



Product Review



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Opening Thoughts



Safety Pin type spinner baits have been around a long time. Through the years, many fishermen and lure manufacturers have tinkered with this basic design by adding their own twist to

improve the bait. All you have to do is stand in front of a spinner bait section in a major tackle store to see what I'm talking about..."Improved Hooks"..."Improved Skirts"..."Improved Blades"..."Improved Wire". But in the final analysis, even with these improvements the truth is they all basically remained the same. That was until recently.

What if I told you that this old standard has been *reinvented*? Yes, for the first time in over 50 years tinkering has given way to true innovative design change. This change will alter your thoughts about spinner baits forever. If you love throwing a blade you don't want to miss this review!

Company History

The reinvention of the spinner bait came from a very skilled mechanical engineer and fisherman named Bob Rickard of St. Louis Missouri. For over 32 years Bob has been handcrafting innovative baits and testing them on various lakes and rivers here in the United States. Bob became convinced that no other lure came close to matching his own design. So in 2001 Bob set out to introduce them to the retail market.

Bob was Production Manager for Comet Tool and Die Company that manufactured precision components for aircraft, aerospace and the defense industry. At McDonald Aircraft his engineering team assisted on projects that included the F 14 Tomcat, F 15 Eagle and the lunar landing module. These days Bob uses his skill and design knowledge to refine and perfect the lure known as the Secret Weapon Spinnerbait!

Beginning The Review



Recently Shay Doming, TBGI guide on Priest (left) and I met Joe Haubenreich (below), President of Secret Weapon Lures at Four Corners Marina on Percy Priest Lake in Nashville Tennessee to conduct this review.

Joe and I had met on one occasion before when he introduced me to Secret Weapon so I was already somewhat familiar with the baits. I knew that the Secret Weapon Spinnerbait came packaged in a "Mini Kit" that consisted of the spinnerbait, skirt, and 4 separate blade attachments. I knew the baits were packaged in 3/16, 3/8, and 1/2 ounce sizes.

Visually, one of the first things that I noticed about Secret Weapon is the obvious quality and workmanship that has gone into these baits. Even the packaging is first class. These are *not* your \$1.00 low end quality baits that only perform correctly 20% of the time.





I was joking with a friend recently, and made the comment that the Secret Weapon Mini Kit package looked so good you could put a hook and skirt on it and catch fish. There isn't one element about these baits that hasn't been thought out ultra carefully. From the lifelike minnow designer heads to the "Quick Clip" easy change spinner blade attachments, these baits are well thought out, well designed fish catching tools.

Visual Value

Another visual element that was well thought out by Secret Weapon Lures' inventor and retired aircraft engineer, Bob Rickard, was to make this premium, high quality bait a real value.

At this point I am sure some are saying, "Rick, how can you link Visual and Value together?" Let me do it this way. Let's tackle the visual piece first. For those of you that are lure aholics like I have been in past years, go to your boat storage area, tackle box or wherever you keep your spinnerbaits and start laying them out on a flat area by size and color so you can *count* the total number of spinnerbaits you have. Don't count your buzzbaits; it will only make it worse. It might be a good idea to do this when the wife isn't around; I wouldn't want to be the cause of a marital dispute.

OK... How many spinnerbaits do you have? 20...30...40...50? (I sure hope Rena doesn't read this review.) In my case 68! Yes 68 spinnerbaits in various sizes, head and skirt colors, blade configurations, and wire construction. I think I qualify for the Fishing Lure Anonymous therapy support group. But... I *needed* every one of those to get the right size the right color the right blades for all the different potential circumstances that I might be faced with when I got to the water. Sixty eight spinnerbaits at what total \$\$\$\$ investment, since good spinnerbaits retail anywhere from \$3.99 to \$10.00? If I just used the low end \$4.00 figure as an average, the total would be \$272.00.

