

The Serious Tackle Box

Experienced Fishing Advice To
Make Fishing Great Again

With Chris Gonzales

King's Choice

Whether by casting or slow trolling, the slashing, flashing strike and blazing first run by one of our smoker Texas kingfish is an experience that's a thrill no matter how many times you feel or see it. Naturally, the first requirement to be a participant in this scenario is to be where the fish are. This is about what comes next.

What's going to be covered are a couple of methods to get a smoker kingfish that are different from the standard freelined sardine or cigar minnow. One can be cast or trolled, the other is primarily a slow trolling rig that can also be slowly freelined back with the current and then slowly "swam" back to the boat. Both are based on various weight Snapper Slappers. I use them because of their head design and the vibration and swimming motion they transmit to an attached bait. This vibration is picked up by the lateral line of predator fish and they come to investigate. At that point the visual signal, being the Snapper Slapper, baitfish, and/or spinner will usually generate a strike. Both of the following rigging methods can be used with any type of leadhead jig.

At the bottom of the illustration is a cast/slow troll variation of the standard Snapper Slapper. The changes are; the added #3 willowleaf blade in a nickel finish attached to the bend of the stinger hook with small split rings and a swivel. The blade's flash and vibration help trigger kingfish and wahoo strikes. At times I replace the standard trailer hook with a larger Mustad R94140-BLN 6/0. I hang it on 100#, 7 x 7, 49 strand stainless cable.

This stuff is tough, flexible, with a small diameter, and the only 100#, 49 strand cable I've found. With the optional sardine hooked through its head on the main hook, insert the stinger into the sardine underside. Be sure to leave a little slack in the cable so that the sardine tracks straight on the main hook during the retrieve. I said "optional" on the sardine because, when casting, the added mass and drag it produces will slow your retrieve drastically. Without the sardine, the higher retrieve speed attainable doesn't give your kingfish or wahoo time to get a good look at it. That, plus the color and motion of the jighead and the flash of the willowblade gets the strike. Color combinations for kingfish and wahoo are black/purple, pink/chartreuse, and



red/white in 3 and 5 oz. sizes. With this rig, I use a 12 to 18" steel leader of cable, also going to the extent of camo painting it for added stealth. The 150# action ring is also stealthy, a swivel isn't needed with this spin-free rigging.

When in a known kingfish area, cast/flip out as far as possible, and let sink from 18 inches to 30 feet. Then burn it back, straight and as fast as you can wind on a high-speed reel such as AVET or Shimano. Lure speed gets strikes from kingfish and wahoo!

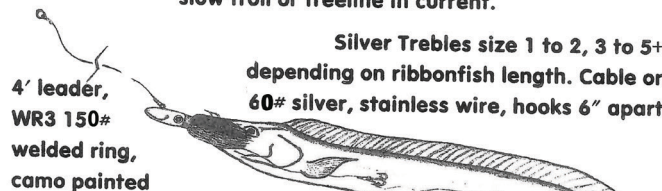
The nose-hooked ribbonfish on a Snapper Slapper as shown in the illustration is another route to your smoker kingfish. If a 50" ribbonfish sounds intimidating or overkill, it is, unless you are a 50# kingfish. While this length is commonly used in tournament king fishing, for most of us,

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Ribbonfish & Snapper Slapper

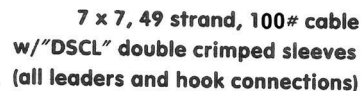
24 to 50" nose hooked on 1 oz pink/chartreuse,
slow troll or freeline in current.

4' leader,
WR3 150#
welded ring,
camo painted

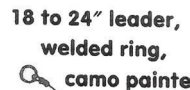


Silver Trebles size 1 to 2, 3 to 5+
depending on ribbonfish length. Cable or
60# silver, stainless wire, hooks 6" apart

7 x 7, 49 strand, 100# cable
w/"DSCL" double crimped sleeves
(all leaders and hook connections)

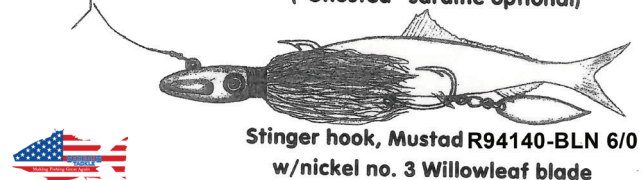


18 to 24" leader,
welded ring,
camo painted



Snapper Slapper w/Willowblade

3 to 5 oz. black/purple, cast/slow troll
("Ghosted" sardine optional)



Stinger hook, Mustad R94140-BLN 6/0
w/nickel no. 3 Willowleaf blade

ribbonfish in the 24 to 30" range will suffice. Whatever size you choose for slow trolling, the rigging is virtually the same except for the number of hooks used; keep in mind that this is not SKA Tournament rigging. If you are in the position to be able to pick up and run after your hooked fish, you can go with lighter wire, smaller hooks, and a looser drag setting. This rigging is primarily for use from a stationary boat but could be used for slow trolling also. Referring to the illustration will give you most of the info needed to complete this rigging. Treble hooks in 3X and 4X strong are available from an assortment of manufacturers such as Daiichi, VMC, Mustad, Owner, Eagle Claw, and Gamakatsu. Use sizes 1 to 1/0 in a silver finish. This ribbonfish/Snapper Slapper combination can also be slowly drifted back in the current, a little slower than the current speed so it "swims", so to speak. When back in the current, say 100 ft, slowly "swim"/retrieve it back against the current. The strike could come at any time.

Other types of leadhead jigs can have the cable attached at the jig head's eye or at the bend of the main hook. Forty to 60# stainless steel wire with haywire twists can also be used if you prefer. Back to the cable, leaving a little slack between each hook connection is vitally important. This bit of slack and the suppleness of this cable lets the swimming motion of the Snapper Slapper be passed on to the ribbonfish, making it almost come alive. The silver trebles and cable are another step toward stealth and a natural look.

An important item when using this multiple treble hook ribbonfish rig is always be positive that everyone is aware when multiple trebles are going to be used on your boat. On anyone else's boat, friends-charter-party boat, ask the captain if it's OK to use them. While they catch fish, not everyone agrees with their use - check first.

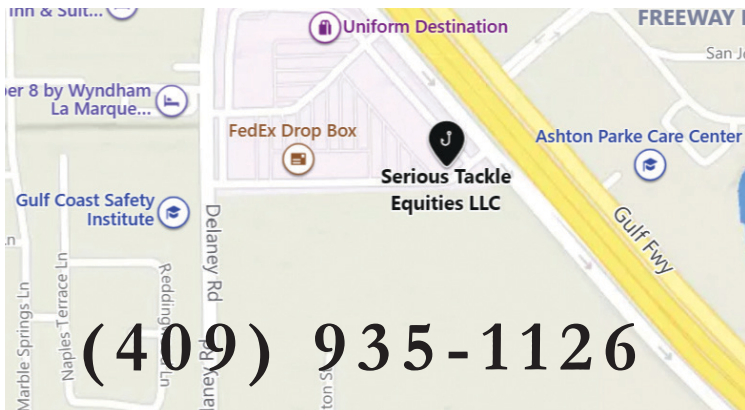
As stated at the beginning, get to where the kingfish are, then add these two rigging and fishing techniques to your arsenal. They just might be the difference that helps you fool that wary adult smoker kingfish that will make your summer a memorable one.

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

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