

# Disco pike

Once in a while I'm forced to come clean. Recently, with one eyebrow raised in curiosity, the love of my life casually asked, "Why is there a disco ball motor in the Amazon cart?" It's moments like this I realize, I'm busted. However, the truth will set me free. I have a plan, and although she will listen intently, I know, deep down, she will never understand the ideas that float through this brain of mine.



Pine Knot News  
Outdoors

Bret Baker

The plan is a solution to a problem it took me years to realize I was having. I will spend hours in a spear shack, but I'm not one to kick back and let the pike lazily float in. I'm much too fidgety to mindlessly stare over the top of my boots. I'm more apt to try and make something happen. That's where pike decoys work their magic. Pike decoys come in an endless array of sizes, colors, and actions. Most resemble some sort of fish. Perch, sucker and small pike imitations are pretty common. Most measure 6-12 inches in length and, when pulled from above, arc in a large circle, calling in all directions to cruising pike. If there were a help group for spear fishermen, I would be front and center confessing: "Hi my name is Bret and I overwork the decoys."

I just can't let them sit. So the same scenario plays itself over and over. I settle in and commit to a morning of spearing. I stare down into the pike's world from my icy perch, and I feel like a voyeur: secret, uninvited. I drop my first decoy down — we all have our favorites, based mostly on memories of prior success. Mine is a heavy pink decoy that looks like nothing that swims in the wild. I watch it cascade down in large arcs until the line tightens and it smoothly cruises across my line of

vision. It sits motionless for a second, I give it another yank, and its journey repeats itself. As it wears its energy out, it settles in once again. I jiggle it. I swing it. I give it a pull. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Up it comes, I grab at the shelf in the darkness for my next offering. I hold the decoy out over the hole so the snap swivel is illuminated from the green glow below. I quickly switch it out. Maybe perch? Perhaps the old standby, red and white? Down it goes, bubbles race to the surface. Couple tornado pulls and it shoots under the ice to the far reaches of its tethered existence.

Bam! A pike nails it. The constant motion has done its job; a healthy northern pike has seen enough and completely blasts the decoy. However, as quickly as it has struck, the pike realizes a mouthful of wood or plastic or metal fin is not what they signed up for and it disappears from my life forever. The entire encounter lasts less than a second.

Admittedly there are much more efficient methods to put a pile of fish on the ice than spearing. However, if you're committed to the challenge, you need the pike to float in under your feet unaware of your presence. Everytime a pike barrels in, slams my decoy and retreats, it gets the heart going, but it doesn't do much for dinner plans. That's where the disco ball motor comes into play.

I'm not sure where I first saw it, but I knew it was going to work: I would suspend a rotating golf ball in the pike's dining room. My kitchen table became arts and crafts central as I took to the task of painting several golf balls. Red and white seemed like a good place to start. Packers green and gold would imitate a



The author displays a couple of old-school pike decoys along with his new favorite, the disco golf ball. *Bret Baker photo*

perch, or at least fluster a Minnesota pike. Pink and silver might draw in my prey? The combinations proved endless. As I excitedly showed off each new creation, my wife was not overly impressed. I fastened a small I-bolt to each golf ball and I was ready for action.

I suspended the disco ball motor from the rafters of the spear shack. I tied an 8-foot section of line to its rotating body. Half of the line would stay high and dry, half would plunge with the golf ball below the lake's frozen surface. The motor began to whirl and the golf ball began its hypnotic dance. From above I could see both colors red and white rotating in place. From the pike's point of view they would see red then white then red, white, red, white, red ... too much to take.

The first pike floated into the golf ball

like it was being pulled on a string. Its fins showed its excitement as it inched closer, but its eyes mirrored its true reaction. It was mesmerized. It had never seen anything like it. Red white red white ... I slid the spear under the water. Red white red white, and without hesitation the missile was off; my aim was true. My wife would have her fish sandwich, even if she wasn't impressed with the disco ball motor in the Amazon cart, or the paint all over the kitchen table.

