

JB Lures

'MEDIUM CHOPPER'

The scoop-faced, hand-crafted Medium Chopper from Dave Venn at JB Lures is carving a strong reputation for itself among Australia's leading anglers. As Sam Baillie found, this easy-running lure offers great versatility, an attractive head-shaking action and an impressive pedigree of tournament wins and big fish captures.

AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM BAILLIE

JB Lures Australia will need little introduction to regular readers of *BlueWater* as Dave Venn's hand-crafted creations often grace the pages of this magazine. They are typically seen hanging from the mouth of a sizeable billfish or tuna, or accompanying a report of a tournament victory somewhere along Australia's south-east coast.

As far as Australian-made lures are concerned, JB Lures certainly rate among the best in terms of both quality and performance. While testing the Medium Chopper for this review, it was quite obvious that these lures really do deserve their tournament-winning reputation. They are the real deal, with a hand-polished finish that is equal to the best lures anywhere.

The Medium Chopper we tested measured a total length of 280mm, including head and skirts, with the head itself measuring 70mm x 37mm in diameter at its widest point. This gives a length-to-diameter ratio of roughly 2:1, which generally translates into a well-balanced, stable-running lure. However, the kicker with the Chopper design is the deeply scooped (or scalloped) face; its pronounced shape creating a very noticeable head-wiggling action when trolled. Despite the deep scoop, the actual angle of the face remains gentle, which helps to keep the lure in the water and tracking relatively straight even when the sea is rough.

While the manufacturer recommends this lure for the short-corner position – no doubt a great spot for this lure in its larger sizes – I was actually quite surprised by how well the Medium Chopper ran in the longer positions with a flatter towing angle. It was particularly good in the long-corner slot.

Because of its stability and versatility, I'd have no issue running the Medium Chopper from any position in the spread. If fishing a normal medium-tackle

pattern I'd suggest running it from either of the flatline positions. However, if you're fishing a heavy-tackle pattern for big blue marlin I'd perhaps send it out on to the long rigger or even the shotgun position.

Rigged on 300lb leader with a pair of 9/0 Owner Jobu hooks set at 180 degrees with the rear hook swinging, we ran the lure on a bent-butt outfit from the corner rodholder. An outfit like this keeps the line angle low. Even when we dropped it way back to the fourth wave – which is further than you'd normally run a flatline lure – it remained up on the surface and continued doing its thing. This lure pumps out a heavy, unbroken smoke trail as it swims along with a very strong head wiggle.

You can tell a lure is really wiggling when the smoke trail behind it runs in a constant S-shaped motion as opposed to just a straight line. This wiggling action certainly creates some activity in the spread, with the resulting vibration no doubt helping to convey realism and act as a strong strike-trigger.

An active medium-sized lure like this, running out the back behind a pattern of bigger lures, can really draw some impressive bites from blue marlin. It would be a good way to hedge your bets when fishing for big blues in areas where striped marlin are still common. The lure doesn't pull too hard, so you can comfortably run it on 15 to 37kg tackle without an issue.

The lures we received for testing were fitted with a mix of both Yamashita and Yo-Zuri skirts, which are considered to be the world's two leading skirt brands, although Yamashita holds a slight edge thanks to their tapered strands and more pliable formula. They may cost more, but high-quality, hand-crafted lures like these deserve to be fitted with equally high-quality skirts as this will enable them to maximise their performance. It's therefore great to see that JB Lures is not cutting any corners in the skirt department. The skirts were also tied on the lures in the traditional fashion, as opposed to being glued, which again hints at the extra attention to detail that goes into their creation.

With a number of head insert variations, including mirrored panels for extra flash through to shell finish for a natural sheen, JB Lures offers some great options for a very attractive lure.

To get in touch with maker Dave Venn or check out the full range of lures, visit www.jbmarlinlures.com

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