunlight coming off the mono's smooth surface is what the target species sees as not being natural, causing it to turn away at the last moment. This mono dulling is accomplished by slowly pulling the mono through a folded "Scotch-Brite" pad while slowly rolling the pad with a back-and-forth wrist rotation. Use a genuine, green, Scotch-Brite pad for the best results. The resulting crosshatch pattern on the mono's surface breaks up the reflected sunlight, making it become almost as undetectable as fluorocarbon. Disrupting the mono surface will weaken the mono to some extent, but it is minimal. Leaders should be replaced as necessary since the dulling procedure disturbs the surface and speeds up the water absorption process. The mono will take on a milky look after a

few hours of use, replace it, mono's cheap.

The camo-painted or dull egg weight as shown in the illustration is a carryover from my belief that stealth is best. The camo blue is Rust-O-leum 7727 Royal Blue with a clear matte topcoat of Rust-O-leum 7902 that knocks down the shine of the camera blue paint. The "dull" on the illustration's egg weight is one that exposure to the elements has naturally dulled to a dark gray. The 80# Spro power swivel is small for its rated strength, dark, dull and it's also stealthy. The reason for stealth in this area as shown on the illustration is that when you are fishing with new, shiny egg weights or chrome/shiny swivels they will possibly generate a strike from one of our toothy offshore residents. Even a small flash to a predator such as a wahoo or one of the other mackerels may trigger a strike if it's your egg weight or swivel, it will cause the loss of your complete rig and ling, snapper, etc., which could be on the hook. Going in the opposite direction from stealth for a moment, the "Bleeding Bait" red finish on the Daiichi Circle Hook (see illustration) also says that your baitfish is injured and vulnerable. This feature alone will add to the strike generation potential of just about any rigging method.

Are all of these stealth and attraction tricks necessary? Not always, but I believe the chance is great that they could make a difference when presenting your baitfish to an adult predator. They're full grown and educated from years of living and changing them from a looker into a striker is a job this rig was made for. The Belly Up Rig gives a bait fish an illusion which often works like magic. Let it turn your baitfish into that illusion and work its hookup magic for you on your next trip offshore.

If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at [chris@serioustackle.com](mailto:chris@serioustackle.com)

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