

# THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for  
Certified Casting Instructors  
Winter 2009*

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## *Lightning & Electricity*

*by Ally Gowans*

The 'gentle art of angling' conception misleads the non-angling public and also a number of anglers into the impression that it is a sedentary pastime for relaxation and meditation rather than an active and very demanding sport. Believe it or not, angling is a very dangerous sport and the perception that it's not only adds to the risk and catches anglers off guard, making them more susceptible to accidents.

A good ducking can be laughed off later-- a drowning can't be. Getting your jersey hooked maybe pulls a few threads, being hooked in the skin is painful at best and a hospital trip at worst, but a hook in the eye is utter disaster. Severe cold, falls, fences, sunstroke getting lost, attacks by animals and many other hazards are good reason to consider safety at literally every step during a day's fishing. Let's face it, we go to strange and unfamiliar territory at all the hours of day and night and in all weathers, carrying all sorts of baggage, tackle, outboards, cookers, rods, nets, etc., therefore it is small wonder that accidents can, and do, happen.

Have I missed anything significant from the dangers mentioned? No prizes for guessing the two perils that are not included, lightning and electricity.

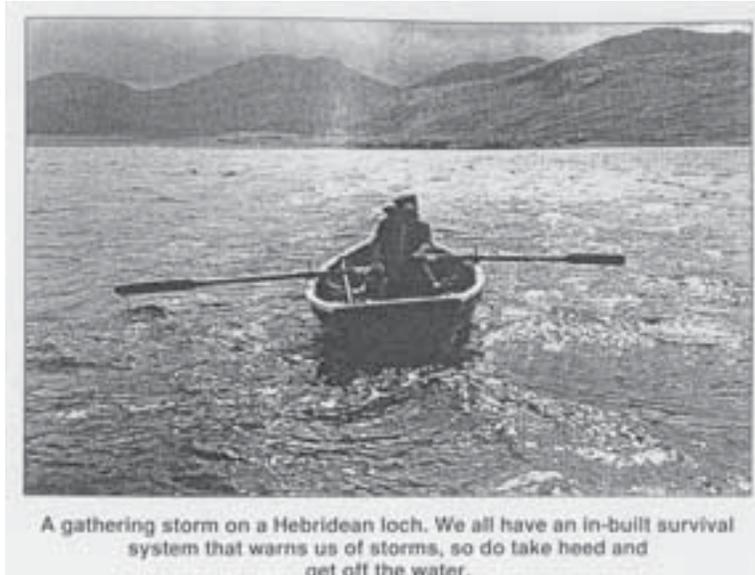
Lightning is surprisingly common, much more so than is generally realized. It originates from thunder clouds that usually contain positive electrical charge at the top and negative charges at the bottom. As a result of these charges, electric fields are built up within the cloud, between clouds and between the cloud and earth. The discharge is normally initiated from the cloud at a point of high electric stress, and in the majority of cases a negative charge from the cloud proceeds towards ground in a series of jerks of 'steps'. This is the leader stroke. When it approaches the ground, high electric stresses develop above the ground and an upward streamer of positive charges develops from the ground. Protruding conducting objects help the development of this streamer. When the streamer meets the down-coming leader stroke, a conducting path is established between the thundercloud and earth and in this second stage a heavy electrical discharge takes place.



*(Continued on page2)*

# FATAL ATTRACTION

(Lightning & Electricity continued)



There is no completely safe amount of electricity. Each of us have a different constitution, however it is generally assumed that a value of less than 30 thousandths of an amp (0.030 amperes) is sufficient to kill, and hence the protective device fitted to the cable of your lawnmower or hedge-cutters is set to operate at less than that amount. Lightning strokes can vary from a few thousand to maybe 150,000 amperes, small wonder therefore that such amazing damage can be done when lightning hits a structure, or indeed anything else.

How can the angler try to avoid lightning? The human body is affected by electric fields, you can feel the strangeness in the air as thunder approaches, please take heed of this warning as it is part of your inbuilt survival system. First precaution is to avoid being the 'blip' on the landscape, stay low keep your rod on the ground or in the bottom of the boat. For goodness sake don't prop your rod up beside you when you stop fishing, that's just asking for trouble. Keep away from any objects that project skywards and may be the target of lightning. Several fatalities have occurred due to people sheltering under solitary trees, oak trees are reputed to be especially prone to lightning strikes. If you are out in a boat when thunder approaches, head towards shore to avoid being the 'blip' on the water. Of course the most basic precaution of all is don't go out when lightning is threatening, the safest place of all is indoors or in a vehicle. Fortunately you won't miss much sport because the fish don't like it either, they tend to stay down until it has passed and the air clears again.

Apart from those few simple precautions there is nothing you can do to avoid the danger of lightning. If you are on the periphery of a stroke you may be lucky to escape with a fright or a few burns. If it hits you directly unfortunately, you won't even know about it. I have been asked whether rubber boots or gloves give protection, unfortunately the answer is most definitely not, nothing can protect the individual from it.

Part of the great joy of fishing is to travel to new places, fish new waters and perhaps catch a few different species of fish. If you normally catch trout on a reservoir it's nice to have a go at sea trout or salmon, to wander the banks of some remote stream away from the madding crowds and enjoy the enchantment of dusk and dawn is a beautiful setting. It's also nice to return to your accommodation switch on the kettle and have a cuppa before going to bed. Electricity doesn't reach the remote places by magic, it gets there by overhead wires that, for the most part, blend into the landscape and go unnoticed. Unseen and unheard this energy produced by mighty machines provides us with the comfort and facilities we expect from modern life. Wires suspended from structures carry electricity around the countryside at extremely high voltage must be treated with respect.

Mention of a few accidents that have occurred in the UK will serve to concentrate the mind. A guide electrocuted as he carried his Spey rod high under the wires and it made contact, a fisherman who caught his lead core line on the wires and was shocked and burned. A man practising casting in his back garden was electrocuted and while crossing an electrified railway line, contact between rod and wires lead to another fisherman suffering 50% burns.

All fishing rods can conduct electricity and as materials have improved, becoming lighter and stronger we have produced rods that are longer in the hope that we can cast further to reach more fish. Unfortunately those new materials are excellent conductors of electricity. Should a rod come into contact with an overhead line, the result is likely to be fatal or at best severely injurious to the angler. In fact you do not even have to contact the wire, just get too close with the rod tip and the current can arc across the gap with precisely the same disastrous results. Fortunately, danger can be completely avoided by being observant, careful and adopting a few simple precautions.

Wherever you fish look out for overhead wires, right from the moment you step out of the car. Never carry a rod upright or over your shoulder, it's a bad habit and very dangerous. Hold the rod at the point of balance where it's easily carried, with the point either behind or in front of you (being careful not to stub it into the ground). Wires often follow fence lines to

## CLOSE SHAVE AT RUTLAND WATER

In April this year a Rutland Water angler was lucky to survive when lightning apparently struck the water, bounced and hit the back of his head.

Peter Weaver from Retford, near Nottingham, was fishing a Benson and Hedges match with partner Ernie Cowie when the strike welded his gold neck-chain together and blew his wristwatch apart.

"All I remember was amazing pain and lights flashing in my eyes. I thought I was having a heart attack," said Mr Weaver, aged 52, who spent the night recovering in nearby Grantham hospital.

"I was holding the tiller of the outboard motor and I think that saved my life. The main force of the blast must have shorted out through the motor. It wasn't a really stormy day. The water was a bit squally but I only heard a rumble of thunder before the lightning struck," he explained.

(Continued on page4)

# FATAL ATTRACTION

(Lightning & Electricity continued)

avoid crossing fields and inconveniencing farmers, be especially careful crossing those fences, keep your rod low and don't prop it on the fence. Occasionally the wires cross rivers; if you are unsure whether you can cast safely below them, simply don't fish beside them. Before night fishing in new surroundings make sure you know the location of any wires by checking the beat in daylight.

Fishing lines can also conduct electricity. Some modern fly lines contain a significant amount of tungsten to make them sink and of course lead core lines are good conductors. However, it is not safe to risk contacting an overhead wire with any type of line, even monofilament.

If you are a provider for fishing there are certain things that can be done to reduce the chances of an accident. Erection of notices where wires might be a hazard will draw attention to their presence and make anglers aware of the danger. Most electricity companies will provide notices to you free of charge. Erect 'goalposts' at styles over fences to ensure adequate clearances, but before doing so ask the Electricity Company to advise on safety whilst you are doing it. Better still, built stock-proof gates for your fishermen, they won't then have to climb and it's easier for the elderly. Remember to examine the whole route from the car park to the river, not just the waterside.



Should you be unfortunate enough to tangle a wire with stray cast, what should you do? If you are lucky and you're line does not conduct, break it free quickly. If any line or lures, etc are left on the wires report the incident immediately to the Electricity Company, it could cause a fault on their system thereby cutting off someone's electricity supply or encourage youngsters to try to retrieve the goodies with disastrous consequences.

Unlike lightning, the electric wire hazard can be completely avoided with just a little thought and care. Remember **“Look out - look up”** and **“Cast with care.”** Enjoy your fishing safely.

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We would like to thank Ally Gowans for allowing us to reprint this article. It originally appeared in the magazine 'Trout & Salmon', June 1994.

Ally is a very active member of our Casting Program in the UK & earns his living teaching. Check him out below.

Ally Gowan's web sites: <http://www.letsflyfish.com> and <http://www.flyfish-scotland.com>

His schools:

2009 [Spey Casting and Salmon Fishing Schools](#) at The Kenmore Hotel March 20/22, April 17/19 and June 12/14.

Trout fly fishing & fly casting school [“Tackling Trout”](#) at The Kenmore Hotel May 15/16/17, 2009  
See web sites for more details of schools.

## Part Nine

# Casting Pleasures - TRAJECTORY

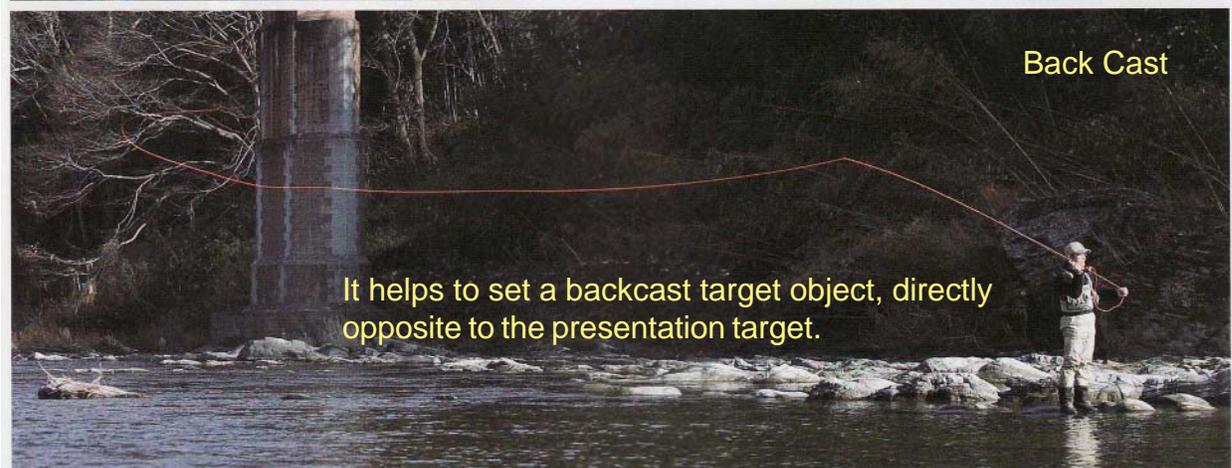
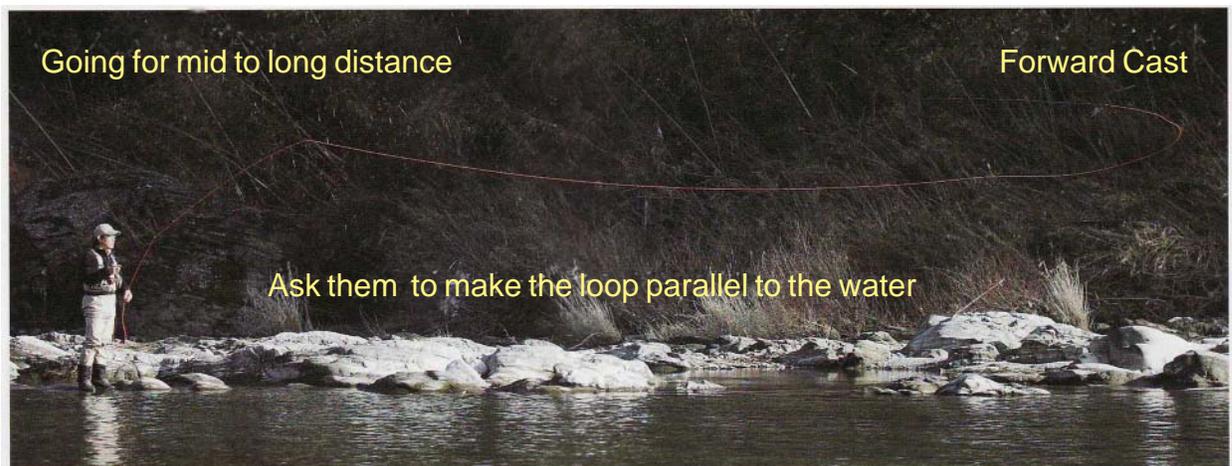
by Tomonori (Bill) Hiigashi

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Is the student's loop in plane, both back and forward?

