

GETTING TERMINAL



The Weakest Link In Your Musky Set-Up

By John Bette

Have you ever watched an auto race in which a driver seems to be on his way to a sure victory but with a few laps to go his car breaks down and he's out of the race? When they ask the driver what happened, you often hear him say something to the effect of "a 50-cent part cost us a sure victory." The same can hold true in musky fishing, only the "50-cent part" is the snap or connector that connects your lure to your leader.

I often preach that the leader is the most important part of your musky set-up and the link between you and your catch. Let's take this a step further and bring it all the way down to that single connector — your set-up is only as good as this one small component! You are relying on this small, inexpensive item to bring you a successful day, week, or season on the water. If you are not going to take the time to make sure your leader has the best possible connection, it doesn't matter how much you have spent on rods, reels or lures.

That said, there isn't a fail-proof connection on the market that can guarantee 100 percent reliability, either. Anything can and will eventually fail if it is not taken care of properly. It falls on us as anglers to do everything we can to prevent a failure from happening.

The most fail-safe connection on the market is a solid, ring-style connector at-



Musky anglers who want the best connection between their leader and lure choose solid rings or quality snaps.

tached to your leader. The ring connector eliminates the need to open and close a snap every time you change a lure. The solid ring connector is very secure but can have a few drawbacks: 1.) You have to make sure you have split rings on all your lures; 2.) You have to have a pair of split ring pliers handy at all times to change lures as fast as possible.

The only thing you really need to do as far as terminal tackle inspection goes with this set-up is to make sure the ring hasn't worn, monitor the tension of your split rings, and change them as needed on the lures you use most often. Once you get used to this method you will find you can change out lures pretty quickly without even thinking about it.

Solid rings are the No. 1 way to prevent any sort of connection failure, but not everyone likes the idea. If you like to change baits often throughout the day it probably isn't for you.

Snap are the most popular choice for a leader-to-bait connection. I firmly believe that the genuine Stringease brand Stay-Lok snap is the best available, but even then a snap will not last forever and in most cases will need to be changed. You want to keep a few things in mind when inspecting your snaps: 1.) If you feel the snap getting "spongy," or easier to open and close, this means the metal is fatiguing and you need to change it sooner rather than later; 2.) When you see the metal beginning to show signs of wear from changes in its shape, diameter or color, again it is time to change it.

The life of a snap varies depending on your style of fishing, which is determined by how often you switch lures, which creates wear and tear on the snap. For some, this might be one fishing trip, while for others it could be a few trips. Rick Albers, who owns Chaos Tackle, helped us determine that you can open and close a snap before between 150 and 200 times before it will fail. Rick came to this conclusion after his acquisition of Shum Shum glide baits. Rick water-tests each type of the lures he sells, and he learned that after approximately 150 to 200 changes he would begin to see issues with the snaps and it was time to change to a new one.

A nice feature of a Stay-Lok snap is you can open the snap and thread it off your leader and feed on a new one without replacing the whole leader. A smart investment is to purchase a bag of snaps to keep in the boat or your tackle bag so you have them available throughout a trip if needed.

Snap awareness is crucial to maintaining success on the water. Don't fall into the trap of ignoring these small, inexpensive components. Don't get stopped short of the finish line!

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