

Erie walleye sizzle for jig and minnow

By STEVE POLLICK
BLADE OUTDOORS EDITOR

The jig-and-minnow fishing action for walleye on western Lake Erie in recent days has been so hot you might scald yourself if you put your hand in the water.

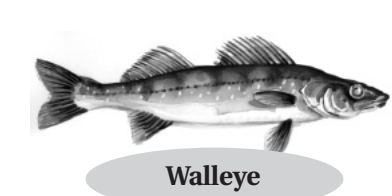
Pardon the exaggeration, but it makes the point. Fish are being taken just about anywhere from Maumee Bay to the reef complex off Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station between Toledo and Port Clinton, and action should remain excellent if the weather holds.

Walleye stage around western basin reefs and move onto them to spawn from late March into April. They also congregate in Maumee Bay, some to spawn and others to run up the Maumee River. The periods before and after spawning can be times of feeding frenzy, and some of the largest walleye are taken.

"That full moon [Monday] seems to have gotten something big started," said Chris Vandergoot, a biologist with the state's Lake Erie Fisheries Research Station at Sandusky.

Limits of three fish lately can take as little as 20 minutes, and anglers spend the rest of their trip catching and releasing, which is legal. As for "sorting," that is, trading a fish in possession for a bigger fish you just caught, it's OK. Just be sure the fish you release from the livewell is alive and well, or you could face a ticket for wanton waste.

For the most part the rig of choice has been a heavy jig — 5/8- to 3/4-ounce — with a hair tail and dressed with a minnow, preferably an emerald shiner. Rick Ferguson, at Al Szych Live Bait in Jerusalem Township, said the best colors at midweek were jigs with blue, blue/chartreuse, blue/white or purple hair. Some anglers were even taking fish just on the jigs, with no minnow, or with jigs and plastic wiggling tails. A few anglers also are using any of the vari-



Hot Spots Walleye ■

ous blade baits, which can be jigged or "snapped."

Note that blade baits, equipped with treble hooks, or the popular "stinger" treble hooks that frequently are piggybacked onto jigs, are illegal in Maumee and Sandusky bays until May 1, as they are on the Maumee and Sandusky rivers.

Many familiar sites in Maumee Bay — from around Turtle Island and the Toledo Harbor Light to shallow water off Little Cedar Point, Toledo Water Intake, and the chart site marked "Gravel Pit" — may produce fish in the Toledo area, as may most of the inshore reefs off Davis-Besse, including Toussaint, Turtle, Crib and Locust Point.

"Anywhere up close," said Dave Whitt, a charter guide from Port Clinton, who fishes out of Wild Wings Marina near the power plant.

In a brief trip Tuesday with Whitt and Jeff Kuelling, another guide, it took seemingly no time to box a limit of fish just offshore from the power plant.

Jig and minnow fishing in early spring was a quietly kept secret for years among knowledgeable old-timers, but it has become very popular in the



Jeff Kuelling, left, and Dave Whitt admire a freshly netted walleye.

last 10 to 15 years, said Ferguson.

"Our guys use the real heavy jigs so they can thump the bottom," he added, explaining that Wisconsin and Minnesota jig-fishermen use lightweight jigs, as small as a 64th or 32nd of an ounce. "A quarter ounce is heavy to them."

It is only during the post-spawn period, say in early May as the lake waters warm somewhat, that walleye seem to switch preferences to weight-forward spinners and night-crawlers. Or maybe that is an

On deck: Hens vs. Charlotte Knights

■ **When:** Today, 7 p.m.; tomorrow, 5 p.m.; Monday and Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