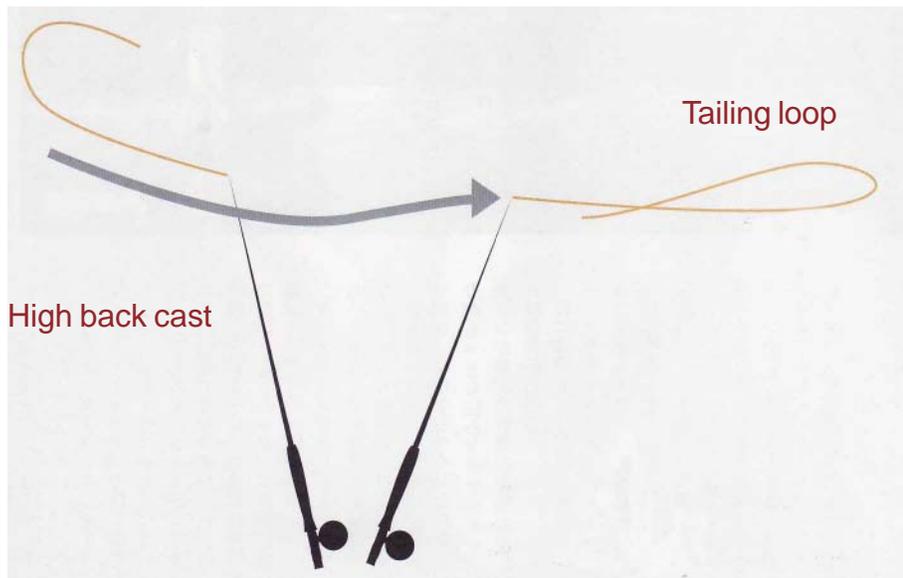
Ask them to change the tilt angle of the loop

Making him/her imagine the real fishing situation is the key to effective learning.  
Do not let the students fall into thoughtless mechanical repetition



(Continued on page6)

## Is a higher back cast always better?



Students tend to fix their line lengths in practice. Most beginning and intermediate students tend to fix the loop trajectory, especially of their back casts. Often this causes the loop to tail.

### The Important 2 feet

The leader should turn over above water, but how much above? In most fishing and practice situations, I advise my students to make it turn over 2-3 feet above the (imaginary) surface. It is very important to have them cast as if they are fishing, or else they may develop bad casting habits that have little use in real situations, like “Unwanted Pile Casts” because of higher-than-ideal trajectory in front.

Back casts and forward casts need to be in plane. As instructors, we all know that. Our students may say the same thing, because we taught them to do so. However, their body sometimes moves differently than what they say, resulting in poor loop shape. In order to teach the student’s muscles, eyes, and coordination the correct way, have them change the line length, and have them cast to turn over the leader - always 2-3 feet above. Starting with a very short line, proceed with some falsecasting - to medium - to (hopefully) long line. They will have to change the tilt of the loop for best result.

Some students (especially those who fish the bushy creeks, and we have many in Japan) try to use way too high back casts, relative to the line length and forward cast angle that is mandated for best presentation.

They are fixated, maybe because instructors yelled at them, “Make a higher backcast!” Teach them to alter the tilt, arc, stroke as the line lengthens. Some of them like to do it like a machine, but it is always good to break their own pace/setting for their spontaneous learning. I always try to combine the trajectory practice with arc/stroke adjustment practice. They are very compatible.

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This completes the article entitled ‘Casting Pleasures’ by Bill Higashi. Once again, many thanks to both Bill and the *Japanese FlyFisher* for allowing us to re-print a beautiful article. We hope you enjoyed it.

# CURVES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Ed Chamberlain, MCI

As taught by Jason Stacy, Tarpon Guide

Now, before anyone gets excited let me assure you this is a “G” rated article and the curves I refer to are the curves in your cast, not your best friend.

I had the pleasure of attending the 2008 FFF Southeastern Conclave at Callaway Gardens, Georgia, and while there attended a tarpon fishing seminar presented by Jason Stacy, an Orvis endorsed guide from Old Florida Outfitters, Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. Jason has plenty of tarpon experience and coached several of us in *improved* ways to get the silver kings to eat. One of Jason’s techniques that is a key part of his feeding technique is the cast. Tarpon are notorious for spooking at a fly in the water coming toward them or approaching from a non typical angle. Jason uses a curve cast to great advantage to show the fly to the tarpon in a familiar, fleeing manner and away from the fish. The third or fourth fish in a group is targeted and cast to; a 90 degree hook or curve at the leader allows the fly to be manipulated in a fleeing direction away from the big fish. Jason also has some interesting techniques for making the fly appear to move vigorously while remaining suspended in the tarpon’s face, but that is for his article.

Many of you are aware of multiple ways to cast a curve. Over powered, under powered, curving path of rod tip, corkscrew cast, and so on. Jason provides a very simple and accurate technique that results in a high degree of curve and a tight line, essentially throughout the length of the line, which facilitates instant fly contact, stripping, and hook setting.

Jason uses a side arm cast to throw a good tight loop. He holds the line in his line hand with his lower

three fingers. His index finger is extended along the line, but not actually touching it, and when he desires his curve, he *taps* the line with his line hand index finger. If you shoot line, stop the line with line hand and then use your finger to create the curve when you need it. A delayed tap results primarily in the leader curving and the curve being at greater distance from the caster. This technique can be practiced using a practice yarn fly, but you will not get the dramatic curve achieved as when a weighted fly is cast. We learned and practiced using an 11 wt rod and tarpon fly with hook cut off, and the curve results were pronounced. I have since done ‘yard drills’ with my 6 wt and yarn fly; it works, and is much easier on the casting arm, but the curve is not as dramatic as when using the big guns. We experimented with a negative curve and achieved a negative with two methods, an off shoulder cast with the casting plane oriented from left to right on the off shoulder (left in my case), and by making an overpowered Barnegat Bay cast, which effectively caused the curve to move from my left to right, or negative cast for right handed caster. Neither of those techniques was as effective as the positive curve side-arm cast on the right side, but I have not practiced those casts as much.

This is an interesting cast and I observed and overheard remarks from several experienced casters that this was an easier method to achieve a pronounced, consistent curve than other techniques they were more familiar with. Hopefully this curve cast will add to your arsenal of casts, teaching techniques, and will help you hook into a *Megalops atlanticus*, as well as less exotic quarry in your favorite stream or lake.

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Ed is a retired Army Airborne Ranger who lives near Atlanta and is a long-time member of the Atlanta Fly Fishing Club.

# StoneFly Vineyards

## Business & Club Programs for our FFF members

You may not know that the Federation of Fly Fishers and StoneFly Vineyards have recently put the whip finish and head cement on a new alliance. StoneFly Vineyards is now our Official Winery and as members of the FFF, everyone receives an array of exclusive benefits which you can discover at the FFF's online wine shop at: [www.stoneflyvineyards.com/FFF](http://www.stoneflyvineyards.com/FFF).

Although this is not one of our usual topics in the Loop, we thought it might be of interest in these unusual times. Read on....

Here are two programs from StoneFly that may be of benefit to you - helping fly fishing clubs and small businesses that make up the fly fishing economy.

**Attention Small Businesses:** StoneFly has a new business program designed to help your business strengthen relationships with valued customers and business partners. Here's what their Chief Fly Fishing Officer, Nick Papadopoulos, has to say about the program:

*"A nice bottle of wine and a card can go a long way. We developed this program to be of service to our colleagues and friends in the angling and fly fishing business. Everyone is thinking about ways to retain their best customers and strengthen relationships with key partners. This program is a winner for everyone: helping businesses show gratitude to their best customers and partners, providing the recipient an outstanding, personalized gift and allowing us to demonstrate our wines and commitment to the angling community."*

For more information please visit: [www.stoneflyvineyards.com/appreciate](http://www.stoneflyvineyards.com/appreciate)

**Give Your Club a Case of Wine:** Between now and March 15<sup>th</sup>, the FFF has worked with StoneFly to create a program to benefit your club. Purchase two or more cases of StoneFly Wines, and an additional case of half-bottles (valued at \$240) will be donated to the FFF-affiliated club of your choice. This is a great contribution to your club's events and fundraisers. *Tip: one way to take advantage of this offer is to team up on the order with a few of your fly fishing friends.*

### Directions

- This offer is for online web orders only at [www.stoneflyvineyards.com/FFF](http://www.stoneflyvineyards.com/FFF)
- Your exclusive FFF member discount of 10% still applies
- Use the code "FFFCLUB" when you place your order
- In the comments field please enter the name and shipping address of your designated club. No P.O. boxes.
- You are responsible for the shipping fee for the donated case of wine. This fee will not appear on your initial receipt. It will be added at the winery and appear later on your credit card statement.
- Some states do not qualify. See StoneFly's website at [www.stoneflyvineyard.com](http://www.stoneflyvineyard.com)



# *Smart Casts™ Casting Challenge Course and Casting Practice Fence*

**By David Lambert**

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A few years ago I went searching for a casting practice-course for clinics and my local club, First Coast Fly Fishers in Jacksonville, FL. After finding little of interest, I put together a few ideas and designed my own, the nucleus of the Smart Casts™ Fly Casting Challenge Course.

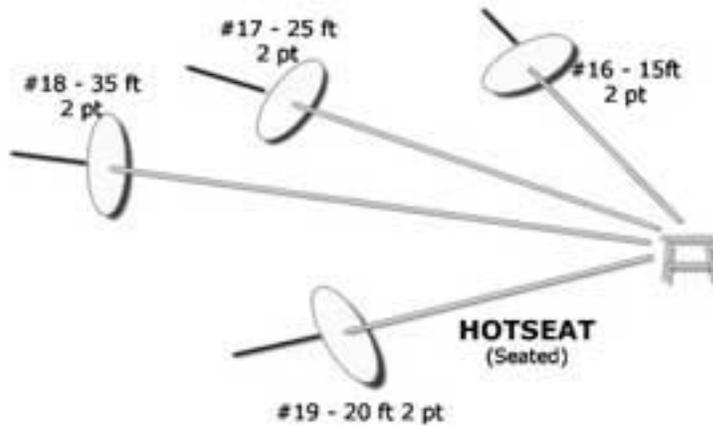
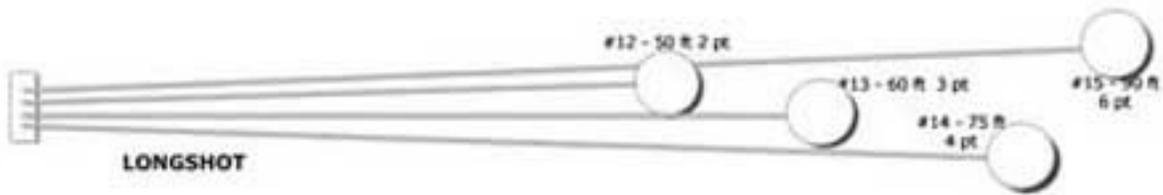
My criteria for a casting challenge course were specific: I wanted something low-cost, portable, easy to set up, and fun. And I wanted a course that presented real life casting challenges, so the practice would be useful in the fishing world. Later came the idea of using golf-like score cards so casters could score themselves—or they could be scored by judges.

The course is designed so that every casting module or station casts away from the others. It's easily customizable and each of the practice modules may be broken out for use in smaller spaces.

Clubs and casting groups seem to especially like the Casting Practice Fence. It's so cheap and easy to build that virtually every caster can have one. All parts are two-feet, except for two 18-inch pieces. I showed it to Bob Clouser after the Renzetti Fly Fair in December; as a traveling instructor, he immediately saw its value and wanted plans. I email groups or clubs a build-copy of the Casting Practice Fence. It's there when I come in for a casting clinic. The club builds it, owns it, and keeps it. And I don't have to carry it with me or ship it in advance.

