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The Loop

THE JOURNAL OF FLY CASTING PROFESSIONALS



From the Editorial Director

Looking Forward

If you told me a couple of years ago I would be the editorial director of a journal for fly casting instructors, I'd have said you'd be very wrong. Recently, though, I find myself in that exact position — of the IFFF's *The Loop, The Journal of Fly Casting Professionals*.

My predecessor, Soon Lee, and his editors did a great job of corralling casting writers and creating a more professional publication, one of which the IFFF Casting Board of Governors was proud. I'd like to help advance this journal to the next level, and I'm confident our crew of editors and graphic designers has, with this first new issue, delivered a strong publication that will do just that.

And thus The Loop moves into the 21st Century. My vision, our vision, for The Loop is a journal of and for professional fly casting and fly fishing instructors, since of course, that is what we are. To those ends, our primary focus will be top-flight casting articles

on instruction, physics, ideas, diagnostics, and analysis, but we'll also include some informational fly fishing pieces as well. . . new knots, line designs, how-tos, and things similar.

All this will be wrapped up in a new layout design, which, has been optimized for the digital world — tablets, iPads, smart phones, and laptop viewing. And since it's in a PDF format, you can print it out with no problem. This format allows us to include hi-resolution graphics and photos to accompany articles, but also will in the future allow to imbed video. This is a more expeditious way of viewing and reading The Loop, and we hope you'll find it enjoyable.

If you like our new direction, and you'd consider contributing ideas for articles, art, or videos, please contact any of the editorial staff. We've implemented a few new guidelines and we'll work with writers to generate ideas about art and photos that could accompany articles.

Stay in touch and let us know how you feel about the new look and the new direction.

Eric Cook, Editorial Director

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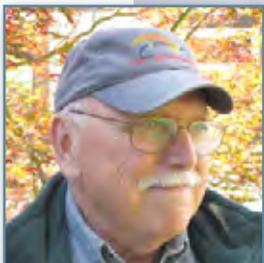
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IN SPEY CASTING

THE ANCHOR IS EVERYTHING

**Mark Huber,
Anchorage, Alaska, USA**

The anchor is everything! In learning to cast two hand rods, you will learn several fundamental principles of spey casting. One such principle is that casting any fly line is less about the amount of power applied and more about the overall efficiency of the cast. Achieving overall efficiency in any spey cast is difficult without a good clean anchor. Many common spey casting faults result from poor and inefficient anchors. Get control of your anchor and you are on your way to efficient and effortless spey casting.

In a spey cast, the anchor comprises the tip of the fly line, leader and the fly. The anchor remains in the water, at the end of the back stroke (D-loop sweep). It creates enough grip on the line to form the D-loop and not pull out of the water.

A clean anchor release is described as one that comes off the water smoothly and quietly as the line and leader transition into forward cast. When placing the anchor on the water, it should be straight, without any slack, and should align with the direction of the forward cast. Relative to the caster, placement of the anchor should be about a rod-length away, placed from slightly in front of,

to slightly behind, the caster. Move the anchor closer to the caster to increase efficiency in the cast.

There are two different types of anchors to consider: airborne anchors and waterborne anchors. Touch-and-go casts such as the switch, single spey and snake roll casts all use an airborne anchor, where the lifted and aerialized line is directed simultaneously into the D-loop formation and the anchor placement. Waterborne casts include double spey and the snap T/C/Z casts where the line is first repositioned on the water, then the D-loop sweep forms the D-loop and aligns the anchor with the forward cast. The remainder of this article will focus on the switch cast, since this casts presents most the challenges a caster faces in forming good clean anchors and should be practiced to the point of proficiency.

The switch cast is the pick-up-and-lay-down cast of spey casting: It contains all the fundamental elements of the other spey casts. Become proficient at the switch cast and you are well on your way to learning the more advanced spey casts. The switch cast involves a lift, D-loop sweep, anchor placement and forward cast without a change of direction. Critical to a good clean anchor are the initial line lift, D-loop sweep and anchor placement. Let's look at the initial lift, D-loop sweep and anchor placement in more detail now. Spey casts always start with the rod tip low to the water and the line tight (no slack) in the downstream current.