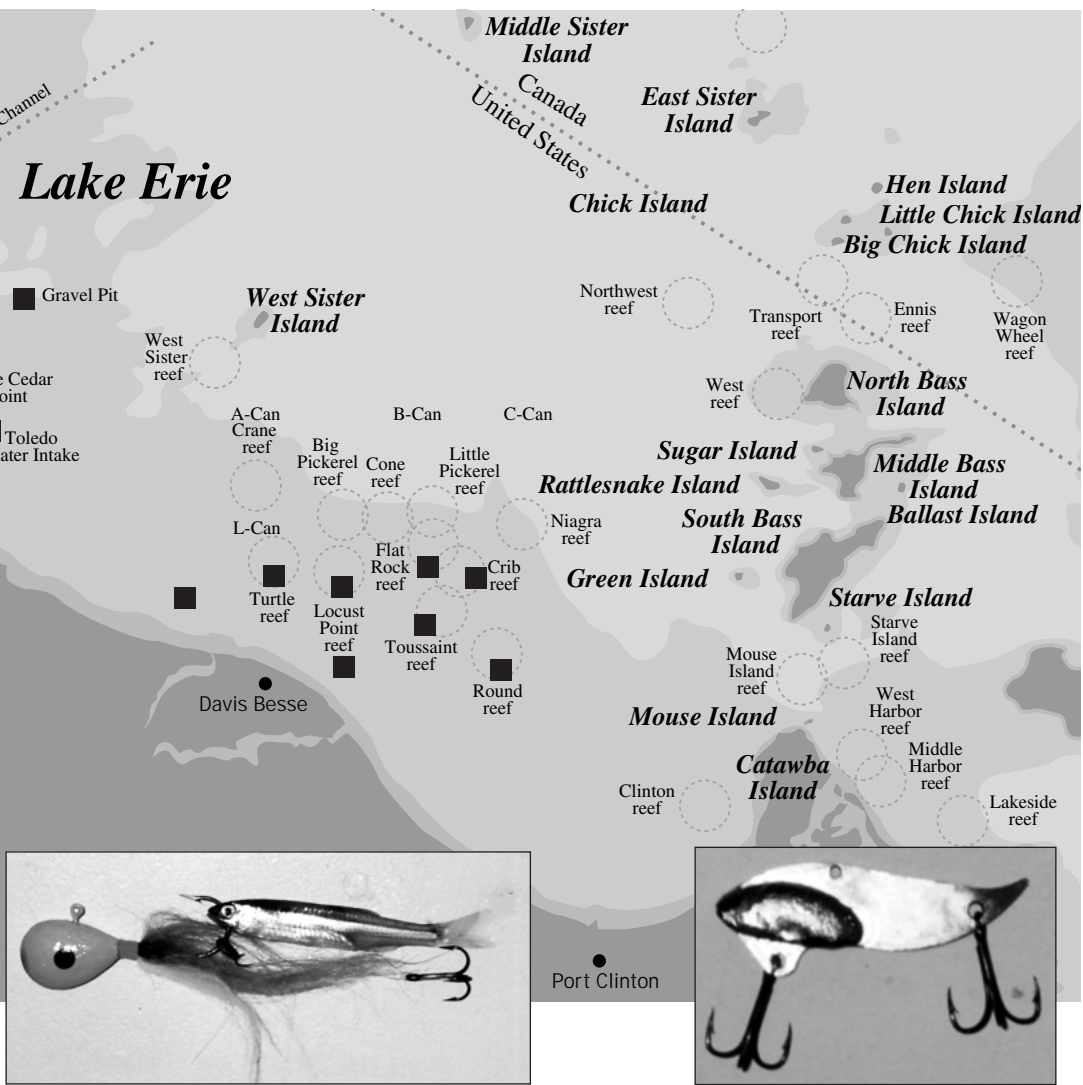
■ **Radio:** 1470 AM

■ **Affiliation:** Charlotte, Chicago White Sox.

■ **Pitching probables (Hens listed last):** today, LH Josh Stewart (first start) vs. RH Shane Loux (first start); tomorrow, RH Jason Grilli (first start) vs. LH Andy Van Hekken (first start); Monday, RH Ryan Kohlmeier (first start) vs. RH Ariel Prieto (first start); Tuesday, RH Jon Rauch (1-0, 1.59 ERA) vs. RH Pat Ahearn (0-0, 1.59).