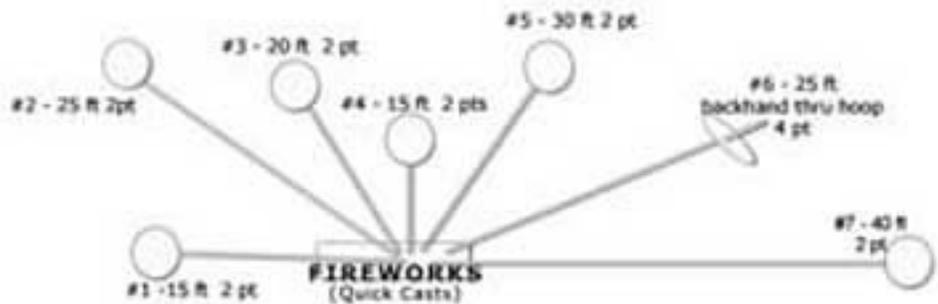
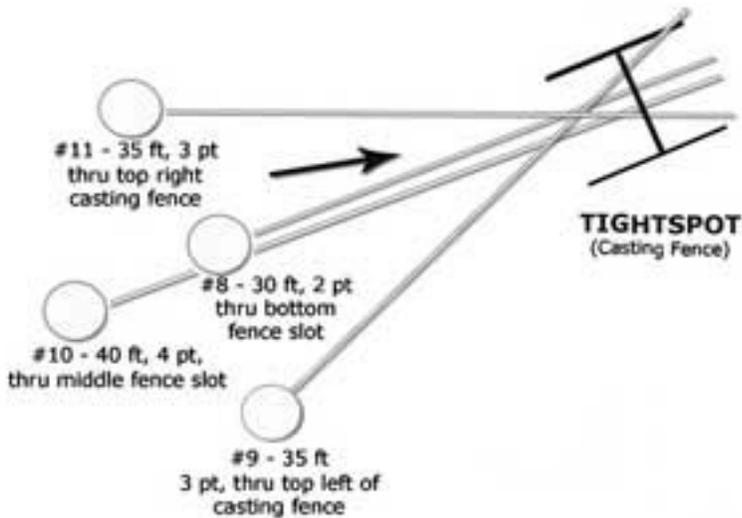
## *A bit about the Casting Challenge Course:*

- \* Comes with individual printable scorecards, like golf, so casters can score themselves as a fun event or pit themselves against each other for a judged event. In competition, each station is monitored and a scorer marks the cards. Cards are designed two to a page in MS Word and pdf formats.
- \* Course is designed to fit in a relatively small space. The design allows for each of the casting stations to throw back casts away from each other.
- \* Easily modified. Clubs or groups can erect any module or station that will fit whatever casting area is available.
- \* Start-up cost is negligible. Many instructors will have at least some of the items needed to pull this off. Approx. \$20 for hula hoops, \$15 for PVC, or use orange construction flagging tape for targets (\$3.50 at Lowes).
- \* Smart Casts™ Casting Practice Fence is simple to build and easily modified. It fits comfortably into the fabric, sling-strap bag that comes with folding chairs.



**SmartCasts™  
Fly Casting Challenge Course**

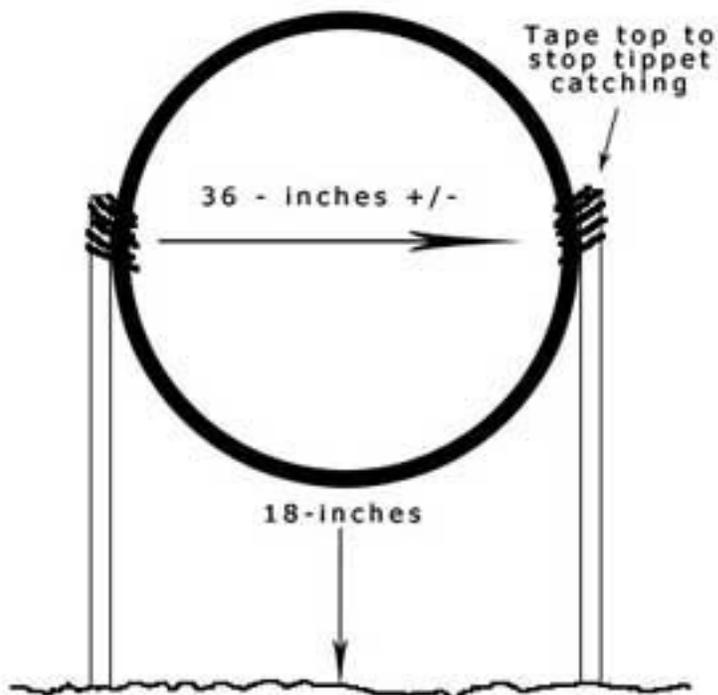
1. Three attempts to put fly in or through target.
2. Three false casts maximum between each attempt.



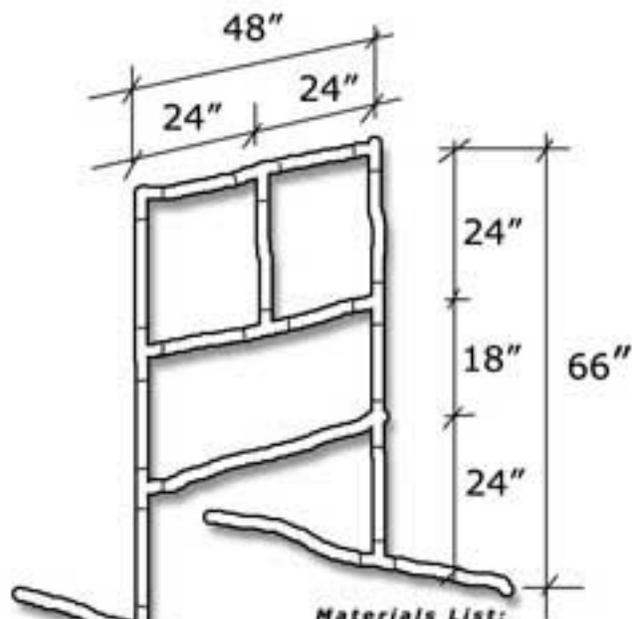
*(Continued on page 11)*

(Smart Casts continued from page 10)

## Cast Through Hoops



## SmartCasts™ Fly Casting Challenge Fence



**Materials List:**  
4 10-ft 3/4 pvc  
8 3/4 pvc tee  
2 3/4 90 elbows  
1 3/4 coupling  
**Cut Instructions:**  
Cut 15 2-ft pvc  
2 18-inch pvc.  
Assemble as above.

**Note:** This article will be available on the FFF web site for download. Many thanks to the author for making it available to our members. Please give credit if you use it. Thanks. DM

(Smart Casts continued from page 11)

\* Casting Practice Fence designed to simulate real-life, actual casting applications, e.g., casting to tight targets, through small spaces which require tight loops, and under shrubs, and vegetation

\* Course offers distance, sitting, accuracy, and fast-cast stations

## *Field notes*

1. Target size = standard hula hoops or 3-foot diameter, bright colors for visibility, international orange is best (but hoop colors fade with UV exposure). I've made the longer distance targets 4-foot square, using orange construction flagging tape, mostly for visibility. At one event, we constructed all except cast-through squares using orange construction tape. Very inexpensive.

2. Target sizes can be enlarged relative to caster's skill level, if needed.

3. To create cast-through targets, stand hoops on edge, cut pvc to a sharp point, then jam into ground and electrical tape hoops to pvc standups. Add'l note: Use tape to close gaps between hoops and pvc ends to avoid tippets getting stuck in the crevices (see Hoops Drawing).

3-a. On concrete, use two inverted t-shaped supports to hold the hoops. Anchor with socks filled with sand or rocks.

4. Use a big boat cooler or similar bench cooler as the casting seat—easy to rotate on and cast from. Lawn chairs do not work because arms restrict rotation.

5. Lowe's has 3/4-inch x 150 feet black poly pipe for under \$30. Insert dowels or old broom handles into one end, then form a hoop and attach to other end. Or end-of-season hula-hoops at Wal-Mart are \$2 - \$2.50

6. Place a judge at each station for competition.

7. Casting fence parts fit into fold-up lawn chair bag, with shoulder strap. Can anchor to concrete with socks filled with sand. On grass or sand, use wire tent stakes or bent wire hangers.

I designed this Smart Casts™ Casting Challenge Course and Casting Practice Fence so casters could challenge themselves, but I also wanted them to have fun. Maybe they will improve their casting skills along the way.

If you'd like to see the course in action, come to the Florida Conclave this year. If you have questions, suggestions for improvement, whatever, please me at [smartcasts@gmail.com](mailto:smartcasts@gmail.com).

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David Lambert is an MCCI, a lifelong outdoor editor and writer, and Temple For Outfitters advisory staffer. He is also a Florida director for FFF Florida Council and author of SmartCasts, A New Approach to Fly Casting and Practice.

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Smart Casts continued from page 12)

Scorecard SmartCasts Fly Casting Challenge Course™				
Caster's Name:				
#	Points	Distance In feet	Description	Score
<b>Fireworks</b>				
1	2	15	Forehand cast into target	
2	2	25	Forehand cast into target	
3	2	20	Forehand cast into target	
4	3	15	Forehand cast into target	
5	2	30	Forehand cast into target	
6	4	25	<i>Backhand cast through loop</i>	
7	2	40	Forehand cast into target	
<b>Tightspot</b>				
8	3	30	Forehand through bottom rectangle	
9	3	35	Forehand through top left square	
10	4	40	Forehand through bottom rectangle	
11	3	35	Forehand through top right	
<b>Longshot</b>				
12	2	50	Forehand to larger target	
13	3	60	Forehand to larger target	
14	4	75	Forehand to larger target	
15	6	90	Forehand to larger target	
<b>Hotseat</b>				
16	2	15	Seated, cast through target	
17	2	25	Seated, cast through target	
18	2	35	Seated, cast through target	
19	2	20	Seated, cast through target	

<b>Max Points 53 Points</b>	
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Notes: 1. Casters use one rod and line per course.  
 2. Three attempts to complete each target.  
 3. Three false casts each max per attempt.  
 © 2007 David Lambert, SmartCasts Fly Clinics

(Smart Casts continued from page 13)

Scorecard				
SmartCasts Fly Casting Challenge Course™				
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12	2	50	Forehand to larger target	
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14	4	75	Forehand to larger target	
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<b>Hotseat</b>				
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<b>Max Points 53 Points</b>	
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 © 2007 David Lambert, SmartCasts Fly Clinics

# MY THCI JOURNEY

by SOON S LEE

Soon Lee is an MCCI, THCI from southern California. He is also in charge of South East Asia events for the FFF International Committee.

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When I passed my THCI test, I had quite a few congratulatory e-mail messages. What surprised me were the many questions asked of me, not so much on the demands of the test itself, but more about how I prepared for it, what equipment I used, who helped me with my preparation, how I knew I was ready, how I chose my examiner, what the test experience was like, etc. I hope the following account of my THCI journey is comforting to some.



Soon Lee in Whitefish at the Casting Rendezvous

Four years ago, FFF offered a two-handed casting workshop for MCIs at the Livingston Conclave. I had always wanted to learn to cast a long rod to expand my horizons, and so, unwilling to pass up a free workshop, I signed up for a session with our guru, Al Buhr. Using a loaner rod I remember roll and overhead casts were fairly easily learnt while late rotation with the bottom hand took a little while to get used to. The other casts however were awkward because (with what I know now) my anchor placements were erratic and D loops were pathetic.

With this experience in hand, I signed up later that year for steelheading in British Columbia. Naively reasoning that a shorter rod might be easier to learn speycasting with, I purchased a T&T 1208-4 (12' 8wt.). Being a MCI, I decided against a Rio Windcutter (said to be best for beginners) and picked a Midspey 7/8 line. The first day at camp, I was casting dogs (luckily I did not divulge that I am a casting instructor). The next day the guide let me try a Skagit line with sink tip, and kept me honest with snap T and double spey casts. By the end of the day I was throwing tight loops and catching fish. I was hooked on two-handed casting.

The next year, at the Bozeman Conclave, I attended the freebie workshop with Al again, this time with my T&T and a Windcutter 7/8/9. With reinforced coaching, my casts were decent but feeble distance-wise. I was appraised that every additional foot in rod length gained 10 feet in distance. This was discouraging considering that I am 5' 4" in my boots. Wielding a heavy 15 footer I thought was going to be a Herculean task.

I live in a Southern California suburb, Upland, midway between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. From ebay I acquired a Sage 7141-4 (14' 1" 7 wt.). This matched my Windcutter 7/8/9 pretty well. I had to look everywhere for a pond to practice speycasting in. Eventually I found that I could practice at the seventh hole of a local golf course. At the break of day twice a week I was there on the bank of the pond. I could wet my line for about 45 minutes before the first foursome stood on the seventh tee. Twice a week some golfer would call in the pro shop to report an intruder fishing at the seventh hole.

(continued on page 16)

(THCI Journey - continued from page 15)

At the next conclave in Livingston I was a “three-peat” student at Al’s class but finally I was doing better. My loops were tight with an occasional hook. But distance remained paltry, even though no one seemed to notice. Dan McCrimmon admonished me to think about becoming a THCI, with the proposition that I could then contribute more to the FFF casting program. I realized that to do this, it was not sufficient for me to throw fishing casts. I had to learn to throw demonstration casts. While at the Conclave, Dan gave me the opportunity to be an observer when Larry Aiuppy was taking his THCI test. Watching a well-prepared candidate in action gave me an idea of what performance level was needed for the test. Here was a big guy, and he was not casting puny 7 weights.

