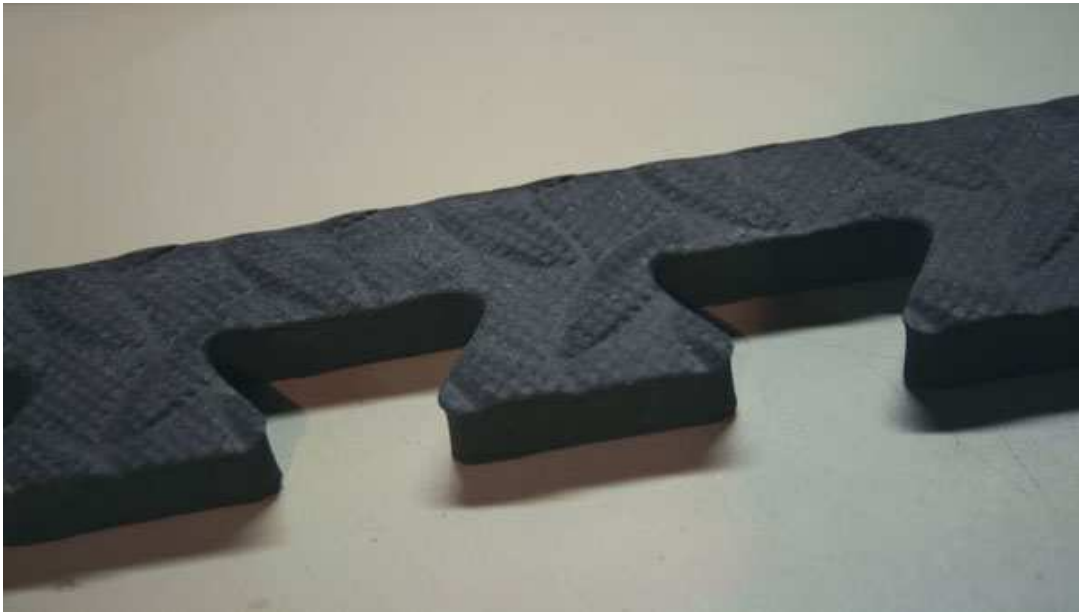


James' Floating Minnow

There has been a lot of talk around here lately about pike presentations and such. One of my absolute favorite patterns for pike and bass are topwater plugs and poppers.

In my gear fishing days, there was a lot of different topwater minnow lures that you could choose from and these were extremely effective for big pike. I needed something that could match or be more effective than those lures for the fly rod instead.

Here's a pattern that I came up with that is absolutely deadly when targeting topwater pike and bass...



1. Being a topwater pattern, I needed a really solid foam that was extremely dense and buoyant. I happened to find a ton of this commercial floor foam that was perfect for my needs.



2. Using my scissors and utility knife I carved the foam into a minnow shape leaving the "pattern" side flat. I also left one side flanged. This will be explained later.



3. I then sanded down the foam so that it was somewhat smooth. Remember to leave one side flat. This is important later...



4. With the utility knife I cut a slit in the foam. Don't cut deeper than halfway through the foam. This is where your hook shaft will rest.



5. Using a empty pen cylinder I wet the foam and twist it in as far as it will go. Why do I do this? In the next step I will explain. It is important that you wet the foam and the cylinder as much as possible to reduce tension as it slides in.



6. Here's why I needed to insert the foam into the cylinder. It makes it a million times easier to slide the Mylar tubing over the foam. Instead of worrying about having to cut your foam small enough to fit into the tubing, I just slide the Mylar up the pen cylinder and then pull the foam from the side that is sticking out. This causes the foam to expand and "fill" the mylar nice and tight.



7. Leave the foam alone for a little bit and head over to the vise. I am using a #2 Streamer hook and I have just added a 14# monofilament weed guard to it. Tie the mono up to the bend in the hook and leave the rest of the mono hanging off the end.



8. Measure the length of the hook against the mylar/foam body and poke a small hole with the hook point at the correct distance from the end. Make sure you are on the flat end of the foam as the hook will need to slide into the slit that was made earlier. Before sliding the hook shaft into the slit, coat the hook with superglue so that it will stay in place. Slide the hook shaft all the way in till the hook eye comes out of the front.



9. At the point before the flange in the foam, make a nice tight series of wraps until you build up a bit of a collar. Whip finish and cut the thread. At this point I will use a Sharpie marker and draw a line down the center of the "spine" on the minnow. Manitoba Shiners have a dark back and this replicates that. Using Sally Hanson "Hard as nails" I found that you can use it on the Sharpie and it will cause it to run, creating a smooth transition from dark to light on the sides.



10. At the very front of the hook tie down the weedguard and build up a bit of a head. Whip finish and cut the thread. Also I sanded down the head to smooth it out a bit. I superglue the head and the foam at the front.



11. At the tail end of the foam cut the Mylar and foam so that you have an even end. Insert 2 marabou feathers (one on each side) for the tail. Try tying a few with the tails in yellow or red works well in different situations. For this one I used Blue Dun to match the body.



12. Tie down the tail nice and tight. I use a thicker thread here so that the thread doesn't snap. Whip finish and cut the thread. Coat with cement.



13. I now superglue on eyes and smooth the foam a bit more to make it look better.



14. Here is a variation of one without a head. This was how I used to tie them but I found that they glided a bit too easily through the water for my liking. I find that one with the head pushes a bit more water and stirs up the surface more, resulting in more hits.



15. The head of the variation minnow. This presentation has "easy meal" written all over it...



16. The final presentations... Although they look pretty big, they weigh practically nothing. With the body foam and very little else for weight, these minnows cast beautifully on the fly rod.

I love throwing this right into weedbeds and watching the pike ambush them. I caught a ton of pike and a few bass on these this past summer. I found that while my other presentations would catch bass and the smaller pikes, this one always seemed to attract the bigger pike that were around.

Another successful way to fish it is to throw it through rapids and current and watch bass and the occasional walleye rise to attack these.

Finding a good, solid and buoyant foam is the most important. When a pike sinks its teeth into it it needs to believe it bit into a minnow. Using the floor foam, this pattern is so buoyant that even with a sink tip and wire leader it isn't affected. Only on the strips does it sink a bit and returns to the surface almost immediately.

Let me know how you guys make out if you happen to tie a few of these for this spring...
James.