

The Serious Tackle Box

*Experienced Fishing Advice To
Make Fishing Great Again*

With Chris Gonzales

Waaa-hoo!

What in our Texas offshore waters is fast, flashy, and colorful? Well, it's not a fish, although the description fits quite a few of them out there. It's actually a family of lures used primarily for casting that can also be trolled, called bombs and bullets. They originated in the fertile minds of southern California's long-range fishermen in the late 80s and early 90s. Their target species was Mexico's also flashy, fast, and colorful Wahoo. These lures caught them then and are still catching them now. They also generate strikes from our Texas wahoo, (or should it be... "Waaa-hoo"?).

I've also taken kingfish, dolphin, red snapper, and amberjack over the past 14 years or so with them and a ling of 72 pounds was caught by one of Galveston's pier fishermen using one of them — these things work!

The Serious Tackle Bomb, like most others, has a "sliding head" design which also has a couple of important features; the spinner blade-to-hook arrangement and the beads and stop crimp on its cable leader. The spinner blade to the hook attachment is simple as it has minimal water resistance on the retrieve which helps in attaining and maintaining a high speed. The beads and stop crimp come into play after the hookup since the thru-holed lead head and skirt can freely slide along the leader. This ability of the head and skirt to slide on the leader is good and bad. The good part is that a head-shaking wahoo or kingfish can't use the weight of the head to possibly help dislodge the hook. The bad thing is that, after the hookup, the head and skirt could be slung up the cable leader to the solid ring or swivel where it may trigger a second strike, which will likely result in a cutoff. Since your wahoo or kingfish will probably have some of their toothy friends and family in the immediate area, this is a real problem. The bead and stop crimp prevent the head from going to the solid ring or swivel, eliminating the problem. See the illustration.

Weighing in at around 6 oz. and 5 1/2" in head and skirt total length, the bomb or bullet can be cast or trolled (5-7 knots) for a variety of species. The near-surface area is their domain; fooling and hooking wahoo and smoker kingfish is their design specialty. Don't forget to have your cap with a dark underbill and polarized sunglasses properly installed on your head. These are two critical items that greatly increase your sight fishing success in the near-surface area where most wahoo and kingfish roam.

The colors, flash of the spinner blade, and retrieve speed are what make these lures work. This factor is a big one — if you have wahoo and kingfish following your bomb but not striking, your retrieve speed is likely



KINGFISH / WAHOO BOMB



too slow. Color and flash will get a wahoo's attention, but it's mostly the speed that triggers a strike. A high retrieve speed is important, such as a 6:1 retrieve, in that you can slow it down as needed. A reel with, say, a 4:1 retrieve ratio can only be turned so fast and it will still only provide a retrieve speed that's too slow to excite one of these "speed merchants" into striking. Wahoo have also been known to burst through the water's surface close to the boat side while chasing one of these high-speed lures. A good procedure to follow is to slow your retrieve about 15 feet or so from the boat side. They have, on occasion, ended up on deck amongst the fishermen on some of those long-range trips out of San Diego. Don't be the first one to make it happen in our waters.

Most of my casting rigs are spooled up with at least 300 yards of 100 lb. braided line either blue, white, or hi-vis yellow. My Shimano, Avet, or Accurate with its 6.2 to 1 or higher retrieve ratio, is loaded to full spool with 100 lb. braided line. The braided line gives you the advantage of its virtually zero stretch. When cast at maximum distance and the strike comes quickly, that lack of stretch gives you a hookset that can't be matched by anyone's mono. I fish my braided line with the drag set at 15 lbs. Its small diameter has these advantages: high capacity of higher strength line; spool diameter stays high longer, which allows longer casts and smoother drag operation. This is all because the reel spool has to make fewer revolutions per foot of line going out or coming back. Maximum spool diameter results in longer casting distance, faster retrieval, and smoother drag

performance. These are three items that you want in your favor. Start with a full spool of line. Also, don't forget that an almost stretchless braided line will give surer hook sets over springy mono and braided lines small diameter helps those first three items happen. Blue, white, or hi-vis yellow braided line lets you see where your line is at all times, day or night, while also allowing other fishermen to see it which helps avoid crossed lines, tangles, etc. For stealth with these high visibility colors, I color the first 15 feet or so above the swivel, or welded ring, with a blue split top Marks-A-Lot®.

On the cast, slow it down with a little additional thumb pressure on the spool; what this gets you is a wahoo bomb/bullet that's straightened out and away from you and ready for an un-fouled landing and sink. Depending on where the target is believed to be holding, let it sink 5 to 50 feet and wind back like mad with your rod tip pointed at the line's entry into the water. At the strike, keep winding until your line is loaded, you feel the weight of the fish and the drag starts to slip. Then and only then, raise the tip loading the rod. Not using this procedure will result in missed hookups - I guarantee it.

Back to the retrieve speed for a moment — believe me, you can't wind too fast. Use a rotating wrist motion rather than a bending elbow and rotating shoulder motion. The wrist roll provides a much faster retrieve speed - you can simply turn your reel handle faster.

Wahoo bombs and bullets are under-utilized off the Texas coast and I believe we have to remember and use these techniques that have been put



Rigged Wahoo Bomb

into a sort of retirement. Remember that a TV re-run is new if you've never seen it. The same goes for these great working bomb or bullet-type lures. They are tried and proven "fish catchers". Cast them around any structure that could hold wahoo or kingfish such as rigs, wrecks,

and anchored shrimp boats when they are out there. Blind casting in these areas can result in a drag-screaming run that few fish can match, they're like being hooked onto a lightning bolt. A blazing run toward, then around the boat, isn't uncommon either. Regaining slack line is made a lot easier with that high retrieve ratio reel.

The Serious Tackle wahoo bombs are available here at Serious Tackle. Armed with your braid-filled high-speed reel and matching rod, cast and then wind like mad and hang on. The next reaction to that first blazing, drag-screaming run may be a "Waaa-Hoo!" of your own.

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

Chris Gonzales
Owner - Serious Tackle




(409) 935-1126
 14065 Delany Rd.
 LaMarque, Texas 77568
 (In the Gulfway Plaza)

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