Once home, I borrowed a Sage 9141-4 (14’ 1” 9 wt.) and bought an Airflo Delta 9/10 line. I found the rod needed a lot of elbow grease from me. My next ebay purchase was a Sage 9150-4 (15’ 9 wt.): the easier rod-loading using the Airflo line was more comfortable for me though I could not tighten my loops to my satisfaction when casting 100 feet. I was fortunate to be able to cast a couple of times with Bob Middo at Long Beach Casting Club.



Soon Lee at the Whitefish class

His comments shook me from my slumber of poor habits. When I regretted that the drive to Long Beach was too tiring and the casting pond too crowded Bob introduced me to Pasadena Casting Club’s pond half an hour away by car. Now I could regularly practice mid-calf deep in water. I was there for three hours each week. I had to adjust my stroke and rhythm because I felt like I was one foot shorter.

I did my requisite reading, Al Buhr, Simon Gawesworth, and others, and watched the recommended videos, Modern Spey Casting, Spey to Z, and others. I corralled a few reluctant fishing club members and friends to try out my ideas on teaching. I fished with spey rods whenever I could and made dedicated two-handed fly-fishing trips, one to Cape Cod overhead-casting for stripers with my T&T 1208, and another with my Sage 7141 speycasting for trout on the Bitterroot.

One of the best things I did was to visit Kirk Eberhard a couple of days before the next conclave at Whitefish. I was critiqued on my casts and given mock test questions, many of which I answered with difficulty and hesitation. I had been on Kirk’s internet study group. The discussions seemed to be relatively uncomplicated.

(continued on page 17)

(THCI Journey - continued from page 16)



Soon Lee on left - Lars Chr. Bentsen on right  
Japan 2008 Certification event.  
Note the happy smile on the successful candidate.

But in Carmen, Idaho, with rod in hand and Kirk staring at me, I could not collect my thoughts to answer concisely. What's the gist of a single spey? In fewer words please. What are the "components of a switch cast"? Enumerate them now please. Twenty novices show up at the Saturday club meeting to learn two-handed casting. How should you proceed? I realized I was not ready for the test. The casting performance I could refine with smoother D loops, sharper V loops, more efficient Devon switch, less top hand, more bottom hand, more consistent single speys, tighter loops at 100 feet... the oral part of the test looked foreboding. I might have read adequately but I needed to organize my thoughts so that I can rattle off answers "one, two, three". Fortunately Kirk was kind enough to provide me some study material with sample questions and answers.

At the Whitefish Conclave, I joined the free class with Al for the fourth time, and also enrolled in the pre-test course (\$80). I tried to cast with as many different rods as I could, sensing that several spey veterans did not regard my traditional action Sage 15 footer the best for the test. I had several recommendations but I found I liked the Sierra HMS 14.3' 9/10 best of all. It cast a Carron line smoothly and without effort. I managed to get Dan to sell me his demo rod. He threw in (actually, threw me) the Carron line (Carron Jetstream 9/10, shortened to 60' belly). My objective during practice was to cast until my strokes were automatic, so that I did not have too many "swing thoughts" before beginning each cast. I would cast non-stop, one cast followed by another, right to left hand, single to double, snap to snake, frequently oblivious to the presence of others around me. So it was that two visiting Italian THCI's, probably unfamiliar with American work ethic and perseverance, pronounced me a "casting machine". I also thought I did well at fault-finding. When my turn came I demonstrated a "creep" which Al picked out immediately. Heck, Al in one of his rare free moments even gave me personal instruction for half an hour.

At the BOG meeting in Whitefish there was discussion about making new THCI's take re-certification tests every five years, perhaps beginning in the near future. Right there I resolved to take the test before the end of the year. Once back home I knew what I had to do. It was back to the casting pond twice a week. Self-directed catechism took the place of unfocussed reading. I gained confidence week by week. I phoned Al to schedule a date to test me. He gently declined but arranged for Rick Williams to do the honor.

(THCI Journey - continued from page 17)

My final step in the preparation for testing was to take a pre-test with a THCI. Two weeks before my test Bob Middo gave me invaluable evaluation of what I was doing right and also what could be done better.

Rick and I scheduled to meet in Boise. I arrived one day early, visited the two test sites Rick picked out, wet my line in both places, grumbled about the slipperiness of the river bed, but finally let Rick commit me to his preferred test site.

Test day was windy. Rick had two observers, both CCIs and professional guides. I believe I did the performance tasks credibly with my Sierra/Carron outfit (naturally I felt I could have done still better). For sink tip performance I used a Scientific Angler Skagit line with sink tip 15' at 150 grains, totaling 48' at 750 grains. I would say I knew 95% of the topics asked; or to put it another way, I learned one or two new bits of information. I fancied I was good at fault finding, but I missed "creep" for goodness sake. I had no excuses. Rick was not impatient, nor was he stern and unfriendly. Perhaps it was near the end of the day and I was getting tired (did I say I had no excuses?). I heaved a sigh of relief when Rick congratulated me on passing the test. The date: November 13<sup>th</sup>. 2008.

I was registered for another day at the motel (just in case weather caused a postponement). Rick was kind enough to take me fishing. I caught my first Boise rainbow with his loaner single-hand Winston. Later that afternoon we looked for steelhead, competing with spin fishermen on the Boise River just outside town. I decided as a THCI to use my Sierra with the Skagit terminal tackle. The river was slow and apparently not deep. My first snap T (magnificently cast) snagged, and I lost my fly. Our cars were parked too far away so I improvised with what I had with me. I tied on an Orvis 12" lead head with 9' leader as a substitute and resumed fishing. I was casting spayed dogs. I was glad nobody around knew I am a THCI.

Here are ten lessons I learned through this THCI journey:

- 1) Do not try out unfamiliar or poorly matched rod/line in public unless you are a total stranger and intend to remain so.
- 2) In what other sport can we say "hook one and you're hooked"?
- 3) To cast 10 feet further, try a rod one foot longer, or grow one foot taller.
- 4) Spey-rodgers living in steelhead country are not appreciative of their advantage over those of us trying to learn speycasting in desert country. They will only get it when they try to become knowledgeable in cacti.
- 5) Fishing casts are not demonstration casts. On the other hand if you concentrate on throwing perfect casts each time you are on the water, you may harvest less fish than you should.
- 6) There are students eagerly paying you for flycasting lessons. Then there are reluctant ones scheduled for free speycasting sessions who avoid answering your phone calls. (Hopefully this changes after certification).
- 7) The rod and line must match. Two-handed rods have personalities of their own. I did not like outfits recommended to me by experienced casters. The Sierra/Carron was a serendipitous acquaintance and love at first sight. For love's sake, trust yourself, not matchmakers.
- 8) The way to continue to attend freebie spey classes at the Conclave is to improve, but slowly.
- 9) It is a bummer having someone find fault with your fault-finding.
- 10) When John Gierach wrote "Standing in a River Waving a Stick" he was obviously referring to single spey.

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# PEARLS....

## *From a Master Study Group*

*Hosted by Gordy Hill*

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### **Pearl #1 - Arm pain.....**

**From Gordy:** I've been receiving many requests for information on various ways of handling casting advice for folks who have many different reasons for hand, wrist, arm and/or shoulder pain after doing a lot of flycasting. The majority of these come from MCCI candidates who have put in long hours of casting practice to get ready for their exams.

Since the change in MCCI casting task requirements - effective Jan 1, 2009 - became known, several of these messages came from candidates who started practicing to cast with the non-dominant hand.

#### **Here is a sample of what I've been getting :-**

**#1** - I took the CCI last week and managed to give myself a rip-roaring case of tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis) in the process of preparing - despite wearing a compression band, icing after practice and the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. It was worth it and with a few days rest, the elbow is calming down as I'd hoped.

My short answer:

- 1) Stretch the area prior to practice.
- 2) Ice the area immediately after practice for at least 20 minutes.
- 3) Use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, naproxen or ibuprofen as required.
- 4) Vary your practice routine giving the affected area time/days off from stressful activities.
- 5) If the problem continues and becomes serious, see a doctor!!!! A good doctor can help with orthotics, specific stretches and more powerful anti-inflammatory medications. (Richard Ross)

#### **Advice from Gordy:**

- 1.) Try to go to shorter practice sessions but more of them.
- 2.) Practice with a light 3 wt. or 4 wt. outfit.
- 3.) You probably already have the 85' distance accomplishment. If so, don't practice distance casts until your shoulder is better.

Make all your specialty casts **WITH LESS LINE CARRIED** .... going for perfection with minimal effort rather than distance. This is good advice for candidates who have not developed a problem, too ..... **GO FOR PERFECTION WITH EACH TASK BEFORE ADDING DISTANCE !**

Remember that examiners are most impressed with casting tasks performed when they appear almost effort-less. (I remember well a word of advice given to me by Bill Gammel during my MCCI exam as I was about to make my distance cast: "I'll be a lot more impressed with a perfect looking 86 foot cast than I will with a hundred foot cast done poorly.")

- 4.) Everything you do in casting should be perfected with an eye to doing it with much less effort.
- 5.) Stop practice-casting with your dominant arm as soon as the pain re-starts. Trying to bite the bullet and working through the pain will only make it worse.

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6.) In order to avoid losing valuable practice time while preparing for the exam, switch to teaching yourself to cast more efficiently with your other arm .... not just the required straight line overhead cast & roll cast .... but even mends, hooks, curves, change of direction casts, snap casts, using your opposite hand to make casts over your other shoulder, wind casts, etc. While you are resting your painful primary arm, a certain amount of expertise learned this way will “bleed over” into the other side of your brain. This helps maintain good casting control when you go back to practice with your primary hand ..... so it is not lost effort.

Even practicing chosen sizes and forms of loops at various distances and at varying speeds (slow as possible to as fast as you can without damaging your loop) with the opposite arm will help.

Tiny tight loops, Medium size loops, Controlled wide loops such that the fly leg is straight and the rod leg low, Wide loops made with the fly leg high (to kite in a back wind) while the rod leg is straight, various methods of making tails, One size loop on the back cast, and another on the forward cast.....etc., etc.

7.) Practice casting errors with your “other” arm, too. This should include at least 3 different ways of making tailing loops, CREEP done so it will be very obvious to your examiner, big ineffective loops the way a beginner might do it, demos of poor application of power, etc.

8.) While doing the ‘other arm casting’, practice hauls .... you will be using your primary arm for line control.... but it probably won’t hurt your shoulder.

9.) If all this fails to help sufficiently, you may wish to consider casting styles different from your own default style.

10.) Taking a page from Lefty: When you do get back to distance casting, remember his sage advice to use no more power on your final delivery cast than you did on your prior forward false cast. Instead, use a quicker more powerful HAUL. His advice includes the idea that by doing this your primary arm executes the mechanics of the cast, while your line hand BECOMES THE ACCELERATOR.

11.) As we all get older, these problems are more likely to appear .... including all sorts of repetitive action injuries some temporary and some permanent. Both Lefty and I have not been excepted (we’re not spring chickens!) .... this led to many discussions between the two of us on this subject. As a result of this and of his gaining the advice of another orthopaedic surgeon as well, he has included a valuable chapter in his new book: ***CASTING with LEFTY KREH, Chapter 3, Casting and the Body, pp. 58-73.*** Part of this chapter was written by orthopaedist Dr. George W. Yu.

12.) We who strive hard to be better casters and better teachers are prone to overdo it. This is particularly true when the “heat is on” in preparing for a Masters exam. That’s when even more simple though distressing problems can occur such as muscle fatigue and temporary tendonitis. When that happens, our casts suffer because we can no longer perform with perfect control when the pain occurs.

**THIS IS ONLY ONE OF MANY REASONS I RECOMMEND THAT EACH CANDIDATE TAKE WHATEVER TIME IS NECESSARY TO BECOME PREPARED FOR THE TEST.**

### **Gordie’s followup letter:**

The advice I gave you in the last letter was for a painful shoulder on the DOMINANT side.

When the shoulder or arm problem is on the non-dominant side, the same advice really holds true as one practices to become proficient with the “other” arm.

Tendonitis and rotator cuff problems are more likely to occur as we start performing tasks for the first time. This means that we must be careful to cast with minimum effort and with short practice periods when starting to learn to cast with the non-dominant arm.

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### **I'd add one more thing:**

When I was practicing for my MCCI exam, I did basic exercises each morning with each arm. This included elbow flexion exercises and triceps exercises (extending the elbow and shoulder repeatedly). I did it because I knew that if I didn't I might suffer some muscle and joint problems. I also knew that good strength was one factor which helped lead to good control and that CONTROL is the magic word to describe good casting.

I always start my ongoing practice routines with loops made slowly with only 30' of line as a "warm-up". I don't go to distance casting until I've done less stressful casts.

