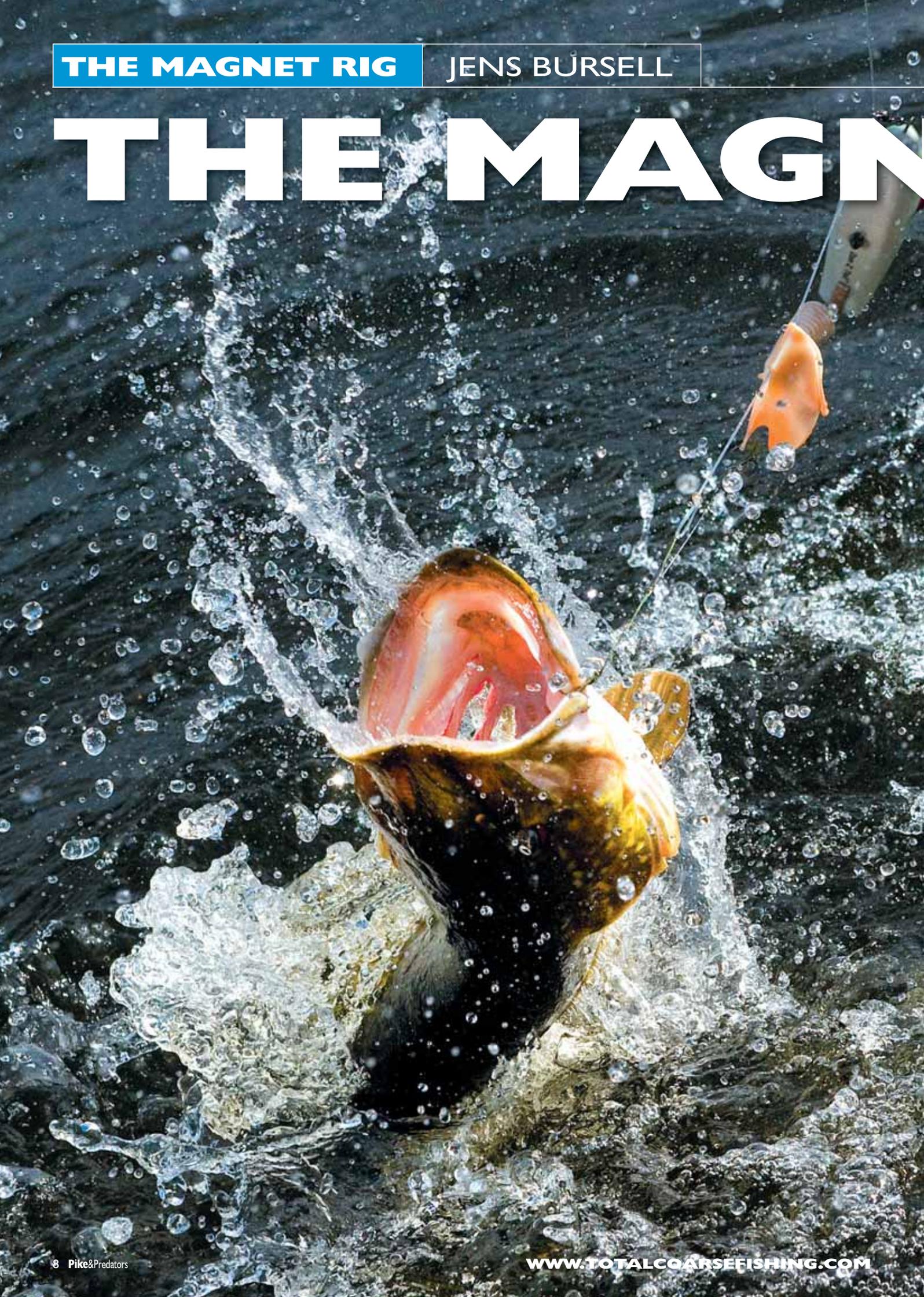


THE MAGNET RIG

JENS BURSELL

THE MAGN



NET RIG

Left: A big advantage of magnet and release rigs is the lure body can't lever the hooks out

WHEN YOU FISH SHALLOW WATER, THE WEED IS HIGH OR WHEN YOUR BAIT NEEDS TO BE DRAGGED ALONG THE BOTTOM, IT CAN BE AN ADVANTAGE TO MOUNT THE HOOKS ON THE TOP OF YOUR LURE. JENS BURSELL THINKS HE HAS THE ANSWER: THE MAGNET RIG.

