

The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

Serious Castable Cedar Plug

What is a castable cedar plug? It's a modification of one of the world's best tuna lures that have been used successfully around the world for many years in their trolling configuration. Why not convert these cedar plugs to casters?" A high-speed reel could readily duplicate the troll speed on the retrieve.

Cedar plugs cast like a bullet, are low cost compared to many other castable hard-body subsurface swimmers. I've taken numerous kingfish, several ling, and even red snapper on them. There's no reason dolphin and wahoo won't also try to eat 'em. The obvious catch omission is tuna; that bulb went off while on a 48-hour trip after a kingfish stop on the way home. At times it seems like the obvious hide from all of us, castable cedar plugs and tuna at night was a combination I'd missed.

Most of my 4" and 6" models are rigged up on about 20" of 7 x 7 cable, a stop bead and single barrel crimp is located about 7" ahead of the cedar plug. I also paint everything but the jig body either camo blue or green. The cable is 90# or up, giving cut off protection when targeting kingfish or wahoo. Incidentally, a 4" model weighed in at 1 ounce and a 6" at 2.23 ounces. Their weight plus rigging and great aerodynamics make them the great casters they are. The simplest conversion to a caster is to shorten the 6-foot section of mono they come with to about 24", tie or crimp on a suitable swivel and you are ready to go casting. In my opinion, they are as versatile as the chrome diamond jig. Those I have on mono are rigged differently — I use 100# or 130# Seaguar Fluorocarbon to greatly reduce its reflection. I specified Seaguar because their diameter per pound strength is less than others I've found.

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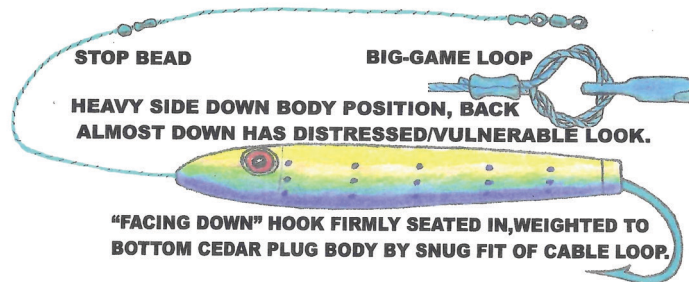


For instance, their 100# is .035 vs .039 which converts to 100# for the size 80#. I don't have the stop bead and crimp ahead of the jig body when mono-casting for tuna, ling, etc. The purpose of the stop bead and crimp is to stop the plug body there when it slides up the cable after the hookup since the body can possibly slide over the cable and the cable's loop connection at the hook. The object is to stop the plug body before it gets to the swivel where a second strike by another kingfish or wahoo will likely result in a cutoff.

If you find bare cedar plug bodies available, the hooks you need for 4" and 6" bodies are MustadTM 3412D Needle Eye in 8/0 and 10/0. Always carefully sharpen them if needed for increased hookups.

Cedar plugs have a heavy or bottom side. To find the heavy/bottom side, run a piece of mono through the bare cedar plug body, pull the mono tight in a horizontal position and spin the plug body on the tight mono. Do this spin motion and you will establish the heavy or bottom side at the stop. Mark the rear flange with a permanent mark of some type — a small dot

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or line will do. I mark most of mine on the bottom side as a place for the hook bend to rest. For casting, I want the hook bend/point facing down. Since blowups and missed hookups are fairly common with near-surface use, the hook down has a better hookup percentage since the hook is the probable first contact for the attacking tuna, kingfish, wahoo, etc. The hook will seat firmly into place when the hook's cable or mono loop is pulled tight through the plug body. This hook positioning looks to be one of those tuning gems that are a real plus...wish I'd thought of it. See the illustration's clear view of all rigging.

When fishing these cedar plugs, a high-speed retrieve reel loaded with braided line is virtually a must. The high retrieve speed is important when targeting high-speed predators and the braid gives many more hooksets than springy mono. Concerning backs and bellies, with the weighted side and hook down the body colors will seldom be "back up". This random positioning of body colors gives the added look of a somewhat distressed and vulnerable target to a predator.

Casting cedar plugs for tuna, it's an open secret now; as casters, a whole new world has opened up. An old saying variation, "You can teach an old dog new tricks" refers to myself as well as cedar plugs. Castable cedar plugs, one of the best of my many offshore fishing innovations over the years. Don't leave the dock without them, their catching ability is hot-hot-hot! They could be your next "go-to" lures!

If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at chris@serioustackle.com



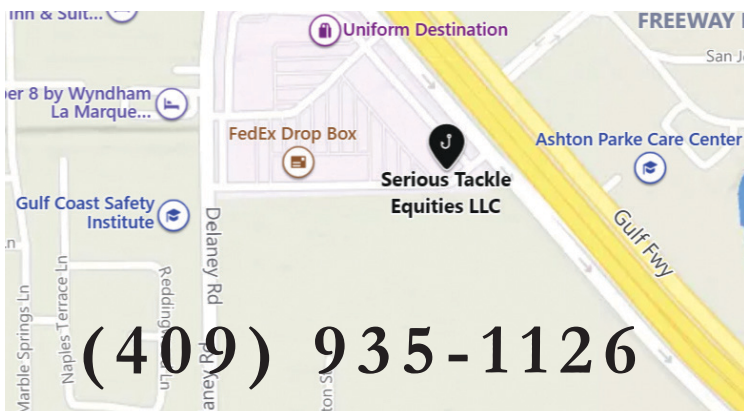
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