I started my exercise program with no resistance .... always stopping at the point of starting to fatigue. After about 2 wks., I did them with a one lb. weight in each hand. I used that until it became, "too easy". I would often repeat these as "warm-up" exercises before going out for a long practice casting session.

Then I went to using a 3 lb. lead ball in hand. I never had to increase that. (I'm sure some large well-muscled guys could do it with a 5 lb. wt. without incurring joint and muscle problems, but I couldn't.)

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In the casting literature, you will find references to an advised exercise program for casters in *JOAN WULFF'S FLY-CASTING ACCURACY*, pp. 89-93. In *A FLY FISHER'S LIFE*, Charles Ritz ,p.35 describes preparation exercises using a "hock" wine bottle.

**Think of it this way:** You are in training for an athletic event. No coach would think of putting his athletes into a tough game without preparing them well in advance with a repetitive exercise program.

*Candidates for the new MCCI exam should take careful notice of this as they may be starting to practice casting with the "other" hand for the first time.*

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### **Pearl #2 - Substance versus Style quiz....**

Are you really teaching casting fundamentals ? See if you can answer these questions only using 'STYLE' or 'SUBSTANCE' as the answer - not true or false!

#### **DEFINITIONS** (for the purpose of this exercise)

**Style**– Something you teach that represents your personal expression

**Substance** – A fundamental casting rule that should rarely be broken.

- Question 1: When casting, the rod side foot should always be slightly back
- Question 2: To allow time for the line to unroll, it is necessary to pause at the end of the backcast.
- Question 3: When roll casting off the opposite shoulder, the rod arm should cross the body
- Question 4: For a straight line cast the rod tip should travel in a straight line path
- Question 5: When making a long double haul, the line hand should haul as far as possible
- Question 6: When making a double haul, the haul should be simultaneous with the stop of the rod hand
- Question 7: It is necessary for the wrist to apply acceleration before the stop
- Question 8: When teaching accuracy, the index finger should be on top of the grip pointing to the rod tip
- Question 9: For accurate, dry fly presentation to 40 feet, (including leader) the preferred line is a DT.
- Question 10: For accurate dry fly presentation to 60 feet (including leader) the preferred line is a DT
- Question 11: When casting, you should always try to throw a tight loop
- Question 12: A fast action rod should be used for casting in salt or large open water areas
- Question 13: When Roll casting the line/fly should stop moving before beginning the forward stroke.

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- Question 14: When using a floating line, a caster should always use a tapered leader
- Question 15: The initial size of the loop is determined by the distance the rod tip is below the line when the rod tip stops.
- Question 16: Your weight should transfer from the front foot to the rear foot on the backcast, then transfer back to the front foot on the forward cast.
- Question 17: On a back cast, you should let the rod drift backward, after the stop.
- Question 18: When ‘Double Hauling’ you should constantly Haul, with the line hand, through both the back and forward casts.
- Question 19: When making a roll cast, the rod should be held high or higher than the top of the head at the beginning of the forward cast.
- Question 20: Before beginning the backcast, the rod tip should be pointed at the fly
- Question 21: To put ‘S’ slack in a cast, the rod tip should be wiggled from side to side during the forward stroke.
- Question 22: You should remove all the slack from the line before beginning the backcast.
- Question 23: All instructional classes should end in time to allow the students to have a drink before supper.

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**Take the quiz and then check out the results on pages 22 & 23.**

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### *Pearl #3 - Saltwater cast.....*

Starting Jan. 1, 2009, the new FFF Master Fly Casting Instructor Performance Test will be used. One of the tasks will be to perform the salt water “quick cast” as one would make it from the deck of a skiff. This is to be followed by an explanation of the challenge faced by an angler who attempts to cast when wading a flat. The exact wording is as follows:-

**Task 14.** First, explain and demonstrate a saltwater quick cast from a flats skiff. Begin by explaining the purpose of the cast. Address all steps in line preparation and executing the cast and include every step in the process. End by presenting the fly at a minimum distance of 60 feet with no more than 3 false casts. Secondly, explain the line handling challenge that an angler faces when wading an ocean flat. Hauling required.

**Expectations:** The explanation should match the demonstration and be focused at students/anglers who have never fished from a skiff. The demonstration should exhibit good line control with consistent loops after the initial pickup. Line and leader should straighten completely. No tailing loops.

**From Gordie:** First, note how the question is worded. It says, “.... **explain the line handling challenge that an angler faces when wading an ocean flat.**” **Challenge, indeed !**

I find a substantial difference when wading as opposed to standing on the deck of a flats skiff. I may be standing in water anywhere from ankle deep to depth above knee level. This means that almost all coils of line longer than 3 feet will be touching the water, thus forming an impediment to casting as energy is used plucking the ends of the loops from the water. That limits the length of line I can have out of the rod tip which translates into limited casting distance. Sometimes there is a current on the flat which can make the problem worse if the ends of the line coils are in the water. Weeds can also get on the line. More than a little line in the water can get tangled between my legs as I wade. I can’t always see that, because my gaze is on the fish. I have even made the mistake of actually stepping on my line in very shallow water, particularly if I’ve elected to use an intermediate sinking line. In short, I think I’ve made about every mistake possible over the years ..... so I know first hand the challenges !

All that makes me very conservative with regard to the length of line I allow out of the rod tip. See: Lefty Kreh’s *FLYFISHING FOR BONEFISH, PERMIT & TARPON (Lefty’s Little Library series.) p. 79.*

(continued on page 22)

**Style versus Substance Quiz Results.....** Here is the tally of answers to Dennis Grant's Style vs. Substance quiz. When reading this tally, you will note that there are a few gaps. This is due to the fact that some participants left out answers to one or two of the questions.

**Number of you who participated: .....66**

**Number of questions with 100% answer consensus.: ..... 4**

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• #1: When casting, the rod side foot should always be slightly back

**Style : 62 Substance: 0 CONSENSUS**

• #2: To allow time for the line to unroll, it is necessary to pause at the end of the back cast.

**Style : 2 Substance: 60**

• Question 3: When roll casting off the opposite shoulder, the rod arm should cross the body

**Style: 54 Substance: 8**

• Question 4: For a straight line cast the rod tip should travel in a straight line path

**Style: 0 Substance : 62 CONSENSUS**

• Question 5: When making a long double haul, the line hand should haul as far as possible

**Style: 38 Substance : 24**

• Question 6: When making a double haul, the haul should be simultaneous with the stop of the rod hand

**Style: 22 Substance: 40**

• Question 7: It is necessary for the wrist to apply acceleration before the stop

**Style: 50 Substance: 12**

• Question 8: When teaching accuracy, the index finger should be on top of the grip pointing to the rod tip

**Style: 62 Substance : 0 CONSENSUS**

• Question 9: For accurate, dry fly presentation to 40 feet, (including leader) the preferred line is a DT.

**Style: 58 Substance: 4**

• Question 10: For accurate dry fly presentation to 60 feet (including leader) the preferred line is a DT

**Style: 59 Substance: 3**

• Question 11: When casting, you should always try to throw a tight loop

**Style: 56 Substance: 6**

• Question 12: A fast action rod should be used for casting in salt or large open water areas

**Style: 58 Substance: 4**

• Question 13: When Roll casting the line/fly should stop moving before beginning the forward stroke.

**Style: 36 Substance: 26**

• Question 14: When using a floating line a caster should always use a tapered leader

**Style: 54 Substance: 8**

• Question 15: The initial size of the loop is determined by the distance the rod tip is below the line when the rod tip stops.

**Style: 2 Substance: 60**

• Question 16: Your weight should transfer from the front foot to the rear foot on the back cast, then transfer back to the front foot on the forward cast.

**Style: 62 Substance: 0 CONSENSUS**

• Question 17: On a back cast, you should let the rod drift backward, after the stop.

**Style: 52 Substance: 10**

• Question 18: When 'Double Hauling' you should constantly Haul, with the line hand, through both the back and forward casts.

**Style: 40 Substance: 22**

• Question 19: When making a roll cast, the rod should be held high or higher than the top of the head at the beginning of the forward cast.

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**Style: 60 Substance: 2**

- Question 20: Before beginning the back cast, the rod tip should be pointed at the fly

**Style: 8 Substance: 54**

- Question 21: To put 'S' slack in a cast, the rod tip should be wiggled from side to side during the forward stroke.

**Style: 40 Substance: 12**

- Question 22: You should remove all the slack from the line before beginning the back cast.

**Style: 8 Substance: 53**

- Question 23: All instructional classes should end in time to allow the students to have a drink before supper.  
style style style

**Style: 38 Substance: 20**

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***Pearl #3* - Saltwater cast.....(continued from page 21)**

Fortunately, when I wade, I have the luxury of being able to get a lot closer to the fish without spooking the critter than I ever could while fishing from a skiff. That is due to many things including the fact that I'm lower down and I know to wade very softly. That makes a lot less disturbance than the "shock wave" of a poled skiff. Also, I don't have a guide way up on a push-pole platform holding on to a 22' long pole to help spook the fish. So I meet these challenges in various ways :

- 1.) I carry less line out of the rod. (Don't carry any more line than you can handle easily under prevailing conditions !)
- 2.) Sometimes I do allow the fly to dangle down in the water.
- 3.) I'm acutely aware of my distance limitations.
- 4.) I try to keep the loops of line from dangling down in the water.
- 5.) I use fewer loops.
- 6.) I capture the fly and hold it between my thumb and forefinger *before* draping the loops.
- 7.) If I do need a bit of extra distance, I may elect to carry one loop in my mouth.
- 8.) I have also tucked a short loop or two beneath the belt or between me and my wading shorts.
- 9.) When the fish are very spooky and the water very shallow ..... say with nervous tailing bonefish and a "severe clear sky", I'll sometimes leave the fly in the water behind me as I wade and hold the fly rod so my rod tip is way back behind me. NOT up high where the fish is likely to see it.
- 10.) Under the conditions described in 9.), I'll sometimes crouch way down as the fish move toward me. That increases the casting and line handling challenge, because the loops will be in the water.
- 11.) Rarely, there will be a strong current coming from behind you. In that instance, you can do as you might do when river fishing ...one long loop, "for the river" (Joan Wulff's description) and progressively shorter loops draped over the fingers of the line hand. (See *Joan Wulff's FLY CASTING TECHNIQUES, pp. 115 - 120.*) The trick to keep the loops from tangling is to have a significantly different length for each loop !
- 12.) Once in a while, I'll use a trick I learned from Lefty Kreh ..... wading forward while repeatedly making short roll casts, not necessarily ever holding the fly in hand.
- 13.) If I happen to have a strong current coming toward me while fishing a smooth sand flat with no obstructions, I may allow my line to dangle down-current behind .... then use a water haul (tension cast) to present to the fish. That way, I need no false casting.

Many methods to match different flats fishing circumstances while wading.

I've given you a lot more information that you will need on your exam. This gives you enough background information that you can formulate your own "*short answer*". This should include :

# The challenges.

# Some basic ways of handling them. (Including **both** ways of dealing with the fly.)

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### Here are some tips on practicing this cast:

# As with most casts with which we are not very familiar, it is a good idea to start your practice with a modest amount of line out of the rod tip. That translates to fewer and smaller coils to control. Don't add more line until you get really good at casting with that amount of line. Then increase it one loop or so at a time. If you get to the point where you begin to fail, back up and use less line again.

# After you get proficient at it using a yarn fly, go out and practice with a real fly with a sharp barbless hook. Doing it poorly with lack of line control may get you stuck with that hook point occasionally. This will encourage better control ! This is especially important if you are actually practicing it before making a fly fishing trip to the flats. Even if you don't get stuck, poor control of the fly may get the fly hook itself tangled with the line.

# If you elect to hold the fly in your rod hand, you may find that the hook point occasionally gets stuck in the cork handle when not held properly. That will ruin the cast in a heartbeat !

# Another hint, is to use the tackle which you will probably bring for that trip after you have mastered the techniques using much lighter rods and lines. That includes the size and type flies which you will be using. Go to the bigger flies after you have practiced well with the smaller ones.

# Once you have a good feel for this casts when casting with no wind, practice with wind from various directions. This is VERY important if you are preparing for a flats fishing trip.

While tarpon fishing this morning, I decided to try the various ways of making this cast which were different from the ways which were ground into my chromosomes for years. I learned a lot.

For example, I had not been using the method of holding the fly with my rod hand. Before I got competent at that, I stuck myself once, twice got the hook tangled with the line, and once got the hook point stuck in the cork! Taught me that none of the methods are really safe until you have learned how to do it.