The lift should be slow, deliberate and free from any pauses. While the height of the lift can vary, it should clear approximately half the fly line from the water. Immediately at the top of the lift, the D-loop sweep begins. It is important not to pause between the lift and the D-loop sweep and to maintain tension in the line. Begin the D-loop sweep with the rod in an off-vertical plane by drawing the rod backwards on a gently rising inclined sweep.

IN SPEY CASTING - THE ANCHOR IS EVERYTHING. *continued...*

If the D-loop sweep is completed smoothly with tension on the line, the remaining line, leader and fly will release from the water and travel back toward the caster about three feet above the water. As you see the leader and fly moving back toward your position, finish the D-loop sweep by lifting the rod slightly in an upward direction while drawing the rod closer to your shoulder.

This movement is called a circle-up move; will result in placing the leader and fly onto the water creating the anchor. The anchor should land smoothly on the water, without slack and aligned in the direction of the forward cast. When the anchor touches down on the water, pull the trigger on your forward cast. This is the touch-and-go of the cast.

Practice this lift, sweep and anchor placement sequence with a focus on finding the right timing, power application and acceleration to set a good anchor in the correct position.

Remember that the anchor is composed of just the tip of the fly line, leader and the fly. If there is additional fly line in the water, particularly fly line in the water behind the caster, the forward cast will require considerably more effort to rip the fly line from the water. You will hear the "rip" as you cast! Anchoring just the tip of the fly line, leader and the fly allows for a quiet and efficient anchor release and forward cast.

Following are some of the common casting faults related to the anchor:

- **No anchor at all.**

Cause: Too much acceleration in the D-loop sweep.

Also a common cause is the D-loop sweep being too vertical.

Correction: Moderate the acceleration of the D-loop sweep and make the sweep off to the vertical plane.



Crumpled Anchor in red

IN SPEY CASTING - THE ANCHOR IS EVERYTHING. *continued...*

- **Too much fly line stuck on the water.**

Cause: The D-loop sweep is too flat to the water and/or dropping the rod tip at the end of the D-loop sweep, and/or waiting too long after the anchor lands on the water to make the forward cast.

Correction: Use an inclined D-loop sweep and keep the rod tip in an upward position (2 o'clock) at the end of the D-loop sweep and begin the forward cast as soon as the anchor land on the water (touch-and-go).

- **Crashed anchor.**

Cause: Dipping excessively during the D-loop sweep will cause the anchor to crash and crumple on the water thereby creating slack.

Correction: Use the appropriate amount of initial lift and eliminate excessive dipping during the D-loop sweep.

- **Bloody L anchor.**

Cause: Excessive dipping during the rotation portion of the single spey cast. In a snake roll cast, the Bloody-L anchor can result from making the roll portion of the cast in an out-of-plane manner (taking the rod tip off the wall).

Correction: Eliminate excessive dipping and keep the snake roll motion in one place.



Bloody L Anchor in red

IN SPEY CASTING - THE ANCHOR IS EVERYTHING. *continued...*



Good Anchor in red

In these pictures the rod is pointed in the direction of the cast, the red line represents the leader (anchor) and the loop of line between the rod and the leader is the D loop. Note how in the good anchor photo the anchor, D loop and rod direction are all aligned.

More common casting faults related to the anchor:

- **Dragging the line, leader and fly into the anchor position.**

Cause: Incorrect initial lift and D-loop sweep techniques.

Correction: Lift high enough to release approximately one half of the fly line from the water and move immediately into the D-loop sweep on an incline and with enough acceleration to jump the fly, leader and tip of the fly line into the desired anchor position.

- **No control of the anchor position.**

Cause: Lifting and sweeping moves are made too fast with too much acceleration.

Correction: Slow lift moving into a controlled and accelerating D-loop sweep maintaining tension on the line.

Practice the switch cast until you achieve consistency in the form and placement of your anchors. Your spey casting will improve, become more efficient and more enjoyable. In spey casting, the anchor is everything.

