Double Hauling

by Bruce Richards

It has been my experience that most casters trying to learn or perfect the double haul have some misconceptions that prevent them from progressing as fast as they could.

First of all, most casters I have worked with consider an increase in line speed (in-and-of-itself) to be the only purpose of the double haul. While double hauling DOES increase line speed, a student viewing that as the sole goal of the technique will probably experience some initial disappointment.

If the student does not have the ability to carry a reasonable length of line (say 40 feet) and form good loops (front and back), the double haul becomes very difficult to teach. A certain minimum skill level is required. A short line and/or a bad loop does not have the power to 'pull' slack line created by a haul out through the guides of the rod. As an initial step to counteract basic skill deficiencies, the double haul can be taught with shooting heads or short-headed weight-forward lines. The problem with such equipment is that the skills developed on it don't always carry over to longer-headed weight-forward lines (the caster may not be able to hold enough line in the air to reach the rear taper/running line).

Most of the students that I have worked with who have the skills necessary to start learning the double haul immediately have one common fault: They simply throw the line too hard. They all want to get extra distance and they think the only way to do that is to throw the line hard and fast. As soon as they begin double hauling, their casting strokes change dramatically, with the usual result being open and/or tailing loops (neither of which are much good for distance).

I've found that if I encourage my students not to change what they do with their rod hand, the end results are much better. Maintaining loop shape is critical and most casters at this stage can't do it when they overpower the rod.

As a caster progresses and becomes better at double hauling, I continue to encourage him/her to become more efficient in his/her casting strokes – less wasted motion (in arm and rod) and cleaner, more abrupt stops. This results in tighter loops that travel a greater distance with less energy input (which makes a long day of long casting much less tiring).

The length of a haul is an oft-discussed topic, and there are definitely different schools of thought on what works best. My casting 'style' revolves around a very long, smooth stroke to apply power to the line as gently as possible. Bending (or flexing) a rod less means it has to 'un-bend' less, which results in better loops (and lessens the risk of tailing loops). Watch any good caster attempting maximum distance and you'll see the rod tip traveling a very long pathway. When a short, sharp haul is made in the middle of this long stroke, tailing loops are the result. It only makes sense that a poorly-timed, sharp haul will cause the rod tip to collapse into a concave pathway, thus making the line 'tail'. I prefer to teach a long, smoothly accelerating haul that mirrors the acceleration of the rod

tip. The longer the cast, the longer the casting stroke, and thus the longer the haul. This approach works very well because it's easy to teach (the timing is not as critical as with short casting strokes), and the student gets the idea that the double haul doesn't have to be done in an ultra-fast manner.

I often use golf analogies in my teaching because many of my students golf (and so do I, sort of). The best golfers use a long, smooth stroke to strike the ball. They don't appear to be working very hard for the results they get- just like a good caster. A long, smooth casting stroke and haul get the best results. As a caster's skill and experience with double hauling advance, he or she can start adding more speed to the casting stroke and haul to increase ultimate distance.