### Saltwater Cast Quiz.....

Since this is a new task, here is a quiz that Gordie sent out to his group. Questions followed by answers. Study and learn! Answers from Bob Hansell, comments on answers in blue by Gordie

1.) Do you ever hold the fly in your rod hand when setting up for the salt water quick-cast ? **Yes**

*As you know, there are those who do it that way and those who insist upon holding the fly in the line hand. G*

2.) Why ? **Keep fly from crossing your body (on same side as the cast). keep line hand free in a bouncing boat to grab something.**

*Good to have a reason for things which represent differences of opinion.... especially for MCCI candidates who are preparing for their exam..... G*

3.) How do you position the hook relative to your hand / fingers ? **In between the thumb and forefinger at the curve in the hook shank with the point of the hook facing away from you .**

*Good way to do it. G*

4.) Why ? **Easy to have fly plucked out of your hand. Faced away so you do not hook yourself**  
*Agree.*

5.) Do you ever avoid holding the fly, and hold the leader instead; allowing the fly to dangle ? **yes**

*Sometimes I do that when wading .... allowing the fly to dangle in the water at my feet. I have not been stuck by doing that. I don't do it when on the deck of a skiff since I'm afraid it may get out of control. Some other excellent casters do allow it to dangle, however. I see that method depicted in Jason Borger's book, THE NATURE OF FLY CASTING, pp. 211, 212. G*

6.) Why ? **Wading, current coming toward me using the tension of the current to hold my fly.**

*Works with current going away from you, too. G*

7.) Do you consider this cast strictly for salt water use ? **No**

8.) When (if ever) would you use it when fishing fresh water venues ? **Fishing for carp on a river or stripers in a lake**

*Good examples. G*

9.) List a minimum of three reasons for using this cast when fishing from the deck of a flats skiff. **1. quickly getting a fly in front of a fish. 2. using the least movement as to not spook the fish. 3. keeping your eye focused on the target.**

*#2. includes making as few false casts as possible. G*

10.) After reading our messages on this subject, and going to the fly casting literature, list the number of noted casters who sometimes hold the fly in the rod hand when using this cast. **Lefty Kreh (pg 373 Casting with lefty Kreh - his new book)**

*Yes. All should see the detailed description of three variations of this cast : Lefty Kreh, CASTING WITH LEFTY KREH, pp. 373-384. The photographs are great and compliment a clearly written text ! G*

11.) In the fly casting literature, there is one author who has described three different variations of this cast. Who is that ? **(Could not find in my limited reference guides)**

*Lefty Kreh. (See, above.) On these 11 pages, he demonstrates the SPEED CAST, the LONGER SPEED CAST and the LONGER SPEED CAST WITH EXTRA BACK CAST. G*

12.) If you were able to answer question 9.), cite your reference including page numbers. *My comment after the ans. to question 10.) G*

13.) Would you ever modify your salt water quick-cast because of wind direction and strength ? **Yes**

14.) If you answered YES to question 11.), tell us when and how. **Change the fly to the rod hand if the wind is blowing from my line hand side to my rod hand side .**

*Several changes to consider including making a “reverse roll cast” with a strong wind from behind. (Here, your D-loop may be blown in front of you on the set-up.) G*

15.) Craig Buckbee has called attention to what he calls a “clearance cast”. What do you think that might be ? **Clearing line from a stripping basket so you can set up a Saltwater quick cast.**

*..... or clearing it from the deck by making a cast and then retrieving it as the set-up for the Quick cast is made. G*

16.) Why do that ? **So tangles from the basket do not hit the stripping guide and effect your cast.**

*A clearing cast gets the line out of the skiff which makes it a lot less tedious and less messy a job as you prepare the set-up for the quick cast whether or not you are using a basket. G*

17.) BRIEFLY list the challenges or difficulties you would face when using this cast while wading a flat.

**Little room between your hand and the water. Typically you have less distance between you and the fish. Current. weeds or other obstructions. stepping on the line while moving towards a target .**

*Less distance to the fish is not a challenge (unless you are thinking that it might make it easier to spook the critter) The other things you cite are challenges. G*

18.) BRIEFLY list the basic changes you would make when leaving the skiff deck and wading a flat and using a modification of this cast. **Less line outside the rod tip. smaller loops in my hand. Set up the fly before putting the loops in my hand. perhaps even letting the fly dangle in the water.**

*Agree. G*

19.) Name one author who uses a different name for this cast. **Jason Borger**

20.) What does he/she call it ? **Speed Pick up cast, Speed cast, boat cast (pg 210 Nature of Fly casting)**

*Yes. Also, Lefty.*

21.) When fishing from the deck of a flats skiff, would you use this cast for all fishing situations ? **No. heavy wind, in front of boat with other anglers, I may choose Barnegat Bay cast.**

*I don't use it if I'm staked out or anchored in a situation where I can see approaching fish from a great distance, especially on those days when fish are few and far between. Reason is that this set-up is very fatiguing. (You can get a cramp in your hand by being 'at the ready' for long periods of time.)*

(continued on page 26)

22.) You are set up for a salt water quick cast, and are looking for bonefish to your left. Suddenly, your guide tells you that there is a fish approaching rapidly from behind you. Your guide has no time to turn the skiff. What do you do ? **Turn around if you can. If not, present fly on the backcast.**

*Sometimes turning around puts you in a position to make the cast over the skiff ..... not good.*

*Better to make a back cast presentation or Galway cast (forward cast in each direction.) G*

23.) List 3 different ways to position and control the line out of the rod tip when using this cast from the deck of a skiff. **1. fly in line hand between thumb and forefinger, 3 coils looped around the last three fingers in your line hand suspended above the deck, 2. fly in line hand between the thumb and forefinger, 3 coils in line hand with one around each remaining finger. coils draped on the deck with line hand holding the line; fly in rod hand**

*Yes. G*

24.) List at least 3 different ways to control the **shooting line between the reel and the first stripper guide** in this situation. **1. fly and loops plucked out of hand then pinch the line with line hand. 2. fly and loops plucked out of hand then circle the line with line hand. 3. fly and loops plucked out of hand, let go and reach for the line to begin a haul**

*Best read this question again. I highlighted in red.. The fly line to be shot may be coiled on the casting deck, placed in a basket, placed in a "Line Tamer", or (if windy) placed on the lower deck (floor) behind and below the forward casting deck.*

25.) We have been talking about flats fishing. Would you ever use this cast when fishing from a skiff in deep water ? **(no experience) But I think you could use once you have teased up a bill fish close to the boat.....**

*Yes. Although, usually the billfish is teased up close so that a very short "chuck-and-duck" cast is all that is required. There are times, however, when it is best to be ready with a quick cast as surface fish such as bluefish, striped bass, little tuny (Albies), etc. suddenly appear on the surface chasing baitfish. Another example, is when drifting along a weedline in the ocean spotting dolphin (dorado).*

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## **Pearl #4 - From the CI Study Group - a Quiz on Why & When.....**

Explain the **Why** and **When** of each of the following casts. Several sets of answers are combined plus Al's comments in green.

### **1) Right Reach Cast?**

**Why:**

- to provide the longest natural drift for the fly.
- Fly first: Drift the fly to the fish before the leader or line.

**When:**

- the current is running from right to left.
- Fishing across and downstream (normally to the left on a right reach cast)

### **2) Pile Cast?**

**Why:**

- to create slack in the leader (**also the line**) - so the fly can drift naturally or to let the fly sink to the bottom of a gut.
- To put a lot of slack close to the fly

**When:**

- it is necessary to cast across conflicting currents and the need is to have the leader uncoil slowly downstream delivering the fly in a drag free drift. **You can set slack over the area from fly to caster.**

### 3) Slack Line Cast?

**Why:**

- create slack in the fly line (to keep the fly in a favorable position for a longer time.)

**When:**

- it is necessary to cast across conflicting currents and the need is to have the line not pull against the leader/fly creating drag.

### 4) Belgium Cast?

**Why:**

- create a wide loop in the cast (non-loop)
- to maintain constant tension between rod tip and fly throughout the cast.

**When:**

- to smoothly and safely cast heavy flies or sink tip lines; the oval loop created avoids the line tangling and/or the fly striking the angler
  - to combat wind (wind from behind or moderate wind from the casting side)
  - to make a modest change of direction quickly
- To cast in two different planes reduces the entanglement of fly and line or weights.**

### 5) Off Shoulder cast?

**Why:**

- to keep the line/leader/fly away from the angler's casting side (arm used for casting)

**When:**

- to keep the fly downwind of the caster at all times
- a crosswind is blowing into the angler's casting side or there is some obstruction preventing the angler from making a cast on their casting side.
- to keep the fly clear of others eg. boat crew

### 6) Tuck Cast?

**Why:**

- to drive a fly (generally weighted) down into the water so it sinks quickly.

**When:**

- to quickly sink a wet (most often a weighted nymph) to fishing depth.
- to make a fly first, splashy presentation eg. of a terrestrial
- to delay drag on a dry fly presented downstream

### 7) Low Side Arm Cast?

**Why:**

- to keep the line/leader/fly low to the water
- to maximize use of larger shoulder and trunk muscles

**When:**

- the angler needs to cast under an obstruction, usually overhanging brush.
  - using heavy saltwater tackle. **This is one that most trout fishers have to learn when changing a 4 wt. to a 9 wt. rod first time in the salt water.**
- (continued on page 29)

- in light winds from the rod hand side, the caster may choose to cast horizontally rather than use an off side method.

### 8) Back Cast Presentation?

**Why:**

- when a forward cast presentation is not optimal or is dangerous

**When:**

- keep the cast on the lee side in a crosswind.
- to combat strong winds or if you need to change your direction of casting

I use it when I have to cast into a strong wind. My backcast is my stronger, tighter cast from a low hand or side arm cast.

### 9) Roll Cast?

**Why:**

- when making an overhead cast is not optimal, not safe or is not possible.

**When:**

- strong tail (back) wind makes normal vertical casting more difficult than the roll cast
- position the line for pickup
  - eliminate slack line before casting
  - raise a sinking line before casting

### 10) Roll Cast low to the water?

**Why:**

- to keep the cast under obstructions to the front of the angler, to keep the cast below the wind.

**When:**

- there are obstructions to the front of the angler such as overhanging brush and a roll cast is necessary (also obstructions to the rear that prevent a normal backcast). When it is necessary to roll cast into a headwind and you must keep the cast as low as possible.

## FYI

The Internet and e-mail is such a wonderful modern convenience. In fact, we don't realize how much we depend on our computers until something goes wrong.

I was experiencing some weird things on my computer recently. Deciding that I should do some scans, I proceeded to go through my list (of scans). A week later.....

Ultimately a small, free software program cleaned up some trojans that had slipped in - hidden somewhere.

So I want to pass this along - and it is FREE. Download it and keep it on your desktop - and use it!

Go to: <http://www.malwarebytes.com> DM

# Youtube, etc.

We are starting a new column that will feature items from Youtube and other web sites. Hope you enjoy it! It started when Chuck Easterling sent me an e-mail with a Youtube link for the Belgian cast. (see below). I realized that not all of our readers get e-mails like this and we could ‘forward’ them in the Loop.

If you don’t know about Youtube and it is hard to miss these days, you may not know how enormous it is and that you can search for items. A lot of our members are featured in short video clips. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words and these may help in the preparation of certification candidates, instructing our students and of course, just looking at interesting casting and fishing related videos.

Featured as well are a lot of very informative web sites that are hosted by our CICP members. A very talented bunch! We will be including more in the next issues.

All these below are casting and fishing related. If you have some and want to bring them to our readers attention, please send them to us.

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## 1. Belgian Cast

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXgEQdQ9pNs>

If you were to ask these guys what “Belgium casting” was or “oval” casting they would be truly puzzled. The “Austrian style” as everyone else in the world calls it (except USA), is clearly demonstrated here. Nice piece of archive footage. (Dan McCrimmon)

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## 2. Saltwater Quick Cast

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyNimtMIBQc>

A timely inclusion due to the new questions on the MCCI test. Sheila Hassan is one of our hard-working Masters. Check out her web site at: <http://www.cast90.com/>

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## 3. Straight Line Path

<http://jasonborger.com/2009/02/04/straight-line-path-slp-visualized/>

Jason Borger has an interesting blog called Fish, Flies and Waters. Check out what he says on SLP.

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## 4. Tight Loops versus Wide Loops

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c2ol8eyqvo>

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## 5. Back Cast Loops

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVjj-hQ48pg&feature=related>

Featuring our BOG in Denmark, Lasse Karlsson.

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## 6. Five Essentials

<http://www.virtualflycasting.com/essentials.htm>

Frank LoPresti has a nifty little site that hosts some good study material

# Picture Gallery



Jane Vanalstien - What an inspiration!



photos by Lawrence Steumke

“I told you I would send you a photo of my 86 year old speycasting friend so I am. Her name is Jane Vanalstien and she has fished for about 40 years. She took up speycasting about 5 years ago and had Glenn Bracket make her a custom 10 1/2 foot light spey rod for swinging flies to trout and she is good at it!! I hope to take her out a few times next year. “

Above is a submission from Lawrence Steumke of Bozeman, MT. We met up at the Casting Rendezvous in Whitefish last summer. Great to see old friends.

Are you planning on coming to the Conclave in Loveland, Colorado in 2009? A great vacation!

## Conclave 2009

Loveland, Colorado

July 28-August 1, 2009

**CBOG Meeting:  
Tuesday, July 28**

Members of the Casting Program are invited to attend the meeting. Come see what we are up to.

