

# The Serious Tackle Box

Experienced Fishing Advice To  
Make Fishing Great Again

With Chris Gonzales

## A Kingfish's Nightmare O.G. Style

Kingfish are one of our primary summer offshore target species and while the title of this piece is "A Kingfish's Nightmare", it's really about numerous nightmare possibilities, not only for kingfish but also for their larger and faster family member, the wahoo. While most true smoker kingfish are taken on live baits, sizeable ones have come on freelined cigar minnows or Spanish sardines, also wahoo. My personal best kingfish of 53lbs.- 11oz hit these freelined dead baits, and my heaviest Wahoo, an 80 lb. - 2 oz. model, ate freelined cigar minnow. The heaviest two wahoo caught on the boat I fished were 87lbs and 93lbs. They also ate freelined dead natural baits, all taken on either single or tandem hook wire leader systems.

The basic layout of either the single or double hook hard wire leader system is shown in the illustration. The free-swinging hook in the bait fish's nose can also be duplicated in the stinger hook position instead of being wired as a stiff hook. In a single hook wire leader, either the free-swinging or stiff hook can be used. I believe the stiff hook gives a quicker hook set.

When making a stiff hook-wrapped leader section, make the stiff hook wrap first, then haywire twist the other end to its swivel. Make the eye around the hook shank, and twist together four to six turns. Now, push each end of the wire through opposite sides of the hook eye and do a haywire twist to complete the connection. See the illustration's closeup view oval for the final look. Notice the stinger's wire is connected to a swivel below the lead "J" or circle hook's eye/shank and the swivel is wired to the hook's leader wire. See the other oval. That "stinger swivel" reduces possible associated leader damage during the "fish fight". The leader, swivel at the main line to the head hook can be 13 to 24"; mine are all 13". The entire leader system, lead swivel to the stinger hook,



is spray-painted camo green. John Deere Green to be exact — it hides in green or blue water. To finish the camo, spray on a light coat of flat clear to kill the reflected shine. Your bait, being the target without an unnatural distraction of the leader, will be more likely to get bit. I've caught sizeable kingfish and wahoo during my over 40 years of fishing offshore without the camo treatment, but I don't know how many others have turned away at the last moment.

Fishing for either of these "drag burners" is aided by using a couple of readily available pieces of fishing-related gear - polarized sunglasses and a dark underbilled cap. Both of these items must be on your head since these targets are primarily near-surface swimmers. If you can't see 'em, you may not bait 'em. With a freelined or lightly weighted Carolina-rigged baitfish out, I always recommend fishing with the reel in gear. I've heard and seen the technique used of "thumb the spool lightly and let 'em run to a count of 4 or 5 before putting the reel in gear and setting the hook" sounds good, and it works if you have an educated thumb, otherwise, you can end up with



a painfully blistered thumb. That can ruin your day for days unless you are using a big, live bait that will require some “swallowing time”. Fishing kings or ‘hoo with the reel in gear will hook over 90% of them without the thumb problem. Hang on...at the hookup, if you don’t have a firm grip on your rod it could be ripped from your hands. I’ve seen this disappearing act present itself on several occasions.

Whether you’re fishing a nose-hooked only or a stinger-hooked baitfish, once it’s cast out or drifting back, every twenty seconds or so, give it a rod tip twitch. Over the years, I’ve seen countless instances where a person starts to reel in for a bait check and their bait is immediately bit — do the twitch. If current, etc. dictates Carolina rigging is needed to get your baitfish down into the strike zone, a quickly adjustable way to do it is with a Quick Change Slip Lead™. The lightest ones are two ounces; to go lighter, hacksaw into four equal-length pieces. You will then have something like two of 3/8 ounces and two of 1/2 ounces. These slip weights give you great adjustability without having to cut and re-tie your line; they ride on a plastic bushing that snaps onto your line — I’ve routinely used them for a couple of years.

When using natural baits, targeting kingfish in particular, and their tendency at times to be short strikers, the stinger rig is the way to go. In my experience, when Wahoo strike they will inhale the whole baitfish. Regardless of which species is targeted, the stealth and target isolation that the camo green hardware provides could be the difference in hooking up with that personal best, record fish or tournament winner. Build ‘em, fish ‘em, and let this Kingfish’s Nightmare leader and rigging system help you on your way to success...it works for me; it will for you, too.

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

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