■ **Knights moves:** Charlotte's roster includes nine players who finished the season with the Knights last year, and 15 members of the team have major league experience. . . . **2B Bryant Nelson** had a double and a home run in the team's Opening Day win at Columbus. . . . Baseball America considers **OF Jeremy Reed** the top prospect in the White Sox system. Fellow **OF Joe Borchard** was the top White Sox prospect entering last season. . . . **C Mike Rivera** had 20 home runs and 53 RBIs in 74 games for the Hens in 2002. He also saw action for Toledo in 2000. . . . **RHP Gary Majewski** will serve as the Knights' closer and had a save on Opening Day.

■ **Hen happenings:** Last year Charlotte won the season series with Toledo 7-5, but the Mud Hens won five of six games played at Fifth Third Field. Toledo is 9-3 against the Knights all-time at Fifth Third Field. . . . Last year **IF Danny Klassen** hit .317 against the Knights with four doubles and a pair of home runs. . . . **RHP**



A hair-jig with stinger-hook, dressed with a minnow, left, is the spring standard in Erie walleye waters. Right, a homemade blade bait, also popular in spring fishing.



angler preference.

Too, some anglers who prefer to troll can take walleye almost from ice-out by towing plastic crankbaits tuned to the depths where the walleye are hanging out. Some trollers also will pull bottom-bouncers and worm harnesses at very slow speeds. Last Saturday, Jim Fofrich Jr., of Toledo, reported taking some fish, including two 28- to 29-inch post-spawn females, trolling off the reefs.

While jigging minnows off Davis-Besse Tuesday, Whitt offered some jig-and-minnow angling pointers. "It's the angle

game. The angle [fishing line to the water] is the thing with jig and minnow."

In other words, sometimes it is not a matter of vertical jigging — wind-drift pushes the boat along too quickly to keep a line vertical. "Some days they want a high lift, some days a gentle lift," said Whitt. Added Kuelling: "I'd say 70 to 80 percent of the time vertical is better, or at least as vertical as you can get." So experiment a little if the fish are not hopping on the jig. Pay out more line to change the angle with the water if a more vertical, or per-

pendicular, presentation is not working.

"Another thing," said Whitt, "at this time of year in these shallow reefs is boat pressure." His personal tolerance is for no more than six or seven boats on a reef. More and "it's time to reef-hop."

This is Whitt's favorite time of year to catch walleye. "It's realistic to say you can catch 100 fish a day [for a six-person charter] this time of year."

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Hens

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out double by Midre Cummings, who then scored on a two-out double by Pete LaForest.

But after the Hens scored three in the bottom of the first, Ennis threw four scoreless frames to allow Toledo to build a 9-2 advantage.

"That was very encouraging to see," Parrish said of Ennis. "After giving up two in the first he settled down and pitched four clean innings after that."

Rich Gomez singled off Durham starter Dewon Brazelton to lead off the bottom of the first, moved to second on a wild pitch, then scored when Morris doubled to deep center. One out later Jason Smith blooped a single to center that plated Morris; Smith stole second, then came home on Andy Barkett's single.

In the second the Hens sent nine batters to the plate and scored four more runs off Brazelton. With one out Nook Logan walked, then moved to second when Gomez beat out a bunt single. Logan and Gomez pulled off a double steal and Morris walked to load the bases.

Danny Klassen's single to left scored both Logan and Gomez and left runners on first and second. Smith's fielder's choice moved Morris to third, where he scored on a passed ball. Marcus Thames followed with a single that scored Smith from second. Tim Corcoran relieved Brazelton, and Toledo quickly nicked him for a pair of runs. Brant Ust led off the third with a single, then scored when Guillermo Rodriguez doubled to the wall in right-center.

Rodriguez moved to third on Logan's groundout and came home on Gomez's sacrifice fly.