Hooks are traditionally mounted on the underside of most lures, but there are some situations where it is better to have the hooks on the top of the bait.

If there are a lot of stones and rocks, top mounting of hooks prevent hook points from getting blunt when hitting hard surfaces. Also if you fish techniques where you let the lure sink and rest on the bottom the risk of masking the hooks in silt or weed is much less.

When you have three big trebles hanging under the bait it is no wonder that you catch a lot of weed! With the hooks on top of the lure weed will tend to be guided along the underside of the lure and away under the bait. With hooks on top you minimize problems with weed without compromising the hooking efficiency. Compared to other conventional weed-free hook set-ups, where some kind of nylon-loop or metal wire covers the hook-point, hooks on top of the lure are much more efficient.

When fishing with hard baits without lips, for example jerkbaits, almost no weed will catch up on the bait when the hooks are on the top. When fishing with crankbaits you will



Jens' magnet rig, here mounted with Gamakatsu T-13 Nickel front hooks. During cast and retrieve the hooklink is semi-fixed as shown, but when a predator attacks the bait, the hooklink is released, so the bait can slide freely up the line. The front hooks are mounted with knotless knots on multi-strand wire. When fishing in heavy weed its worth adding the lip loop that runs between the trace and the belly eye

get some weed catching the lip, but this is still much less of a problem than you would have had with belly mounted hooks. Fishing slowly with floating crankbaits you can feel through the inelastic braid when the front of the lure hits the weed; just give immediate slack line and let the lure rise until it's free of the weed.

ANTI-WEED LIP LOOP

Another possibility is to use an anti-weed lip loop. With crankbaits I minimize weed hanging up on the lip by tying a fluorocarbon link from the trace to the belly eye on the lure. This will help weed to slide off

the lip. The lip loop can be mounted on the trace with a stop-knot so you can slide it up and down the trace to adjust the positioning, and fixed to the belly-eye with a small fly-snap lock so it's easy to shift between lures. The larger the crankbait, the higher the retrieve speed or the heavier the weed, the thicker and stiffer the material of the lip loop should be. Depending on stiffness and memory of the chosen link material, it might be necessary to mount a sliding glass bead (for example a Jackson TC glass bead) in front of a stop knot to weigh down the loop to keep it into position under the lip. A 0.60mm

fluorocarbon is a good starting point for the lip loop.

NECK ADVANTAGE

On crankbaits with a steep lip, I think you obtain an advantage in the hooking potential of the front hook when you move it from the belly to the top or neck of the bait. Experience shows that pike very often attack the head of the bait in order to swallow it head first. The bigger and more vertical the lip on the crankbait is and the closer the bottom-mounted front hook is to the lip the poorer hooking potential of the front hook. I think this is because the hook is in the 'physical shadow' of the lip; i.e. when the jaws bite over the front of the lure the big vertical lip shields the front hook. A good example of this is the Butch lure where I think the hooking potential of the front hook is much better when placed on the neck.

To my mind top mounting of the hooks demand a special approach in order to work well. Since 2008 I have worked with the idea of using magnets to semi-fix my release rigs, and in the specific situations where top mounting of the hooks is an advantage, I think this is the best and easiest way to semi-fix the rig on the top of the bait. When top mounting the hooks in a magnet rig you get many but not all of the general advantages of the original dangling release rig. The most important of the advantages you get is that you obtain a better hook hold because you eliminate the leverage effect. The rig construction enables the lure to slide on the trace so when a fish is hooked and shakes its head for the first time, the hooklink is released from the magnet and the lure body can slide freely up the line. This also minimizes the negative effect of the weight of the lure being thrown from side to side during the fight, tearing at the hooks. This in turn minimizes the risk of big hook wounds and thereby minimises the risk of



Left: On pike traces with breaking strains over 30lb I often make a fixed stop for the release rig by making a single overhand knot and sticking a hair-stop into it to avoid the knot strangulating or cutting itself over – secure the stop with a drop of superglue Right: To protect the knot on the cast I mount a small rubber bead and a stop pearl between knot and the swivel where the hard lure slides



the hooks falling out during the fight, because of the hole they create.

TOP MOUNTING DISADVANTAGES

The upper and lower jaws of pike, zander, trout and salmon are equally hard, but most fish are harder to hook in the top of the front part of mouth cavity compared to the floor of the mouth. The reason for this is that the lower parts of the mouth contains the tongue, which is relatively soft but still gives a good deep hook hold compared to the thin pellicle covering the roof of the mouth in trout. The hook very easily

cuts itself out of the pellicle, and if it hasn't got a hold in the very hard palate bone, which it rarely has, the hook will cut through the pellicle as it slides towards the front parts of the jaw, which is equally hard but a bit easier to get a grip in because it is angled more in the vertical.