If you can't make our meeting, please come and attend the Conclave. You will be happy you did!

## *Upcoming Events for 2009*

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Minneapolis, MN Great Waters Show John Breslin	Instructor - 2	Mar 6 - 8, 2009  <a href="http://www.greatwatersflyfishingexpo.com/">http://www.greatwatersflyfishingexpo.com/</a>	
<hr/>			
Salt Lake City, UT ISE Show Jeff Wagner	Instructor 3	Mar 12 - 15, 2009  Sandy, UT - South Towne Expo Center	
<hr/>			
Albany, OR Northwest Fly Tying Expo Al Buhr	Instructor - 2  Two-Handed 1	Mar 13 - 14, 2009	
<hr/>			
Mtn Home, AR Sowbug Roundup Chuck Easterling	Instructor 6	Mar 19 - 21, 2009 <a href="http://www.northarkansasflyfisher.org/SB%202008.html">http://www.northarkansasflyfisher.org/SB%202008.html</a> Redeemer Lutheran Church	
<hr/>			
Germany Int'l Experience the World of Fly Fishing Furstenfeld Monastery near Munich	Master 4 Two-Handed 2	Mar 27 - 29, 2009	
<hr/>			
Seattle, WA (Skagit River) Kaufman's Spey Days Denise Maxwell	Instructor 2  Two-Handed 2	Mar. 27-29, 2009	
<hr/>			
Gotemba, Japan Bill Higashi / Soon Lee	Instructor Master Two-Handed	April 2-5, 2009	
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(continued on page 33)

(Continued from page 31)

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San Francisco, CA	Instructor	2	April 20, 2009
Spey-O-Rama	Master	1	
Chris King	Two-handed	2	

Golden Gate Park

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Tasmania, Australia	Instructor		Apr 12-15, 2009 spaces limited to 30 people
Peter Hayes	Master		

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Kolding, Denmark	Instructor	10	Apr 18 - 19, 2009
For more information, contact:	Master	5	
Lasse Karlsson	Two-handed	2	

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Portland, OR	Instructor	2	May ??, 2009
Sandyclave Oxbow Park	Master	1	
Al Buhr	Two-handed	4	

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Lake Charles, LA	Instructor		May 14 - 17, 2009
FFF Gulf Coast Expo			
Al Crise /Harry Crofton			

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Madrid, Spain			May 29 - 31, 2009
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International testing is being organized for this location.  
Please check back at a later date for sign up and more details

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Loveland, CO	Instructor		Jul 28 - Aug 1, 2009
FFF Annual Conclave	Master		
Bruce Williams	Two-handed		

To sign up for testing at this location you will need to sign up through the pre-registration link below:  
<http://www.federationconclave.org/> Pre-registration will open in April

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Orlando, FL	Instructor (10/23/09)		Oct 23 - 24, 2009
To Be Determined	Master (10/24/09)		

Dusty Sprague  
Testing is being organized for this location. Please check back at a later date for sign up and more details

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*Please see the FFF web site for registration deadlines, testing class limits and contact information.*

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# *CONGRATULATIONS*

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## *New Casting Instructors*

Joseph Meyer	– Countryside, IL
Charlie Collins	– North Reading, MA
Ludo Vanhove	– Belgium
Jean (Ben) Weytjens	– Belgium
Patrick Steenhout	– Belgium
Roger Huysmans	– Belgium
Michael Jones	– Farmington, ME
Rodney Priddle	– Mechanicsville, NY
Daniel Davala	– Centreville, VA
Jo Meder	– New Zealand

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## *New Master Casting Instructors*

John Hand	– Ruskin, FL
Juergen Friesenhahn	– Germany
Bernd Geier	– Germany
Gary Eaton	– Columbia, MO
Robert Andries	-- Belgium

# *Leaders - A Compilation*

*Contributing authors: Jason Borger, Dan McCrimmon/Thomas Berggren,  
Bill Higashi, Ally Gowans and Lars Chr. Bentsen*

*Compiled by your editor - Denise Maxwell*

The idea for this article came from a question on the CCI written test that has created some problems for our International certifications. Having been on several International events, this question is always a problem outside of North America because outside of the US, most countries don't use this method for designating leader material.

As there are several versions of the CCI written test, perhaps not all of you have encountered it. If you have, you may not have thought of it as a troublemaker. I am talking about 'X' and the 'rule of 11'.

To get a broad view of the differences and the similarities when talking about leader material, I asked several of our hardworking Masters and Governors in different countries to help.

What follows is a compilation of their submissions. We also have a good and hard to find explanation of where the 'X' system came from. Read on....

## *CCI Leader Math (U.S.)*

*by Jason Borger, CBOG*

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In the U.S., leader and tippet material diameters are typically measured in thousandths of an inch, with tippets also given an additional "X" designation. An example of each that you might see on a spool of tippet material would be as such: .006" (read as "six thousandths") and 5X (read simply as "five x"). The X designation has a relationship to the thousandths diameter.

This is where the old "**Subtract from Eleven**" rule comes into play. This rule gives you a simple way to determine thousandths diameter or "X" designation of a section of tippet material, as long as you have one of the two numbers. The baseline for this rule is 0X, which is .011" (eleven thousandths). To get either "X" or thousandths subtract the other number **from 11**. When doing the math, it initially helps to view the thousandths diameter *sans* decimals. In other words, a diameter like .011" simply becomes "11."

Let's apply the Subtract from Eleven rule on the baseline tippet above, which was identified as 0X or .011". Here is the math to determine the X designation if you know the thousandths diameter:  $11 - 11$  (that's .011") = 0. That "0" corresponds to 0X. Here is the math to determine the thousandths diameter if you already know the X designation:  $11 - 0$  (that's 0X) = 11. That "11" corresponds to .011".

To expand the idea, here are two more examples (we'll use .006" or 5X):  $11 - 6(.006") = 5(X)$ , or  $11 - 5(X) = 6(.006")$ . Run through the rule a few times and you will have it.

And to finish, here's a quick look at the most-common U.S. tippet sizes with the X designations and corresponding thousandths: 0X (.011"); 1X (.010"); 2X (.009"), 3X (.008"); 4X (.005"); 5X (.006"); 6X (.005"); 7X (.004"); 8X (.003").

# Leaders in Japan

By Bill Higashi

When I bought my first fly rod outfit, the only choice of leader brand was Mason Knotless, imported from the USA, at least in the fly shop in my home town. The unusual, matt-blue tapered leader performed all right in casting practice, but it broke too often in actual fishing situations. So I had no choice but to switch to hand-tying knotted leaders using monofilaments made in Japan for conventional fishing. However, all leader formulas available then were in either X designation or inch system. Because we use the Goh system, I had a lot of difficulty building my leaders that truly performed up to my expectations.



Monofilament classification in our country is based on the system used to rate the strength of silkworm gut. It was like the modern-day denier system, but with gut leaders being natural products, inaccuracy was inevitable. The base length was 5 Shaku (151.5cm or approximately 5 feet), and 100 gut strands were weighed for that length. 100 strands of gut that weighs 3.75g was classified as 1 Rin. The average diameter of 1 Rin gut was about 0.165mm. With the advent of synthetic nylon, Rin is re-named to Goh, and the system is still used.

Because the Goh system is based on the diameter just like the X system, the strength of mono in the same Goh category varies depending on the brands, makers and materials. Here is a rough conversion chart of a nylon mono.

## Goh - mm - lb.test - X comparison chart

Goh system	0.4	0.6	0.8	1	1.5	2	3
diameter in mm	0.104	0.128	0.148	0.165	0.185	0.235	0.285
lb. test (approx.)	2.5	3.5	5	6	8	10	15
X system	7x	6x	5x	4x	3x	2x	0x

Japanese manufacturers have quite a big share in tapered leaders and leader materials for fly fishing. Major raw-material makers here include Toray, Unitika, Asahi-Kasei and Kureha. Various fly fishing brands/makers use the materials offered by such large manufacturers to produce individual products that fit the needs in the market. A wide variety of recreational fishing in Japan contributed to the development of super high performance mono. For example, decoy fishing for very territorial ayu (*Plecoglossus altivelis altivelis*) requires a very long graphite pole (up to 40 foot) and ultra thin fixed line so the angler can steer the live decoy into the territories of the wild fish. Typical mono used for ayu fishing go right down to less than 0.06mm (0.0024") in nylon, and even smaller in fluorocarbon or metal.

*Leaders in Japan -  
(continued from page 35)*

We used to use Goh as the primary system, but in order to speak the same language, the fly fishing industry in Japan also employed the X system. Some products (for example, KTY tippet distributed by Flux) have description in X system, Goh system and diameter in mm.



One interesting trend in the Japanese fly fishing market is the modification of the X system in the smallest end, which causes some confusion. Let's take AKRON Misty+ Tippet made by Tiemco, and Varivas tippet made by

Varivas. These products almost exactly follow the original X system (0.001" steps) down to 7x, then the following three steps become considerably smaller. Their 10x tippets are actually 8x in diameter. This is the reflection of the demand. Japanese fish are typically smaller, and in midge fishing on flat water, a slight difference in tippet thickness can lead to either success or failure. Flyfishers here thought the gap between 7x and 8x was too dramatic, and the leader makers responded to such demand. However, it might be less confusing if the makers would have labeled them as 7.4x, 7.7x and 8x instead of claiming them to be 8x, 9x and 10x.

*Tippet Comparison Chart*

Standard X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Diameter in inch/1000	6	5	4	3	2	1
AKRON Misty Tippet - actual inch/1000	5.8	5.1	3.9	3.5	3.1	2.8
VARIVAS Tippet - actual inch/1000	5.9	5	4	3.8	3.4	3

Bill Higashi is a MCI from Japan. He is the Japanese organizer of the International Certification event in Japan. He writes extensively for The Japanese Fly Fisher, he fishes as much as he can and works as a translator.

# Where the X comes from

*From Dan McCrimmon.....as told by Thomas Berggren*

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Dan told me the story in Italy and I was amazed... Later on I asked him to refresh my memory after I forgot half of it. It was a description written in an e-mail he sent me and I pasted the text in my computer-file-library before I erased it.

I also made an Excel-file to calculate the translation between the x & mm system.... *And the funny thing I've found out is that we can manufacture a nylon tippet in size 0.5X or 0.2667 mm, but the Chinese can't do it with silk. They have to have at least .0001 of an inch between each size-step...*

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This comes from the days of the old SILK leaders. A straight "bundle" of silk fibers made of many silk strands. **Note:** a silk worm produces two filaments at a time which spiral together as they pass through a gland which produces a natural adhesive which binds the two filaments.

The filaments are wound into a cocoon (by the silk worm). The cocoons are boiled to remove the natural adhesives. The individual filaments are twisted into threads. The threads are twisted into a bundle (heavier thread) which had an approximate diameter of .0011 of an inch.

This was rated as a zero or 0x.

Therefore 0x = .0011. The 0 X thread was then passed through a diamond aperture (hole).  
One pass = 1x, 2 passes = 2x, 3 passes = 3x and so forth.

The diameter of a 5x line would be equal to .0011 - .0005 (reduced by .0001 per pass. Or 5 times (5x)  
This would give you a diameter of .0006. Each pass would reduce the diameter by .0001 as the thread went through ever decreasing apertures.

I've been told they could not shave off a large amount at a time because the silk thread would catch or bind and break off. So it had to be done in ever decreasing sizes of .0001 of an inch.

This also gave them quality control if each pass reduced the thread by the same amount (.0001 of an inch).

Therefore a pass was marked as an x meaning "times"

0x meant never passed through.

6x meant passed through 6 gates (apertures or holes) or 6 times or 6X.

This was explained to Dan McCrimmon by a guy who used to have a "leader" factory in China.

And then this was explained to me by Dan McCrimmon.....

Thomas Berggren's comparison chart follows.

(continued on page 40)

# Leaders in Denmark

By Lars Chr. Bentsen

Across the world, there are several systems in which leaders and leader material are measured. In Europe, the main two ways of looking at leaders are breaking strain in pounds and millimeters.

In England breaking strain in pounds is the main way of quantifying leaders and leader material, while mainland Europe primarily uses millimeters. One system is not better than the next as they both represent an objective measure – diameter and breaking strain. They both relate to one another of course – the larger the diameter, the stronger the material. One manufacturer’s 0,285mm (or 0X) is not necessarily as strong (or weak) as another’s, and copolymer and fluorocarbon are not equally strong either.

I find personally that both are important factors to operate with – diameter can be crucial in getting a selective fish to accept the presentation, and breaking strain can be equally crucial in landing the fish.

I mentioned “0X” above, which is the American system, which relates to diameter – 5X being thinner than 0X. Below you see a chart which outlines the relation between the “X-system” and the corresponding diameters in metric (millimeters) and inches.

