

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU!

Captain Mike Genoun

When it comes to enticing trolling lures, it's all in the eyes!

With pleasant seas and summer-like conditions directly ahead of us, blue water battlers all around Florida's 1200 miles of coastline are gearing up. We're strategizing and planning our upcoming searches for rod-bending, drag-screaming action farther offshore. We'll be looking for weed lines, floating debris, bird life, current rips, color changes, temperature breaks, concentrations of baitfish- any form of structure or life that could potentially attract and hold gaffer-size dolphin, powerful tuna, super fast wahoo and, of course, the always welcome surprise of a blue or white marlin.

I fish from Hillsboro Inlet, but regardless which port you call your own, as the summer season approaches, the majority of our efforts will surely shift toward trolling. Sure, we all know that live goggle-eyes, runners, pilchards, whitebait, speedos, bullets- they all get the job done, and they get it done well- but putting together a solid catch of brilliant pelagic predators with nothing more than artificial skirted trolling lures, now that brings a whole new level of satisfaction to the game.

I, for one, thoroughly enjoy the approach. I get a big kick out of the challenge that accompanies setting an effective trolling spread, and the rewards that come with fooling game fish into striking nothing more than oddly shaped concoctions of plastic and metal- concoctions that barely resemble anything alive.

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One of the most challenging aspects of blue water trolling, which may be two or a hundred and two miles offshore depending on your particular port of call, has always been and continues to be, lure selection. Size, shape, color, weight- all play major roles in how effective a skirted trolling

lure will perform under the prevailing conditions. As a rule, many offshore pros stick to the mantra

of matching-the-hatch in both color and size to the prevalent forage in their particular areas. It's a proven phi-

losophy and one that works well. A number of seasoned veterans, however,

believe in contrasting lures. While dragging a typical six or eight rod spread in search of pelagics, they'll pull a mix of blue/white and blue/green jets and/or chuggers, highlighted by something like a pair of neon pink lures. Now

let me ask you; have you ever seen a bright pink baitfish? The answer is obviously

"No," but yet, this sort of pattern is deadly! This tells us that while color and size may be important, swimming action and

lure placement also play a vital role, as does another key ingredient- seductive eyes.

Scientific studies have proven that eyes trigger an uncontrollable instinct in predatory game fish to strike. Pursuers are attracted to what they believe is a vulnerable fleeing baitfish, but they commit to the attack at the very last moment when making eye contact with the prey. Does this mean our targeted blue water species will never strike a trolling lure without

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eyes? We all know the answer to that. But let's not overlook the fact that as determined anglers constantly refining our tactics in search of consistent success, we're always doing everything in our power to increase our odds. It's a big ocean out there with an awful lot of 'fishy' territory to cover, and fuel isn't cheap. Plus, I don't know about you, but I prefer to see rewards for my efforts. This explains why consistently successful blue water fishermen spend so much time preparing, and why we're so meticulous about how we execute our game plan. Yet, we must also remain versatile and ready at a moments notice to alter our tactics to match the conditions we're faced with. Offshore trolling is no different.

As of last count, there were 13,276 different trolling lures on the market in every size, shape and color imaginable. Deciding which artificial baits to spend our hard-earned money on and which baits to present in our trolling spread is a daunting task. And while there is no one lure or one perfect spread that is "guaranteed to catch them all," (I promise you, there is NO one lure or one trolling spread that is guaranteed to catch them all), my offshore experiences have, in fact, proved that trolling lures with distinct eyes outperform the competition. As a matter of fact, if a lure doesn't have some sort of eyes- glued on- painted on- or imbedded into the head of the artificial lure- I won't pull it. It's that simple.

As mentioned earlier, there are many aspects to successful blue water fishing which must constantly be taken into consideration in our ongoing attempt to perfect the art of the troll. Sea conditions, water clarity, trolling speed, lure placement, lure design, size and color, the look of our overall trolling spread, all of these factors must be considered and accounted for. However, what I can tell you for certain is that when I am rigging my trolling rods for the day's fishing, if a lure doesn't have eyes, it never touches the water!

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WITH LARGE ENTICING EYES, MOLDCRAFT SOFHEADS ARE A FAVORITE TREAT FOR BILLFISH WORLDWIDE.