This is one of the reasons why I only use top-mounted rigs when it's necessary. To some degree you can compensate a bit for the harder mouth by using thinner, sharper hooks, something made possible by the fact that you use a release rig. Because the hooks are released from the lure after



In order to maximize the holding power on the rear 'anchor' hook, I glue a small iron or steel plate to the hook shaft. Cut a rectangular piece of steel plate. Make an angle of 90° at the end of it by gripping in a vice and bending the plate, then smooth the edges with emery paper. This type of anchor is especially important when using asymmetric trebles like VMC Scorpic or chemically-sharpened hooks without nickel finish

hooking, the force applied on the hooks is less and there is no leverage effect. In other words you can take advantage of the better hooking potential of the much thinner, sharper hooks without risking them straightening out.

Top-mounted magnet rigs are only an advantage in the following situations: shallow water less than one metre deep, fishing on the top of very high weeds, and when the lure scrapes the bottom. These are all situations in which the lure can be expected mostly to be attacked from the same level. When fishing over high dense weedbeds like Canadian pondweed the fish only has a very narrow window to see the lure and, because it has no time to decide, it often attacks by rising after the lure has passed and following it in a violent bow-wave on top of the weeds before executing the final attack – leaving you with your heart almost jumping out of your mouth in pure excitement!

When the lure is scraping over the bottom I believe most of the fish attacking are actually lying on the bottom, so they take it from almost same level. When you fish relatively high over more than three feet of water when the fish most often takes the lure from directly below, top-mounted hooks give an inferior hooking because the hook points lie in the physical shadow of the bait when attacked from this angle. Therefore I have no doubts that bottom mounted hooks in general provide better hooking. In this case the initial hooking potential of the top-mounted magnet rigs is inferior to normal bottom-mounted hard baits, but the better hook hold in the magnet release rig compensates for this, giving a landing rate which is somehow the same.

Although the magnet rigs can be fished under the bait, I prefer my original dangling release-rig for bottom hook mountings. When the hooks are firmly set, the magnet rig gives the same superior hook hold as the dangling release rig. This



An easy way to secure the positioning of the rear hook on the rear magnet is to place a small Prologic Bait Band over the treble and push it over the rear eye on the lure – this prevents unwanted hook release on impact of with the water, but releases freely when a predator hits the bait

leads me to believe that the reason why the dangling release rig is superior to the magnet rig as an all-round rig is because the rear hook is better exposed when dangling loosely under and behind the bait. Just as important, this positioning of the rear hook makes it possible to choose a smaller and thinner hook as end hook, giving a better hook penetration. When using a bottom magnet rig you are forced to choose a relatively big hook at the end of the rig in order to get enough holding power on the magnet, which acts as a semi-fixed anchor for the hooklink. The hook gape must be rather large in order to compensate for the fact that the hook is semi-fixed close to the body of the bait on magnet-rigs. This is the reason why I rarely go under size 4 in normal trebles on the middle and front hooks in magnet rigs with big baits for pike, whereas I can drop down to ultra-sharp size 6-10 trebles when using a loose dangling release-rig. The need for a large anchor hook is most evident on jerkbaits with a rather deep belly or very high back.

TOP AND BOTTOM

On lures with a steep lip why not mix the best from top- and

bottom-mounted hooks; semi-fixed magnet hooklink on the neck of the bait and bottom mounted hooks on the middle and rear of the lure? This is possible to do not only as a release rig but also with lures where the rear hooks are mounted normally with fixed split rings. The magnet hooklink



On wire I use a segment from a ball chain inside the knot. Micro Hook Beads like these from Kevin Nash are perfect to protect the knot. I prefer Savage Gear's Ball Bearing Swivel and Crosslock because it's discreet, strong and slides in a small rig-ring – it is perfectly suited to all types of magnet and release rigs



Magnet-rigs can be fished on both crankbaits and jerks – here Westins Jätte and Hellhound



Jens with a nice pike caught in 30cm of water with weed on the bottom – a place where it would have been impossible to fish with most conventional baits, but because this Westin Jätte was fished with a top-mounted magnet rig it was no problem to fish this shallow bay

can either be sliding on the front part of the release rig or fixed to the swivel crosslock on your normal trace.