Now, how about you? To make this easier, let say you spent \$100.00 on conventional spinnerbaits with the average cost of \$4.00. (I'm

sure if you are like me the average cost would actually be higher.) That would give you 25 spinnerbaits for you to use. Let's now compare what you would have, if you bought four different Secret Weapon Mini kits at the suggested retail of \$10.99 per mini kit for a \$44 total investment.



Remember that each mini kit comes packaged with four separate blade attachments. So the four kits would give you 16 different blades that make 125 different blade combinations for *each* color head and skirt. Let me say that again....not 25 baits to use, but *500 baits*. And you would still have \$56.00 left to take the whole family to McDonald's and a movie. Now, which is the better value? 25 baits for \$100.00 or 500 baits for \$44? There really is no comparison! Secret Weapon wins hands down!

Performance

No spinnerbait is a good value unless it performs correctly when you're on the water. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Early on Bob Rickard must have realized that if you could successfully marry the in line spinnerbait qualities with the safety pin style you could have baits with superior performance. He and a few fortunate bass anglers that used his invention found that to be true on the Missouri lakes and rivers where Bob used and perfected his designs over a 30 year period. As we conducted this review I made these observations.

▣ There are times when you will want to work spinnerbait fast just under the water, but not break the surface. To make this technique work correctly you need to make sure that the spinnerbait doesn't sink too deep upon entering the water. With many spinnerbaits that I have

used in the past I have encountered two problems: (1) It was hard to get the blades to turn freely immediately upon entering the water (2) When you "burned" the bait back toward you, many times the spinnerbait would roll on its side instead of tracking true. This was not true with Secret Weapon! Since the blades of the Secret Weapon Spinnerbait are free floating and not attached to the frame itself, the rotating blade doesn't torque the bait over, so it doesn't roll side to side. Cast after cast with each size bait I was unable to make the bait roll and the blades starting spinning immediately upon retrieve.

- ❑ There are also times when the reverse is true. The fish might want the bait to be retrieved very slowly. Once again, with many spinnerbaits this is difficult to achieve because you have to steadily increase speed to keep the blades rotating. Prior to and during the review I have tried each style of the blades offered by Secret Weapon and have found that I could slow these baits down to a crawl and still free the "thump" of the blade all the way through my rod handle of my All Pro Rods.
- ❑ This feel is also a direct result of the heavy gauge stainless steel wire that Secret Weapon spinnerbaits are made of. Folks, the wire on these baits isn't going to snap after you have caught a good fish or two, and when they get bent pulling a bass out of the brush, they're tough enough to bend back repeatedly and go back for more.

I asked Joe why Bob chose stainless steel instead of titanium like many high end spinnerbait are made of. Joe explained that through Bob's engineering knowledge, they knew that stainless wire wasn't prone to becoming brittle when heated like titanium is, and it would provide the user many years of excellent performance compared to other materials.

- ❑ If you like to "Slow Roll" spinnerbaits Secret Weapon is for you. The blades on this bait spin at a lower speed than any spinnerbait I have ever used. This is ideal for yo yo'ing retrieves, since all the blades rotate on the drop, or for crawling the bait along the bottom where the least movement makes the blades revolve.

- ❑ Spinnerbaits are often fished near the surface, but they can be deadly on suspended and deep water bass, too. These baits can be retrieved faster at greater depths than regular spinnerbaits because the free floating blades don't tend to "helicopter" the bait upward. In fact, a 1/2 ounce Secret Weapon spinnerbait can be fished as deeply as a 3/4 to 1 ounce regular spinnerbait. This again is a direct result of excellence in engineering.

- ❑ Another useful feature is that the blades will actually "FLIP" out of the way when a fish strikes the bait, which will increase your hook ups greatly. This is a direct result of the bait's unique free floating blade attachments.

