

**WHEN RICK CLUNN** designed his original RC (Rick Clunn) series of square-billed crankbaits, he specifically told Lucky Craft to make these lures without rattles. He said he believes that bass have grown leery of rattling crankbaits because they've been assaulted by them for so long.

Clunn's quiet crankbait theory began to materialize when he won the 1984 Bassmaster Classic on the Arkansas River by cranking a row of submerged stumps. On the first day of the tournament, he quickly culled a heavy seven-fish limit of bass by banging a Bomber 7A against the stumps. The 7A plucked another good limit of bass from the stumps on Day 2, but he had to cast all day to catch them.

On the final day, Clunn had no success with the Bomber 7A. He was about to give up on the stumprow when he tied on a Rapala Shad Rap for one last try. The Shad Rap nailed a 28-pound limit in two passes over the stumps, his heaviest catch of the tournament.

"That stuck in my brain for months," he said. "Why did that simple bait change turn that spot back into virgin water?"

Clunn's experiences over the ensuing years have given him the answer to that question: The bass at the Arkansas River Classic were soon put off by the rattles in the Bomber 7A. They pounced on the balsa Shad Rap because it didn't have rattles.

This theory was reinforced during a tournament at Texas' Sam Rayburn Reservoir one March. Clunn was slamming bass at the beginning of the event with a Rat-L-Trap, but the bait was becoming less effective every day. Then, he took a beating when one of his partners outfished him 3-to-1 on a Cordell Spot, another lipless rattling crankbait.

The veteran pro took a closer look at his partner's lure and found that it was one of the original Spots, which did not have rattles. That night, Clunn drilled a hole in a Rat-L-Trap and filled it with silicone to silence the rattles. The next day he went back to slamming bass with the lipless "nonrattling" crankbait.

Shallow running, square-billed crankbaits have caught enough evidence to support his quiet crankbait theory. Over his 30-plus-year tournament



**Rick Clunn prefers quiet crankbaits, and he claims you'll get three to four times as many strikes with a fast retrieve.**

Photos by Mark Hicks

career, Clunn has caught many more bass with square-billed crankbaits that don't have rattles than with those that do have rattles.

Most of the bass he has caught on square-billed crankbaits have come on wood lures because plastic crankbaits without rattles have been almost nonexistent. So Clunn designed the RC series without rattles.

"Wood baits catch bass, but you might have to buy six or more of them to get two that run right," he said. "And they're fragile. A plastic crankbait lasts 10 times longer."

Clunn's goal was to come up with quiet, plastic, square-billed crankbaits that run at the same depth, and with the same wobble and buoyancy of the best wood crankbaits. He said that Minoru Segawa, Lucky Craft's president/lure designer, more than met the challenge with the RC baits.

"Minoru is a lure-making genius," Clunn said.

"Now, I finally have a hard plastic nonrattling bait that achieves everything I get with wood."

Then again, Clunn will use a rattling square-billed crankbait in some instances, which is why he asked Lucky Craft to make the new line of RC Rattling Crankbaits.

"I sometimes like a rattle in muddy water and when I'm cranking over heavy vegetation," he said. "But, day in and day out, I prefer no rattles." **BT**

## Cranking Tips

One reason wood crankbaits don't hold up for Rick Clunn is that he casts them into the heart of laydowns and other cover.

"I've always fished square-billed crankbaits with a spinnerbait mentality," he said. "I'll use 14- to 25-pound line, whatever it takes to horse bass out of the cover I'm fishing."

Shallow crankbaits are most effective in off-colored water, claims Clunn. He keeps his boat on the move and saturates any likely bass cover with multiple short casts from different angles. Repetitive casts pay bigger dividends in the fall because bass are more lure-shy then after a season of fishing pressure.

Speed pays off as well. "You have to fish these baits fast to make them deflect hard off cover and trigger reflex strikes. That's why you need a bait that runs true and won't roll. And, the bigger the crankbait, the faster you need to fish it. You'll catch three to four times as many bass with a fast retrieve."



**The Lucky Craft RC series of crankbaits gives Clunn the wobble – and the silence – that he likes.**