MAKING A MAGNET RIG

The magnet rig can be made in many ways. The magnets are fixed to the lure by gluing them with epoxy resin. The mounting of the release rig on the front part of the hard bait can be done exactly as on the original release rigs, described in my article in an earlier *Pike & Predators* (check out this article on www.bursell.dk). The main difference is that the release mechanism is more simple, making the general construction of the rig easier to make. Additionally you don't need to modify the lip when fishing top-mounted magnet rigs, which is mandatory if you fish

bottom release rigs.

The holding power of the magnet depends on the type of magnet, the mass and material of the hook, and the area of the hook in direct contact with the magnet. The strongest magnets are called NEO magnets, and in general the larger the mass of the hook and magnet plus the better physical contact between them, the better holding power. This is important, because you don't want the hooklink to release during cast or retrieve – only when the fish bites. For the same reason it's important to maximize the holding power of the rear hook especially, as it acts as an anchor for the rig. A size 4/0 treble with nickel finish is a good choice for 15-30cm lures.



Top-mounted magnet rigs work well with jerkbaits like this Zalt Z – for jerking it's important to have extra holding power on the rear hook

large rear hook, therefore, is ideal for many reasons as the

It can be an advantage to use different sized hooks on the rig. As I see it, the rear hook has a greater chance of ending up in the back of the mouth cavity where the chances are that it will get a good, deep grip in the softer part of the mouth such as the tongue. A relatively

end/anchor hook on the magnet rig. A hook with a heavy wire and a big gape is easy to set in the soft flesh – and gives a better hook hold than small, thin-wired hooks which more easily cut themselves out through soft flesh.

Because only one branch of the treble is exposed, it acts in practise as a single hook where the other branches only help in keeping the right position of the protruding branch. This is an advantage, because now the power from the strike only has to be transmitted through one point, and this will maximize the penetration power of the protruding part of the treble, compensating a bit for the heavier wire.

The problem with larger hooks is that, compared to thinner and sharper hooks, it's more difficult to set them in the harder front parts of the mouth. I believe that the front hooks statistically have a greater risk of pricking the fish in the harder front parts of the mouth, so I often mount much smaller hooks on the front part of the hooklink. In this way the different sized hooks on the hooklink are optimized to maximize the penetration and hook hold where they have the greatest chance of penetrating. I believe this maximizes the chance of landing the fish, because you take account of two different hooking scenarios at the same time.

When you use very small hooks on big lures they must be loose, dangling 2-3 cm from the



1.5kg perch caught on a Westin Jätte trolled on a top-mounted magnet rig over very high weeds in shallow water

bait, in order to work well. On large, hard lures with top-mounted magnet rigs where the hook sits close to the body of the lure, I do not recommend hooks smaller than size 2 to 4 on the front hooks.

The material of the hook is also of some importance. Hooks with nickel finish give the best holding power, and I have had best success with hooks such as the extremely sharp Gamakatsu T13 or T18 in the nickel versions.

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

When you take off the original heavy hooks and place magnets plus lighter hooks on the top of the bait, you change the weight distribution. This can change the movement pattern of the lure. In general this gives a more rolling and erratic movement, being even more

attractive for pike. This is an advantage when using rather slow retrieve patterns in cold and shallow water, but can be a disadvantage when trolling at higher speeds because the lure can start to spin in an uncontrolled manner.

Whether your hard lure is suited for top-mounted magnet rigs depends very much on the specific type of lure. For pike I have found the following work well: Westins Jätte, Butch, 4Play, Zalt Z, Zam Z Tail, Hellhound and Buster Jerk.

THE RIGHT RIG

To summarize, the advantage with top-mounted magnet-rigs is that they are perfect for specific situations such as extremely shallow water, weed fishing and scraping the lure over the bottom. A plus is that they are cheaper and easier to



Zalt Z Tail works best with the magnet rig fished under the lure. From the VMC Scorpic hook that is semi-fixed at the end magnet the hooklink is extended with a piece of super stiff BFT No-Kink Titanium exposing a stinger hook 2-3cm behind the curly tail. This gives no tangles and is a perfect way to hook those pike which only bite at the tail

make than the dangling release rig. So, if you aim to maximize the efficiency of your fishing, my advice is to use top-mounted magnet rigs for the situations

described above and dangling release rigs for your all-round fishing. I never use a normal hook mounting, because losing a lot of fish means catching less.



Magnet rigs are also suitable for fishing big soft baits like this Alien Eel



Swimbaits like this 25cm 4Play works perfectly with the magnet rig