

So You Want To Try Handlining Eh!

by Dan Boileau

[\(Click on pictures for large view\)](#)

During the 2001 fishing season, I decided I wanted to develop my skills as a hand-liner beyond the dabbling I had done the prior year. Having reached that decision, I knew there were two things I would need to do. One, I needed to talk to some of the experienced wire pullers in the club to get a jump start on the learning curve. With over a thousand years of handlining experience within our member ranks, this wasn't hard to do. But I would especially like to thank John Sparkman (Got-cha) for his ongoing help in developing my skills. *(I think John may actually have a shot at turning me into a real walleye fisherman if he keeps it up.)*

The second thing I knew I had to do was to rig my 1996 Lund Pro-V for the special requirements of this unique and exciting method of catching fish. Sharing how I did this is actually the real reason for this article. I have been told that some of the things I did may be of interest to other members, so here goes!



Mounting the reels was really quite simple; I just placed a 6" universal mount from Bert's Custom Tackle just behind the console on both sides of the boat. Bert also makes an "L" shaped handlining reel mount that clamps into the universal when needed, but can be easily removed when jigging, trolling or boat riding if your wife is anything like mine.



There are many options for steering your boat while handlining, but I opted to install a Panther remote steering unit on my two stroke kicker. I got the unit from Lockeman's Hardware and Boats for about \$300. That's a lot less than a TR-1, but it only provides manual steering control. Other, less expensive options, could include setting up a foot controlled steering system. *(Talk to some of the other members in the club if you are interested in doing this. It's actually pretty common.)* You can also just use the tiller on your main or kicker outboard in many cases. That just depends on how your boat is set up and how easy it is to reach while handlining. Tiller extension handles are sometimes helpful when using this direct control method.

The last thing I needed to do to my boat was to come up with some kind of comfortable seating arrangement that would position me and my partner at the back of the boat and as close to the sides as possible. I didn't want to drill or cut or permanently mount anything to the boat, so I came up with a fairly simple design for a removable seat mount that met all my other requirements and could just be left at home or on the dock on the days I wouldn't be handlining.

Many of today's walleye boats (mine included) have a sort of bench across the back in front of the splash deck. This bench normally covers live wells, battery storage, fuel and oil tanks or other utilities of this type. Sometimes, you could just put a boat cushion on top of this bench and have at it. I found this a little too low for me though. I also like a little back support now that I'm not quite as young as I used to be.

Anyway, as you can see in the photos, I just built an "L" shaped seat mount with a couple of cross pieces to keep it from turning over sideways. The height of the lower leg matches the height of the rear bench area of my boat. I added a standard swivel mount and a somewhat comfortable marine seat and I'm in business. I also built one for my partner by the way.



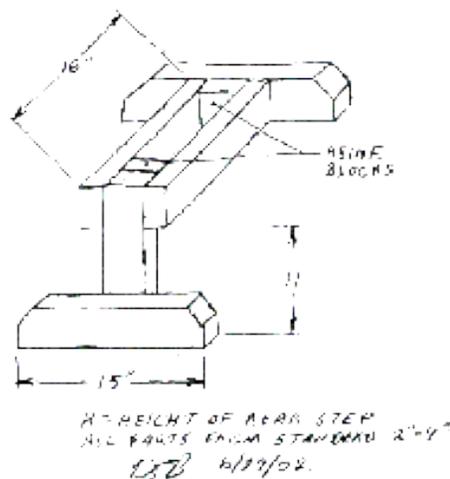
This is a pretty easy project to build that requires only one eight foot 2x4, some 3" wood screws, some 1/4"x2" lag bolts for attaching the seat swivel and the seat itself. If you build one for yourself, I recommend you knock off the corners, round the edges with a router or file, and put a couple of coats of spar varnish on it. That way you won't be snagging your line on it all the time. I also recommend you use clamps to hold everything tightly and squarely together when you drill and drive the screws to assemble it.

Other options include mortising the joints, using 1x4's for the cross pieces to reduce weight, adding a shim between the swivel and the mount to increase the seat height, or anything you can think of to make them a useful, practical and cool addition to your boat gear.

In addition to the photos, I have included a simple hand sketch of the design I used. I have found that these dimensions (15" wide and 16" deep) provide a very stable seat without being too large or ungainly. You may find it necessary to make some adjustments to meet your particular needs.

Next time you get blown off the lake or rained out, go out in the garage and invent something!

Dan B



Note: There are several other good handling articles on the site. Click on the links below to go to them.

[So You Want To Try Handling Eh! \(Part II\)](#) by John Sparkman

[Remote Steering For Handliners](#) by Ron Welch

[Handline Sinkers](#) by Ron Welch