About the Author:

Mark Huber, BOG, MCI & THCI,
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He enjoys fly casting and fly fishing for salmon, steelhead and rainbows throughout the Pacific Northwest.



TEACHING THE DANCE

Using the Body's Walking Rhythm to Teach Rod Load

Syd Smith, Gulfport, Mississippi, USA

I imagine that all of us have, in the teaching of an all day introductory class, come upon students who appear lost. They might seem to be unsure they belong there and are nearly frozen with what appears to be fear of failure.

Their movements have deteriorated to mostly ineffective wristy movements of the rod without body involvement. There is no good loop formation or obvious feeling of loading the rod. As the day progresses the problem intensifies. When I have talked with such students they generally feel fly casting is too complicated for them.

What follows is a teaching technique which you may not often need, but when you do it can be invaluable. I call it "The Dance". It embodies Bill and Jay Gammel's Five Essentials in an easy to learn series of movements. It usually produces beautiful loops quickly – often within 5-10 minutes.

First, instruct the student that this simple technique will demonstrate how easily good loops can be cast. Reassure the student that it may be utilized as a valid fall back technique when the student is feeling frustrated. As the student progresses all new skills can be incorporated into this technique. As simple as it is, it adheres to the Gammel essentials. And, it works.



Photo 1.

TEACHING THE DANCE *continued...*

Start by overlining a rod by two line weights and pull about 15-20 feet of line out from the tip. Instruct the student to lock the rod hand wrist holding the rod at their side pointing straight up, low elbow with the elbow flexed at the side blocking at full flexion. The arm, hand and rod should be pointing straight up (see photos 1 and 2) with the line at the reel clamped against the grip with the rod hand finger. Instruct the student that they are not to move this position of the arm and rod AT ALL, NO wrist bend during the cast. The line hand may simply hang at the side.

Next ask the student to begin a process of stepping first forward and then backward, coming to a stop when the advancing foot hits the ground (see pictures 3 and 4). The student then immediately reverses the step. The point is to encourage the student to make the forward and backward steps so vigorously that good loops are formed and maintained. When done properly the loops will be tight and the student will feel the rod loading and actually see an effective fly cast.

Most students really get into this when the loops are visualized and the load of the rod is felt, understanding that this is a valid process. Some wrist usually will be automatically added by the student when the load of the rod is felt. As the situation progresses the process may really take off. It can be a needed epiphany and can help get the student into the game. I've never seen it fail, although I imagine it will sometime.

Encouragement is a prime factor in getting "The Dance" going. The movements are familiar and most people have no problem executing them. Many women take to it quickly, and I have used it most with women who seem to like the fact that it is just a little dance. But men also find it helpful.



Photo 2.

So, what is going on. Is this overly simplistic or is there real substance to this methodology. I would submit there is real substance. Let's take a brief look at the essentials of casting. We want a straight line movement of the rod tip which is accomplished by the positioning of the rod with rod tip movement from about 1-2 o'clock on the back cast to about 10-11 o'clock on the forward cast, approximating SLP when the force is added.