*Bret Baker is a lifetime resident of Cloquet. He is a proud husband, father, educator and outdoorsman. Bret began guiding fishing trips when he was 16 years old. Today, in his 40s, his passion is to introduce people to the tremendous outdoor adventures available in our region.*

## Sports Schedules

### BOYS BASKETBALL

**Carlton Bulldogs**  
Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm vs. Barnum  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm at Silver Bay  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:15 pm vs. Moose Lake-Willow River

### Cloquet Lumberjacks

Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm vs. Chisago Lakes  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm vs. Moose Lake-Willow River  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:15 pm at Superior

### Cromwell-Wright Cardinals

Friday, Jan. 18 6:30 pm vs. Cook County  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm vs. Wrenshall  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:15 pm at Esko

### Esko Eskomos

Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm at Floodwood  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm vs. Duluth Denfeld  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:15 pm vs. Cromwell-Wright

### Fond du Lac Ojibwe Ogichidaag

Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm at Chisholm  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm at Ely

### Wrenshall Wrens

Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm at Two Harbors  
Monday, Jan. 21 7:15 pm at Bigfork  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm at Cromwell-Wright  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:15 pm at Barnum

### GIRLS BASKETBALL

**Carlton Bulldogs**  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 4:45 pm at Silver Bay  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm at Moose Lake/Willow River

### Cloquet Lumberjacks

Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm vs. Crosby-Ironton  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:15 pm at Duluth Denfeld  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm at Duluth Marshall

### Cromwell-Wright Cardinals

Friday, Jan. 18 4:45 pm vs. Cook County  
Monday, Jan. 21 7:15 pm vs. Mountain Iron-Buhl  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm vs. Esko

### Esko Eskomos

Friday, Jan. 18 7:15 pm at Pequot Lakes  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm at Cromwell

### Fond du Lac Ojibwe Ogichidaag

Monday, Jan. 28 7:15 pm vs. Northwoods, site TBD

### Wrenshall Wrens

Friday, Jan. 18 5:45 pm at Two Harbors  
Monday, Jan. 21 7:15 pm vs. Cromwell-Wright  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:15 pm vs. Barnum

### BOYS HOCKEY

**Cloquet-Esko-Carlton Lumberjacks**  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:30 pm vs. Virginia-Mountain Iron-Buhl  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:00 pm at Superior

### GIRLS HOCKEY

**Cloquet-Esko-Carlton Lumberjacks**  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 7:00 pm at Proctor-Hermantown  
Thursday, Jan. 24 7:30 pm vs. Grand Rapids-Greenway

### NORDIC SKIING

**Cloquet-Esko-Carlton Lumberjacks**  
Saturday, Jan. 19 11:00 am at Duluth Marshall Invite  
Friday, Jan. 25 11:00 am Lake Superior Conference, Snowflake

### ALPINE SKIING

**Cloquet-Esko-Carlton Lumberjacks**  
Monday, Jan. 21 10:00 am Invitational at Mont du Lac  
Thursday, Jan. 24 10:00 am Invitational, Spirit Mtn

### WRESTLING

**Cloquet-Esko-Carlton Lumberjacks**  
Friday, Jan. 18 4:00 pm at Chisago Lakes  
Tuesday, Jan. 22 5:00 pm vs. Aitken & Deer River

### COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

**Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Thunder**  
Friday, Jan. 18 7:30 pm at Central Lakes  
Saturday, Jan. 19 3:00 pm vs. Mesabi Range Tech Comm  
Saturday, Jan. 26 3:00 pm at Northland Tech Comm

### COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

**Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Thunder**  
Friday, Jan. 18 5:30 pm at Central Lakes  
Saturday, Jan. 19 1:00 pm vs. Mesabi Range Tech Comm

### JUNIOR HOCKEY

**Minnesota Wilderness**  
Friday, Jan. 18 7:05 pm vs. Brookings  
Saturday, Jan. 19 7:35 pm vs. Brookings  
Friday, Jan. 25 7:05 pm vs. Bismarck  
Saturday, Jan. 26 7:35 pm vs. Bismarck

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