Durham					Toledo				
	ab	r	h	bi		ab	r	h	bi
French cf	5	2	1	0	Gomez lf	4	2	2	1
Maxwell 2b	4	0	0	0	Morris 2b	4	2	3	1
Cummings dh	5	1	2	2	Klassen ss	5	0	1	2
Diaz rf	4	0	1	0	Smith 3b	4	2	1	1
LaForest c	3	0	1	1	Thames rf	3	0	1	1
Sandberg 3b	3	1	0	0	Barkett 1b	4	0	1	1
Guzman 1b	4	1	2	0	Ust dh	4	1	1	0
Gomez if	4	1	1	3	G. Rodriguez c	1	1	1	1
Canis ss	4	0	2	0	Logan cf	3	1	1	0
Totals	36	6	10	6	Totals	35	9	12	8
Durham	200				Toledo	200			
Durham	342				Toledo	342			
DP—Durham 1, LOB—Durham 6, Toledo 7, 2B—Cummings (1), LaForest (1), Guzman (1), Morris 2 (3), G. Rodriguez (1), 3B—Logan (1), HR—Gomes (1), SB—French 2 (2), Gomez (2), Smith (2), Logan (1), SF—Gomez (1).									
IP					H	R	ER	BB	SO
Durham					Toledo				
Brazelton (L, 0-1)	2				7	7	6	2	2
Corcoran	3 ½				4	2	2	1	2
Seay	1 ½				1	0	0	0	1
Fortunato	1				0	0	0	0	1
Toledo					Durham				
Ennis (W, 1-0)	5				5	2	2	1	1
Burnside	1				3	4	4	1	2
Mears	2				1	0	0	0	1
German (S, 1)	1				0	0	0	0	1
WP—Brazelton, PB—LaForest, G. Rodriguez.									

"We got some big hits with a couple outs tonight to keep things going," Parrish said. "We had some good things happen even though we didn't score in the late innings. We've got to get production throughout the order, and tonight we did."

Durham made things interesting with four runs in the seventh off the Toledo bullpen. Hens reliever Adrian Burnside gave up a three-run homer to Jonny Gomez and Cummings had an RBI single off Chris Mears.

Franklyn German allowed a pair of baserunners in the ninth but got Cummings to fly out to earn his first save of the season.

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TIGERS SUSPENDED: Tigers pitcher Nate Cornejo was suspended for five games and manager Alan Trammell for one game and fined by Major League Baseball, which said Cornejo intentionally threw at Philadelphia's Ricky Ledee on March 29 during a spring training game.

Trammell will miss today's game against Minnesota and Cornejo will miss his next start, Wednesday at home against Toronto.

Indians

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Stewart came in to face Guilel and gave up a two-run double. Tony Graffanino then made it 3-0 with an RBI single for the Royals, who stranded 12 runners.

Jason Grimsley (1-0) pitched the seventh. Curtis Leskanic allowed an RBI single to Casey Blake in the ninth before getting his first save.

"Gobble kept us off balance," said Cleveland manager Eric Wedge. "He did a good job. We just never got anything going against him. He took us out of our game."

Several teams had lefties start their first four games, but one had always pitched more than once. The 1994 Yankees were the last to do it, starting Jimmy Key twice, Terry Mulholland, and Jim Abbott, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Stanford, who was making his ninth major league start, went five innings plus two batters and gave up seven hits — six never left the infield — with four walks and two strikeouts.

The Royals' first seven baserunners came on two walks and five infield hits off Stanford.

