

TOMMY HARRIS REVISITED

SEEING WHAT'S NEW WITH TOMMY

BY TERRY BITZ OF
OUTDOOR CONVERGENCE

A rolling stone gathers no moss. I think that is Tommy Harris' motto as he is a man in motion. I recently sat down with Harris to see what is new in his world. The question I should have asked. "What isn't new?"

Ironically the biggest changes could be in the blades themselves as Harris is producing and painting large walleye blades in sizes that would have been unheard of several years ago. Maybe even unheard of still today by many people when they see the #8 blades that Harris produces.

"The average people still don't get it," said Harris. "That's way too big they will say. However, anglers up in Green Bay are running #8 blades. Many people believe the big blades can be seen further in the clear water. I have been going after the big blade market".

Brand new this year is a barbwire theme that he has added to the blades. It's a bit of a twist on Harris' trademarked spidewire that he is known for.



A Selection of Tommy Harris' New Blade Designs

Oh yes, I did say trademark. Harris since my last article has trademarked his spider/spiderweb blade design. It took a year and a half plus an investment of capital, but it was something he felt he needed to pursue in order to protect his business which is has carefully nurtured over 25 years.

Copycat blades have occasionally cropped up on the market from people who are trying to pass their blades off as ones produced by Harris.

And Harris has a right to protect his good name. His designs and his name are well respected in the fishing community. He has been around for a long time while others come and go.

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"There are one year wonders," said Harris. "People who come in the business for one year. They have to practically give their stuff away to get in the stores."

Those people soon learn it's not worth their time and they drop out of the business.

As for Harris, business has been good and is keeping him busy.

His blades are now found in Mills Fleet Farm throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota. He has also hooked up with a distributor in Canada that found Harris through his website which he started about two years ago.

Of course, when you talk about Harris' blades you have to talk about paint since he is know for his high quality paint jobs.

When it comes to paint colors, those can change yearly based on what is hot at the time. He said he is doing a lot of stuff in candy colors, flourescent and microflakes. Harris also said that glow-in-the-dark paints have been making a come back as well.

Harris is also still one of the few painters who is painting the inside of the blades. This is done on the theory that most fish strike from behind and not from the front. However, most blade builders have not caught onto that yet.

Harris though says it's the graphics that really make the blades stand out.

"You can only do so much with paint," he said. "It's the graphics that really make the difference".

So what's new for 2011?

Harris will be working on some ice fishing spoons this winter and there's talk that his blades could find their home on some muskie baits as well. But with Harris you never know. He is after all a man in constant motion.

Contact Tommy Harris at 262-672-1448

You can also go to his website at www.tommyharrisblades.com