- ❑ This bait also has a "Lower Line Tie Angle" which is perfectly aligned with the point of the hook. Why is this important? It's simple! When a fish strikes the bait and you set the hook, if the line tie is "Higher" than the hook point you will actually be rolling the hook point downward during your hook set which results in fewer hook ups. I'm sure you have heard someone say they had to "open" the hook up to get better hook ups...the reason for this is a design fault in the bait. ***This Is Not True With Secret Weapon!*** Pick up one of these baits and take a look. The line tie is perfectly aligned with the Mustad Ultra Point hook. This is a result of careful planning and excellent craftsmanship.



- ❑ Another unique difference in these baits is the "Sonic Signature" the free floating blades emit. By talking with Joe and doing some research I found that every spinnerbait blade emits its own unique sound. If you are using a conventional spinnerbait with its swivel mounted blade, these sonic emissions will all sound very similar and the fish become accustomed to that sound. But if you are fishing an inline spinnerbait the sound is entirely different.



One problem with many in line spinnerbaits is that they don't cast or retrieve through weeds and brush as easy as safety pin spinners. Secret

Weapon provides the inline spinner sound with the weedless, snag resistant shape of a first generation spinnerbait. For you tournament fishermen this could be your ace in the hole. Joe sited many times during testing where they went behind other fishermen using conventional spinnerbaits and caught fish on the Secret Weapon Bait, and they attribute that to the fish reacting to the different sound.

Versatility

This is one of the most versatile baits I have ever fished. I've listed several areas below where I believe using a Secret Weapon is superior over all other spinnerbaits.

- ❑ How many times have you been on a good spinnerbait bite and then the fish just stopped?



You know the fish are still there but seem uninterested. In the past the very first thing most of us would do would be cut off the bait and tie on something

different, but with Secret Weapon's Quick Change blade attachment, in just a matter of seconds you can change your blade colors or configuration and the bite may very well be back on. This same scenario will work for sudden changes in water color (such as mud lines) or if a heavy cloud cover moves in. Or maybe you have been fishing stained water and then come upon clear water. Keep you bait on — just change your blades to match the conditions.

- ❑ These baits are also terrific for controlling your depth. If you have been fishing fairly shallow water and then want to switch to a deeper water presentation but still keep the same retrieve speed...once again all you have to do is "Change Your Blades" size so the bait will drop deeper but still perform the same. Switch to larger or wider blades to produce more lift so you can retrieve slower and nearer the surface.
- ❑ I would almost bet most of you have at least one Quad type spinnerbait in your box. Another example of Secret Weapon versatility is that you can add 4, 5, 6 or even more blades one behind

the other to create your own "schooling minnow" effect without purchasing another bait. Smallmouth hitting the blades and not the bait?

Attach a treble hook behind the rear blade using a split ring. The versatility of these baits is limited



only by the user's imagination. One important thing you need to remember if you daisy chain the blades, *always* start with your smallest blade attachment first and then move up in size to a larger blade. Otherwise the larger blades can create a draft so the smaller blade behind it may not spin properly.

- ❑ Take a look at the attached Rat L Trap picture. Here a small Secret Weapon Colorado blade attachment has been added to its tail and the treble hook reattached by a split ring to behind the blade. This same technique can be duplicated on many other types of crank baits or to put a spinner in front of a worm or lizard.



Conclusion

Superior quality and design. Lifelike designer heads and Quick Clip blade attachments. Rock Hard baked powder paint on heads and painted blades. Durable Stainless Steel wire construction. Premium silicone skirts. Super sharp Mustad Ultra Point Hooks. No swivels to bind and fail. Better hookups since the blades won't block the hooks. Different blade sound that attracts more species. Always runs true with no roll over. All Blades rotate as the lure sinks. Easy turning blades for the slow rolling technique. Lure design permits a higher retrieve speed. Unequaled flexibility that gives you the best value anywhere. Bob Rickard and his team have crafted a ultra high quality bait that will enhance any serious fisherman's arsenal. A great bait, manufactured by a great company.

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