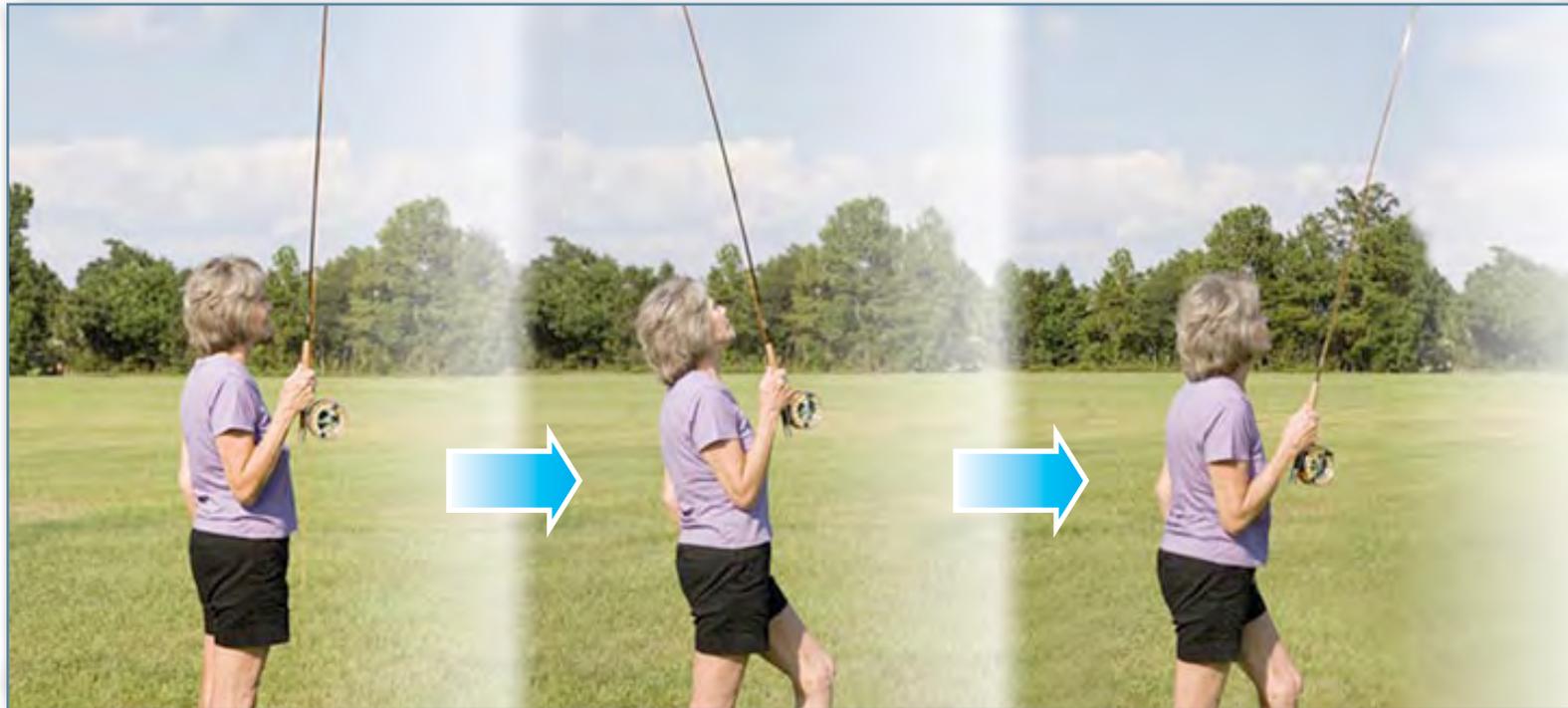
TEACHING THE DANCE *continued...*

Photo 2.

Photo 3.

Photo 4.

The Force comes from the use of the big muscles which begin slowly as the student steps and progress with as near a constant acceleration as physiology will allow. The motion stops when the advancing foot hits the ground. It is followed by a pause. This pause is usually exactly right for the student's body movement. If the student gets faster the stop is longer due to the increase in momentum and consequent increase in time required for reversal of the movement. The student maintains a stroke length appropriate to the line out from the rod tip as part of the technique of loop formation.

There is usually no slack problem once the technique is mastered although mastering the technique includes eliminating slack. Give it a try if you have not already. I think you will find it helpful.

*About the Author: **Syd Smith** graduated from Washington University School of Medicine in 1969 and practiced Neurology and Sleep Disorders Medicine until retirement in 2011. Syd is an MCI who handcrafts and fishes bamboo rods. He loves casting and teaching fly casting. Syd lives in Gulfport, Miss., USA. with three parrots and his Labrador retriever, Buddy.*

Big Two Hearted River

REVISITED

Bob Clay, Albany, Georgia, USA



Hemingway's Trout Tent

"As far down the long stretch as he could see, the trout were rising, making circles all down the surface of the water ...