Royals 3, Indians 1															
	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.		AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Cleveland	3	0	0	0	1	0	.435		5	0	0	0	1	1	.211
Bellard 2b	3	0	0	0	1	0	.435		5	0	0	0	1	1	.211
Vizquel ss	3	1	2	0	1	0	.292		3	1	2	0	1	0	.292
Gerut rf	4	0	1	0	0	0	.292		4	0	1	0	0	0	.292
Blake 3b	4	0	2	0	1	1	.320		4	0	2	0	1	1	.320
Lawton lf	4	0	1	0	0	0	.333		4	0	1	0	0	0	.333
VMartinez c	4	0	0	0	0	2	.154		4	0	0	0	0	2	.154
AlEscobar dh	3	1	1	0	0	0	.222		3	1	1	0	0	0	.222
Thalmer 1b	3	0	0	0	0	1	.214		3	0	0	0	0	1	.214
Crisp cf	3	0	0	0	0	0	.190		3	0	0	0	0	0	.190
Totals	31	1	7	1	2	4			31	1	7	1	2	4	
	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.		AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Kansas City	5	0	0	0	0	1	.211		5	0	0	0	0	1	.211
Berroa ss	5	0	0	0	0	1	.211		5	0	0	0	0	1	.211
Beltran cf	5	0	0	0	2	1	.267		5	0	0	0	2	1	.267
AlEscobar dh	3	1	1	0	0	0	.188		3	1	1	0	0	0	.188
JGonzalez rf	4	0	2	0	0	0	.438		4	0	2	0	0	0	.438
Randa 3b	5	0	0	0	2	0	.077		5	0	0	0	2	0	.077
Harvey 1b	4	1	2	0	0	1	.571		4	1	2	0	0	1	.571
SSantiago c	3	1	2	0	0	0	.686		3	1	2	0	0	0	.686
Guilif lf	3	1	1	2	1	0	.250		3	1	1	2	1	0	.250
Graffanino 2b	3	0	2	1	0	0	.773		3	0	2	1	0	0	.773
Totals	32	3	11	3	5	3			32	3	11	3	5	3	
Cleveland	000	000	001	1	7	0			000	000	003	1	11	0	
Kansas City	LOB-Cleveland 5, Kansas City 12, 2B-Guile								LOB-Cleveland 5, Kansas City 12, 2B-Guile						
	(1), RBIs-Blake (5), Guile (2), Graffanino (1),								(1), RBIs-Blake (5), Guile (2), Graffanino (1),						
	S-Beltran (1), Beltran (1), Berra (1), C								S-Beltran (1), Beltran (1), Berra (1), C						
	S-Santiago, Graffanino, GIDP-Gerut								S-Santiago, Graffanino, GIDP-Gerut						
	DP-Kansas City 3 (Berroa, Graffanino and								DP-Kansas City 3 (Berroa, Graffanino and						
	Harvey), Berra (Graffanino and Harvey),								Harvey), Berra (Graffanino and Harvey),						
	Graffanino, Berra and Harvey).								Graffanino, Berra and Harvey).						
	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	ERA		IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	ERA
Cleveland	5	7	0	0	4	2	.95		5	7	0	0	4	2	.95
Stanford	5	7	0	0	4	2	.95		5	7	0	0	4	2	.95
Cressend L, 0-1	1%	2	2	2	2	1	0.77		1%	2	2	2	2	1	0.77
Stewart	1%	2	2	2	2	1	0.77		1%	2	2	2	2	1	0.77
AlEscobar	1%	1	0	0	0	0	.686		1%	1	0	0	0	0	.686
Kansas City	1%	1	0	0	0	0	.675		1%	1	0	0	0	0	.675
Jimenez	1%	1	0	0	0	0	.675		1%	1	0	0	0	0	.675
Gobble	6	1	0	0	2	2	.740		6	1	0	0	2	2	.740
Ward W, 1-0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000		1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Carrasco H, 1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000		1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Leskianen S, 1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000		1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Stewart pitched	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000		1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Stewart pitched	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000		1	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Inherited runners scored-	2								Inherited runners scored-	2					
Stewart 2-2, Jimenez 1-1									Stewart 2-2, Jimenez 1-1						
IBS-Cressend (Beltran) 1, WP-Stanford,									IBS-Cressend (Beltran) 1, WP-Stanford,						
T-Martin, A-28,535.									T-Martin, A-28,535.						