## Understanding leaders

X-rating	Metric (millimeters)	Inches
0X	0,28	0.011
1X	0,25	0.010
2X	0,23	0.009
3X	0,20	0.008
4X	0,18	0.007
5X	0,16	0.006
6X	0,14	0.005
7X	0,12	0.004

Commercial, tapered leaders have come a long, long way since I first tried them 12 or 14 years ago – back then I preferred to tie my own leaders (still do for some very specialized situations), but now I almost exclusively use tapered leaders. They offer many advantages, and they come in a huge range of specialized tapers and lengths.

One great advantage is that the bulky knots in the thicker parts of the leader are avoided. Even though tapers are specialized, I still find myself altering these tapered leaders. Sometimes I cut back to get different tapers – sometimes I lengthen them quite a lot to get different presentations.

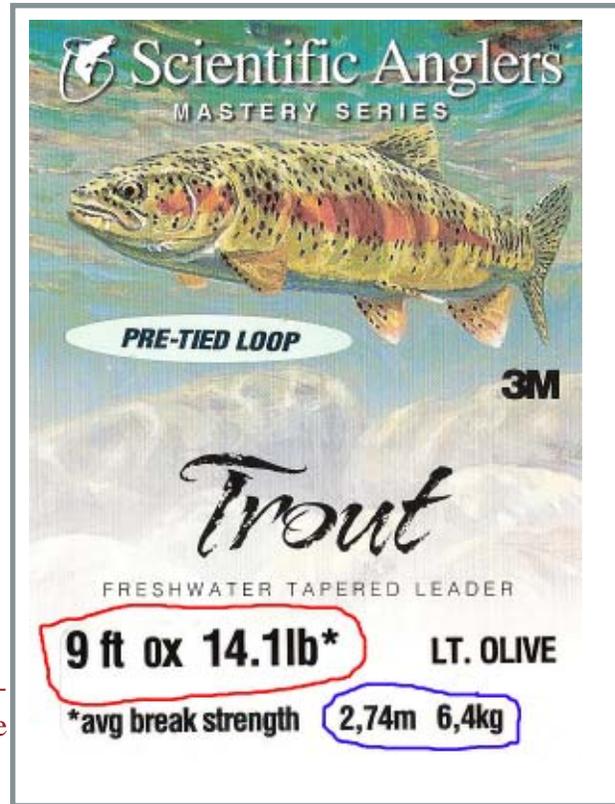
Generally it’s a good idea to use tippet of the same brand and material, but sometimes I add a fluorocarbon tippet to a copolymer leader. Doing this one needs to take extra care with knots, and make sure that diameter and breaking strain are checked, so one doesn’t end up with a leader where the tippet is stronger than the tip of the leader itself. Just one case where it’s important to know both diameter and breaking strain.

Many brands of leaders are from the US, and with the above chart in mind, here's how to read the information on the packaged leaders:

The red circle contains the information in the American X system. In this case a leader with a tippet diameter of "0X", a total length of nine feet and an average breaking strain of 14.1lbs.

In the blue circle that same information is "translated" to the metric system, telling us that the leader is 2,74m long with an average breaking strain of 6,4kg. What this doesn't tell you is that 0X equals 0,28mm, which is why you need to know the X-system.

Lars Bentsen is a MCI from Denmark. He fishes extensively, teaches and is one of the organizers of the Danish Fly Fair (April 17-19, 2009).



## Where the X comes from....

(continued from page 37)

1 inch = 2,540005 mm/100

1/100 of an inch = 0,0254 mm

Inches	mm.	X	Inches	mm.	X
0,0020"	0,5080 mm	09 X	0,011"	0,2794 mm	0 X
0,0019"	0,4826 mm	08 X	0,010"	0,2540 mm	1 X
0,0018"	0,4572 mm	07 X	0,009"	0,2286 mm	2 X
0,0017"	0,4318 mm	06 X	0,008"	0,2032 mm	3 X
0,0016"	0,4064 mm	05 X	0,007"	0,1778 mm	4 X
0,0015"	0,3810 mm	04 X	0,006"	0,1524 mm	5 X
0,0014"	0,3556 mm	03 X	0,005"	0,1270 mm	6 X
0,0013"	0,3302 mm	02 X	0,004"	0,1016 mm	7 X
0,0012"	0,3048 mm	01 X	0,003"	0,0762 mm	8 X

Thomas Berggren is a CI, THCI from Sweden. Dan McCrimmon is a member of the CBOG.

# *Leaders in the UK*

*By Ally Gowans*

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Not being in retail I don't exactly know which material is most popular but those commonly available include Maxima, Drennan Double Strength Nylon, Drennan Fluorocarbon, Drennan Sub Surface Green, Orvis Super Strong, Orvis Mirage, Fulling Mill, Seagaur Ace Hard Fluorocarbon, Rivege Grand Max, Grand Max Soft-Plus, Rio Powerflex, Rio Fluoroflex, Frog Hair Fluorocarbon and Frog Hair Co-Polymer.

Incidentally I think that the Seagaur and Grand Max materials may be the same or similar to the Sea Wulff and Wulff Triangle Taper Tippet materials available in USA (Japanese). Since most of these materials are available in the US, you will know where they come from - mostly Japan, USA and Germany I guess. I also use a French material called Racine Tango which is an excellent nylon mono.

Material sold for the UK market tends to have the diameter stated in mm and the strength in lbs. or kg. I like the "X" system for tippets for trout flies because it's easily related to hook size.

Most anglers in the UK (despite being metric!) buy and refer to leader material in lbs BS (breaking strain), ignoring the diameter and relatively few bother to make up tapered leaders or even buy tapered leaders. They tend to just cut some material from a spool and tie it to the fly line. Then they wonder why it lands in a heap! The better anglers of course take more care.

Originally all leaders (they weren't called leaders they were called "casts") were made from the same material, gut. Gut was still available when I started fishing but soon we used nylon.

I know that many recommend that the same material is used throughout a leader. That certainly works but you can use different materials and make perfectly practical leaders if you know what you want in the first place, even to the extent of using shock leaders and wire tippets.

I encourage my students to understand how leaders work and to experiment with them without getting overly complicated. I have seen leaders of 9 ft or so with 7 or 8 sections in them. I think that four sections is a sensible maximum and for salmon fishing I often just have a butt and a tippet (albeit that the tippet is fairly large).

You can get problems knotting dissimilar materials together and it makes sense also to understand the different knots and their best usages.

## *Mono conversion table*

inches	mm	"X" sizes
0.004	0.10	7X
0.005	0.13	6X
0.006	0.15	5X
0.007	0.18	4X
0.008	0.20	3X
0.009	0.23	2X
0.010	0.25	1X
0.011	0.28	0X

Visit Ally Gowan's web sites <http://www.letsflyfish.com> and <http://www.flyfish-scotland.com>

# *Leaders for testing*

*by Gary Eaton*

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For testing and practicing with a yarn fly, some suggestions follow.

Tapered leaders commercially available tend to perform less well than certain competition-style, leaders tied by the caster.

In the CCI & MCCI tests, your leader can help overcome wind and sharpen your accuracy.

Your instructor or mentor should have some recommendations. I suggest you experiment with a few to get the results you want with your outfit. Be careful to use all the same type of material and low-profile, blood knots in making this.

Recently, I used a leader tapering from 40-pound to 15-pound with the longest sections being the butt and the tippet. I found darker mono more easily seen during casting compared to clear material. Smoother transitions result with minimal diameter change from section-to-section.

Here is a starting point for you:

Butt 40 inches of 40 pound (.024 inch diameter)  
then, 15 inches of 30 pound (.022 inch diameter)  
then, 10 inches of 25 pound (.020 inch diameter)  
then, 10 inches of 20 pound (.017 inch diameter)  
then, 18 inches of 15 pound as tippet.(.015 inch diameter)

Lengths are the distance between the knots. Don't expect to be accurate to the inch.

Once you settle on a formula you like - please write it down so you can remember it.

Second, tie up several of them so when you wear one out, you can quickly get back to casting practice.

The above sample leader is for a 7-weight outfit.

For lighter rods, or if this is too stiff for your casting style, one might start with 35 or 30 pound butt section and proceed to 12 pound tippet or even 10 pound.

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Gary Eaton is a MCCI from Columbia, Missouri

## From The Editors

Good to be back with you. We have a huge issue this time. I never thought we would have to edit for length but so many good articles - and they kept coming in.... We have some submissions by new authors and we invite all of you to send us your writings.

The FFF Casting Program is becoming an established International program. This year examiners are travelling to Japan, Denmark, Germany, Spain and Ireland. So it is appropriate that the Loop feature our international members when possible. A special invitation to them to write for us.

We have a new set of Casting Games for you to try, called Smart Casts. An inexpensive, portable set of games - what a great idea for a club event or to practice yourself!

They may be used at the Conclave so those of you who are attending, start practicing!

We continue with our **Pearls** column, with material chosen from the Master Study Group, hosted by Gordie Hill. With the new questions on the Master's test, learning to cast with your other hand has caused some injury and overuse problems.

For those of you with arm or shoulder problems - old or new casting injuries - some advice on how to prevent them and recommendations to stretch before practicing. (*I should know to do that, but I have an old shoulder injury that I re-injured while practicing for my THCI and it is a nagging problem that is slow to go away. Prevention is the best advice!* DM)

The saltwater cast question is another worry for those of you who don't get the opportunity to fish in the salt. Lots of information here and if you follow the link on the Youtube page, there is a video of it.

MCI Ed Chamberlain shares a great technique for those of you gearing up for tarpon season.

There is a short piece on our official winery. If you didn't know that we have an official winery - they are offering clubs and members a chance to save on orders. One of these is a fundraising offer for clubs and

might be of interest. Please note that this offer has an expiry date, so check it out.

In the leader article, you will find a cross section of how leader materials are measured and the differences and similarities of measurement between different countries. Find out about 'X' and '11'.

Our International members are truly becoming a learning experience for all of us. Fishing is not always the same in different countries. Different fish, different challenges, different equipment. Hope you find it interesting.

Please come to the Conclave if possible. We look forward to seeing you there. (Although it is a far greater distance for me, I may get to fish on the way. What a thought! - DM).

**Talk to you soon.  
Denise & Liz**

### THE LOOPSTAFF

**Editors: Denise Maxwell & Liz Watson**

*goldnwst@telus.net, 604-945-9002*

*lizz58@aol.com, 305-849-1672*

**Program Coordinator: Barbara Wuebber**

*fffoffice@fedflyfishers.org, 406-585-7592*

**Chair, Board of Governors: Bruce Richards**

*bwrichards@mmm.com 989-496-1113*

**Fly Illustrations: Jason Borger**

**We welcome your submissions via e-mail.** When you submit an article(s), please attach a short (1-3 sentences) author/instructor biographical statement, including your location and Certification level on every article.

Also be aware that the back issues of the Loop are posted on the FFF web site. Any illustrations should be in JPEG format and submitted separately, if possible.

**The Loop** reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission.

Submissions may be sent to the editors or the National Office:

**Mailing Address:**

FFF

PO Box 1688

Livingston, MT 59047

**For UPS & Overnight**

**Shipments:**

FFF

Buffalo Jump Building

5237 US Hwy 89 S

Livingston, MT 59047

**The Loop** is a quarterly publication of the Casting Board of Governors for the FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program.

# CONCLAVE 2009

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The location for the 2009 Conclave has been finalized. Many of you have been waiting for this in order to make your reservations in the area.

The Conclave website is [www.federationconclave.org](http://www.federationconclave.org)

This is the link to the lodging on the Conclave website:

<http://www.federationconclave.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4868>

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The Embassy Suites Loveland is the Host Hotel and the Headquarters of the 2009 Conclave.

Their web page address is:

<http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/groups/personalized/FNLESES-FFF-20090728/index.jhtml>

Group Name: Federation of Fly Fishers, Conserving-Resorting-Educating

Group Code: FFF

Check-in: 28-JUL-2009

Check-out: 01-AUG-2009

Hotel Name: Embassy Suites Loveland - Hotel, Spa & Conference Center

Hotel Address: 4705 Clydesdale Parkway  
Loveland, Colorado 80538

Phone Number: 970-593-6200

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The Conclave web site is up and running and information is being added all the time. Not much lodging information there yet.

As some of us camp during the Conclave, I went looking for camping and RV facilities in the area. Rates are approximately the same for the sites below. Here is what I found:

1. Riverview RV - [www.riverview.com](http://www.riverview.com) Approximately 20 minutes from Loveland. On the banks of the Big Thompson River.
2. Fireside RV Park & Cabins - [www.co-lodges-review.com](http://www.co-lodges-review.com). 3.5 miles west of Loveland.
3. Loveland RV - [www.lovelandreresort.com](http://www.lovelandreresort.com) - 3 miles east of Loveland.

For those of you with non-fishing partners, I discovered that there is an outlet shopping mall in Loveland. Oh-oh!

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Please contact the FFF Headquarter's Office with any questions:

Jessica Atherton

406-222-9369 ext 107

[conclave@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:conclave@fedflyfishers.org)