"..... as though it were starting to rain." This is Ernest Hemingway's description of a stretch of the Big Two Hearted River in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Hemingway revisits the area of his childhood days through the eyes of his character, Nick Adams, in his short story, "Big Two Hearted River." It provides us with an incredible insight into the fisherman Hemingway.

Hemingway's short story is a beautiful narrative of a soldier returning home after World War I. It is filled with symbolism that Hemingway scholars discuss with great enthusiasm. In this story, the writer does not tell us Nick was wounded, but in other Nick Adams narratives we know he was wounded in the war. The scholars tell us that Hemingway finds rebirth and refuge in nature. Something they fail to see, however, is the insight he gives us of early fly-fishing in America.

We can deduce the story is based in the 1920s although the exact date is unknown. I am not going to reiterate the whole story but rather comment on the fly-fishing and camping as it relates to today's equipment and methods.

BIG TWO HEARTED RIVER REVISITED *continued...*

The story is filled with strong autobiographical elements. The Hemingway family had a cottage on Walloon Lake in Michigan near where the story takes place. The only character in the story is Nick Adams. He goes fishing alone in his homeland. He gets off the train in the town of Senay when he sees the trout feeding in the river. The town has been literally destroyed by fire, but he carries what he needs in his backpack and his fly rod in its leather case.

We know that early rods were made of bamboo and the reels were very simple. Fly line was silk and quite expensive. I think Hemingway wanted to tell his readers about fly-fishing because so few people knew anything about it in those days, especially in America.

In all of his works, Hemingway relates fascinating and interesting details that were both new and foreign to his readers. He wanted his readers to experience wonderful things they could only read about. For example, it was prohibition days. Many readers had no idea how a mixed drink tasted or how it went down. I have always been amazed in some of his works how he could detail a simple thing like the making and the drinking of a mixed drink.

Nick Adams knows the river and he has a good idea of where he was going to camp and fish. He was happy and excited about being there and going fishing. His pack was very heavy. His plan is to travel on foot as far as he could in one day.



He finds just the right place to start his camp set up. He leveled and cleared the spot between two jack pines to make his bed. He doubled one blanket for the bottom and spread two on top. Then he stretched a rope between the two trees and hung the canvas over it to make his tent. He used cheesecloth as a screen door for the front opening. He was very happy with his camp.

Nick planned every detail of the trip. He complained in the story several times about the weight of the pack.

No wonder! This is what he carried:

Tent, three blankets, rope, axe, cheesecloth, bag of nails, frying pan, coffee pot, wire grill, tin plate, canvas bucket, empty bottle, leader box, landing net, flour sack, oiled paper, matches, extra clothes, fork and spoon, coffee cup.

BIG TWO HEARTED RIVER REVISITED *continued...*

He carried food:

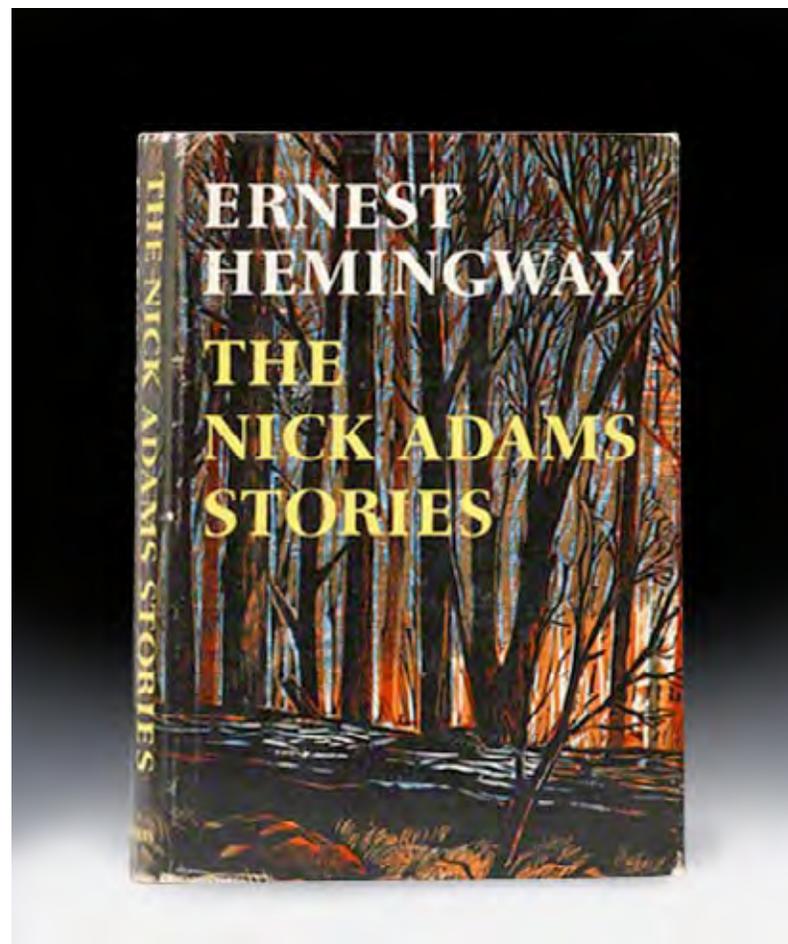
Can of pork and beans, can of spaghetti, tomato ketchup, bread, can of apricots, can of condensed milk, apple butter, onions, buckwheat flour, grease (lard), coffee.

