

## NEW Berkley® Powerbait® 5" Hollow Belly™ Swim Bait

Review and Rigging Tips by ABQ Sportfishing  
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We have finally achieved a level of confidence in swim baits after a recent trip to Amistad. We fished several different varieties and came back with a renewed spirit for throwing the monster (and not so monster) baits in the local waters. Also, we are going to highlight some rigging advice we received from our friends at [Mack's Lure](#). Mack's has an entire section of their website devoted to rigging advice from some great anglers like fellow Pro Staffer [Stan Fagerstrom](#). We will be highlighting some of the [Smile Blade rigging advice](#) we learned about on the site later on in the review.

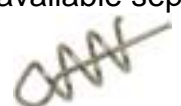
Berkley continues to come out with some great products for catching more and bigger fish. Having some of the top pros consistently winning tournaments on the [BASS Elite series](#) keeps their R&D team very busy...and it shows. Their submission to the swim bait revival are some great all-around baits - the [Hollow Belly](#) series. The reason we mention "revival" is that we often laugh about the "swim bait craze" as it is something we have used for years...mostly referred to as a Sassy Shad and not so fancy. That little Sassy Shad from Mr. Twister has caught a lot of fish. When we began guiding for stripers at Elephant Butte, swim baits were a core part of the arsenal. With our migration to the black bass world...swim bait technology has gone to a whole new level...almost insane in certain cases. You can easily spend \$50 on one bait...and that isn't necessarily a durable hard bait.

We have tried several other brands of swimbaits: Sebile, Reaction Innovations Skinny Dipper, California Swimbabes Baby E, Osprey, Castaic, 3:16, Optimum Baits Double Diamond Swimmer, Canyon Plastics Swim Doctor, Basstrix, Yamamoto Swimsenko, Reaction Strike, Storm, Calcutta, Yum Money Minnow and more probably if I thought about it longer. The Basstrix is credited with fueling the flames in recent years...you could not even buy one for a while unless you "knew someone". A lot of you are probably thinking "old news, why are they writing about this now, this is all old news", which is why we mentioned the rigging advice. We think there is something you can do to separate your Hollow Belly from the next one...but more on that later. Outside of the [Sebile Magic Swimmer](#) as an alternative hard swim bait, we have very few of the others that we would recommend. Several were not very durable...to cast even...much less bring through any kind of cover more than once. If they were durable, they lost a lot of the tail action or had a lot of plastic which made quality hooksets difficult.

The Hollow Belly can be rigged traditionally with a treble or swim bait hook. [Click here](#) for a brief video showing some of the items we will be highlighting below. One of the biggest differences between the Hollow Belly and other similar (at least on the surface) swim baits is the plastic and how the plastic collapses on a strike allowing for better hooksetting. Several other baits have a slot in the

bottom and a lot of plastic in the body making it harder for the material to compress and get out of the hooks way. Berkley has created a variety of different life-like finishes that are every bit as good (even better) as some of the much more expensive baits. The eyes are oversized and have a very life-like appearance. Creating them out of the PowerBait formula also increases your odds of drawing out that bigger bite. Several of the competitor brands are plain old rubber...and are hard to cover up with scent. Hollow Bellys are offered in 3 of the most popular sizes ranging from 4"-6". We prefer the 5' inch as we tend to move them faster than the 4" will allow although the 4" have found their place in our walleye presentations.

We've hinted around a few rigging ideas above and how we are incorporating the swim baits more successfully into our fishing. The first thing we want to talk about is utilizing a [Mack's Lure Smile Blade](#) and a few strategically placed 4mm or 5mm beads. There are some [great photos](#) of the rigging in this article from Stan. If you are rigging the bait, you want to slide a bead on, then a Smile Blade, two more beads and then your hook. This will allow the blade to swim freely and not hit the bait. We've begun placing a Smile Blade in a color consistent with the top color of Hollow Belly we are fishing. For the Herring we are using a green holographic blade, gold holographic in front of the Gizzard, etc. This will compliment the color of the bait and also put a subtle glow out for the fish to key in on. Using the Smile Blade also moves water differently than the other 1,000,000 spinner baits the fish have seen that morning. Vary the size of your Smile Blade depending on the water clarity and how much action you want. We prefer smaller more subtle colors in clear shallow water and larger blades for moving faster or dirty water. We prefer using the [Owner Beast Twistlock](#) hooks as they are the easiest to rig the bait straight although we have learned a couple tricks on the hooks that do not have Twistlock...add the CPS Twistlock now available separately at Charlie's and other retailers.

  
For all of our walleye friends, the 4" Hollow Belly rigged on a 3 foot leader with a Smile Blade behind a bottom bouncer and slow trolled has been very effective. We use an unweighted hook or rig with a treble along the belly. The instructions that come with the Hollow Belly demonstrate this rigging.

We are throwing our soft swimbaits on a [G.Loomis WTR941C](#) paired with a [Abu Garcia Revo Winch](#) and [15# Trilene 100% Pure Fluorocarbon](#) in open water or 20#-25# Trilene 100% Pure Fluorocarbon around cover.

You can find all of these items in Albuquerque, NM at Charlie's Sporting Goods or follow the hyperlinks above to find a dealer near you.