

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Skirted lures that consistently deceive fish

JB Lures – XL WILLY WILLY

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Dave Venn of JB Lures created the largest size in his successful 'Willy Willy' series especially for the jumbos of the fish world. Suitable for heavy-tackle only, this serious-sized lure gives the impression of a small tuna freaking out on the surface – an irresistible temptation for a big blue marlin.

REVIEWED BY MATT GROSS

Dave Venn of JB Lures creates lures to catch fish, not fishermen. As he states: "The fact they are beautiful is beside the point; they have to catch fish and if they can't do that there is no point to their existence." You can take a great deal of confidence from a lure-maker that makes such a statement.

Interestingly, this lure was created due to the outstanding success of its smaller siblings, rather than the other way around as is often the case. Dave's 'Willy Willy' range started life as a modified version of the excellent JB Lures 'Dingo', which was designed to chase tuna.

One of the key attributes of the Dingo was its ability to be trolled at 15 knots, enabling skippers to get their boats on the plane and chase tuna schools that popped up for brief periods. However, the XL Willy Willy is a 33cm skirted lure and it has *not* been designed to troll at 15 knots – in fact it starts to get rowdy at anything over 11 to 12 knots. On the contrary, this is a very useful lure because it can be very successfully run at five knots, at which speed it will run true while offering a reasonable rooster tail and a nice smoke trail.

However, it's at the 7- to 8-knot mark that this lure really starts to perform. At this speed you'll notice there are two very significant changes in its attitude. The first is that it appears to dive longer and deeper, particularly when run in the long-flat position. It also has a smoke trail that resembles a small propeller in that it creates large bubbles and a cavitation, suggesting it displaced quite a large amount of water when breathing. When this occurs, you should expect this lure to throw a large rooster tail and then rip under it, looking much like a little tuna accelerating down the face of a wave.

Although this lure was only released in September 2017, its list of captures and releases is already very impressive. It has accounted for an 80kg yellowfin tuna and numerous striped, blue and black marlin, with the largest known so far around 250kg.

Make no mistake, this is a good-sized lure and at 33cm in length it really sits in the heavy-tackle category. When running in excess of 10 knots, the drag created by the XL Willy Willy seemed excessive

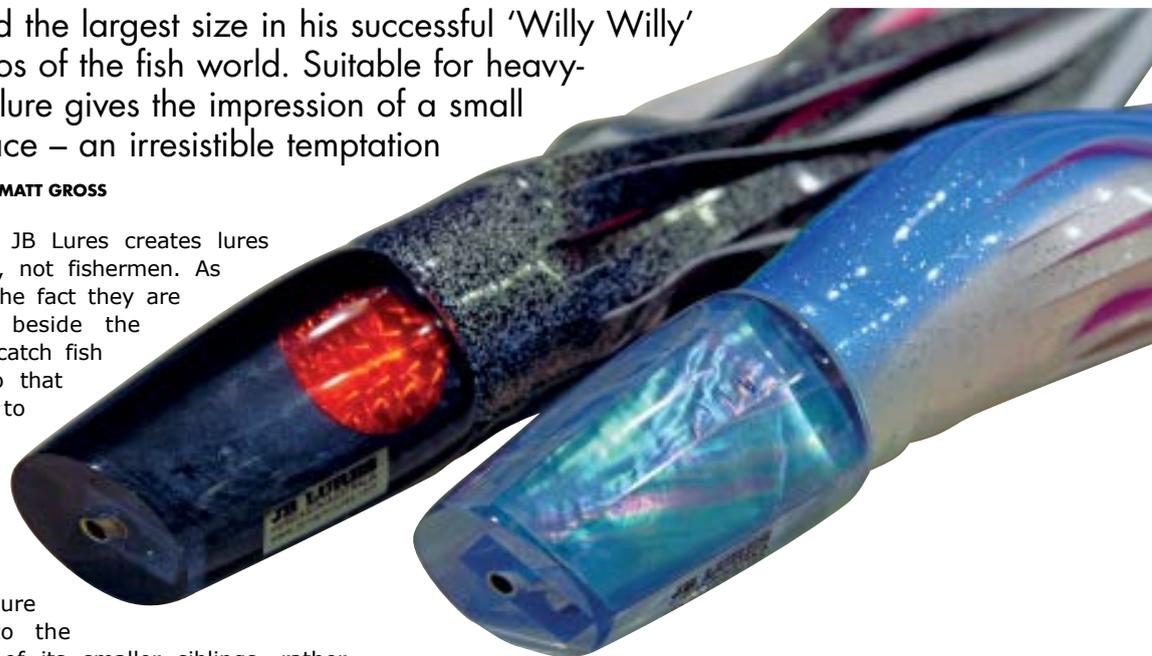
on the 24kg tackle I was using for this test. Dave agreed that this size in the Willy Willy range is far better suited to 37 or 60kg tackle. However, at normal trolling speeds you'll probably get away with this lure on 24kg as long as your terminal tackle matches the line class.

Keep in mind the matching terminal tackle for this lure needs to be big. Dave recommends a minimum of 200kg mono leader onto a single hook rigged on a tip of 750lb 49-strand wire. This just reiterates that with this lure you are chasing the big mommas and not their offspring.

The skirting can have a significant impact on the swimming capabilities and longevity of a lure. As you'll see in the accompanying picture, Dave is one of the very few lure-makers in Australia that offers vinyl strips as a skirting option – as is favoured by much of the Hawaiian professional fleet. In fact, JB Lures are used by many of the boats in Kona, and Dave is sent lures from all over Australia to be skirted this way. It's a great option that helps to set his lures apart from many others.

JB Lures is a brand that continues to grow in Australia and internationally based on its reputation of raising and hooking fish. They may not be the cheapest lures on the market, but when your success is on the line it doesn't make sense to scrimp on a small handful of dollars. I have never understood the logic of spending thousands on your boat, fuel and rods and reels, only to then tow substandard lures around the ocean that deliver second-rate results. It is far better to go and buy a JB Lure and fish with confidence.

For details of Dave's skirt options and extensive range of colours, email jbmarlinlures@gmail.com, or call him on 0422 429 385. 🐟



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