Dinner his first night was a can of pork and beans and a can of spaghetti. Maybe Nick was reminiscing about his earlier days and wanted to re-visit those meals of the past.

The next morning Nick gathered grasshoppers for bait. He used live bait, not artificial flies. Nick prepared buckwheat pancakes for breakfast then it was time to go fishing. He took his fly rod out of the leather case and put it together carefully. He put on the reel and threaded the line through the rod eyes. He noted that the line was double tapered and very expensive "had paid eight dollars for it a long time ago" (\$150 in today's dollars). He kept his leaders coiled between damp flannel pads in an aluminum box.
(No tapered monofilament leaders as today.)

He placed the live grasshoppers in a bottle and tied it around his neck. He used an empty flour sack as a "live" creel to place his fish. He waded in his pants and shoes---no waders!

The river was just full of fish. For trout fishermen, his description of the river and the trout feeding is as close to heaven as could be on earth. He ran his small hook through a grasshopper. Fly casters can appreciate how delicate and subtle a cast must be to get a live bug out there without throwing it off. Having learned to fish in mountain streams of West Virginia and the Smokies, I can appreciate his techniques.



BIG TWO HEARTED RIVER REVISITED *continued...*

We could identify one of his casts as a flip cast, another a pendulum cast, but in most cases, he peeled line off and let the current take the grasshopper where he wanted it. Only one cast did Nick, "swing the rod back over his shoulder and forward, and the line, curving forward, laid the grasshopper down on one of the deep channels in the weeds". The character used a variety of mends to accomplish placement of the grasshoppers in the water.

Seeing fish is a learned skill. Nick Adams could see fish. In the shallow water he could see the fish "steady in the current with wavering fins". In the deep water "he saw the bottom of the pool, big trout looking to hold themselves on the gravel bottom." There were no polarized sunglasses 80 years ago!

Nick could read the water as well as anyone. This might be one of the earliest examples of an angler describing how to read the water and where the fish are. He spotted wakes and ripples. He understood edges and seams. "The big ones would lie up close to the bank".

Nick also described how to catch and release without hurting the fish. In another hook up, he describes how to fight a big fish. The early equipment shows some weaknesses in this episode, as he obviously had no backing on his fly reel. There was little or no drag as he thumbed the reel, "It was awkward getting his thumb inside the fly reel frame". This description indicates that the left and right side frames of the reel were stationery while only the spool revolved.

Today, of course, on our modern reels we have drag systems and we can palm the reel to control fighting fish. In the story, the big

fish wins this battle. In his words, "By God, he was a big one. By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of." Haven't we all been there?

He catches more fish but only keeps two for dinner. He describes each fight in detail and you wish you were there. The story ends with him looking forward to the next day's fishing. That part, for all of us fly fishers, has not changed in all these years.



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SLP

AND TWO NECESSITIES

Soon S. Lee - Upland, California, USA

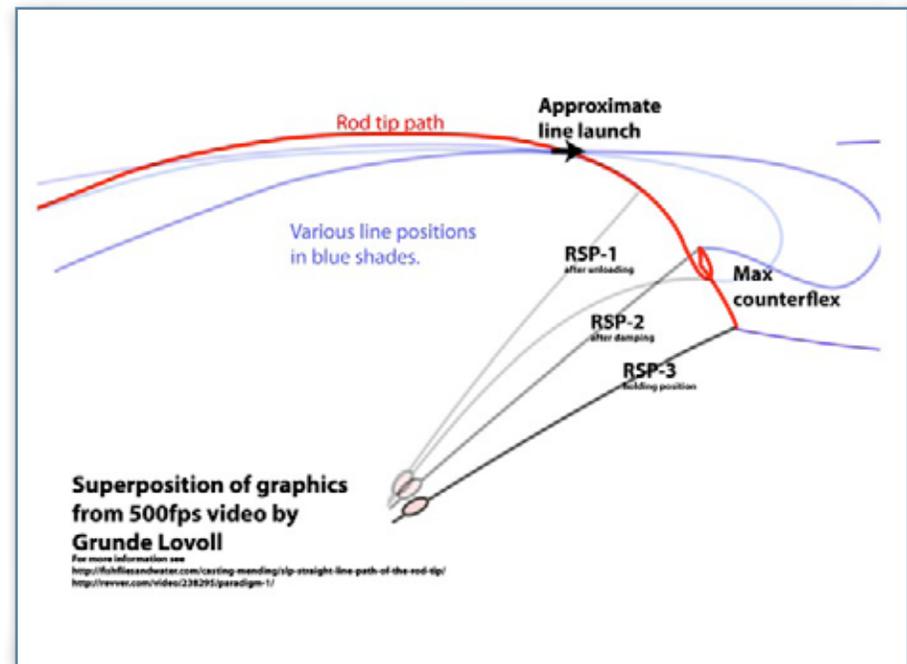
Straight Line Path of the Rod Tip (SLP) - SLP is a definitive concept in fly casting. SLP is the reason the straight upper leg of a true loop delivers a dry fly to a distant target.

A short ascending SLP with an extended "stop" in open loop allows an indicator dry fly mated with a dropper nymph to be lobbed tangle-free. SLP gone awry because of erratic/extreme acceleration results in tailing loop. And which instructor has not come across a beginner waving non-loops with a drastically underloaded rod with scant SLP? Finally, trigger rod acceleration with slack line (without straight line carry from SLP) and all we get is line collision or collapse.

SLP is an abstract objective. Telling the student to imagine the rod tip scraping a ceiling may not help because the student can neither feel the scraping nor see the ceiling.

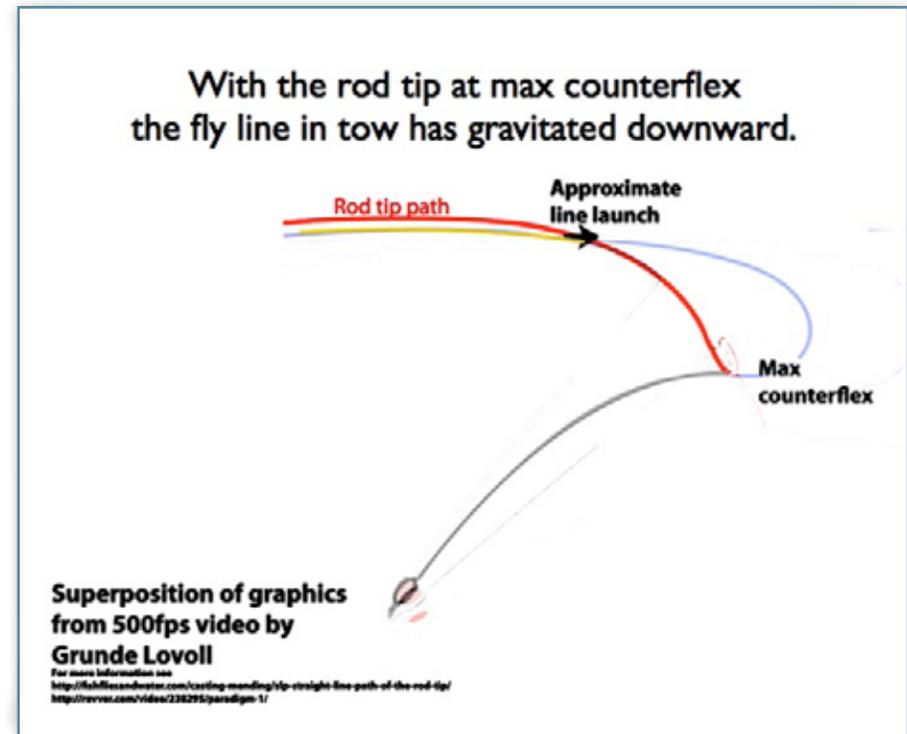
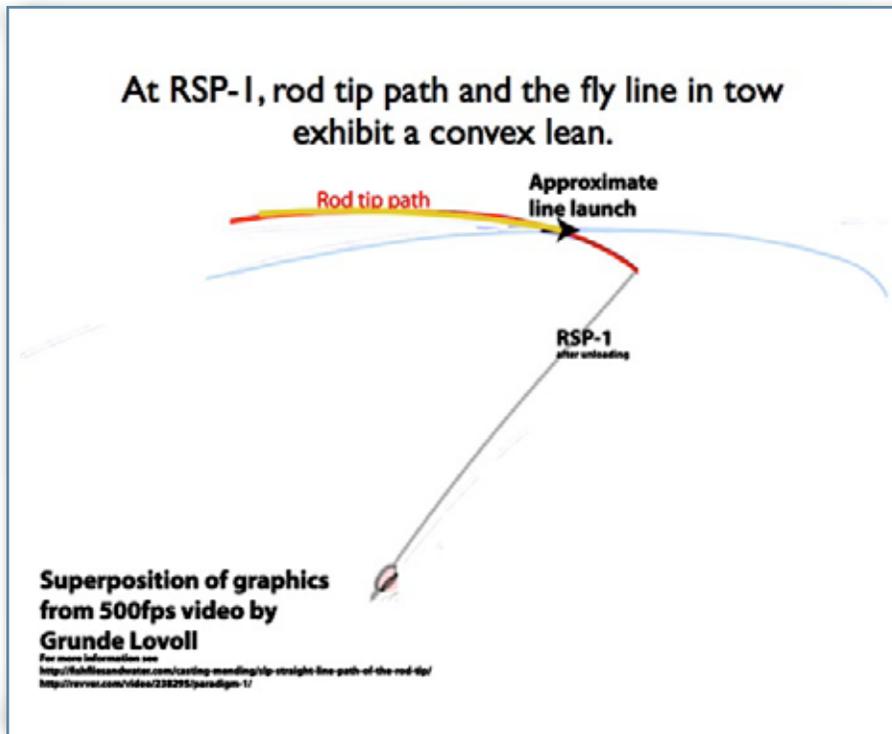
The fifth in a series

- 1: *A Maze Of Loops - Dec 2012 The Loop*
- 2: *What is Casting Stroke? - Mar 2013 The Loop*
- 3: *What Is Stop? - Jun 2013 The Loop*
- 4: *The Legacy Of A Definition - Sep 2013 The Loop*



Instruct the student to watch how his loop unrolls as he adjusts his rod acceleration. A straight upper leg is the indication that his rod tip traveled SLP during casting stroke.

SLP and TWO NECESSITIES *continued...*



Making generalizations on loop dynamics from studying relatively long casts require caution. Gowan's adaptation of Løvoll's video studies (see images on the right) shows that rod tip path has a convex lean prior to line launch. This is interpreted to mean that SLP does not exist in practice.

Time sequencing shows however that the fly line in tow (highlighted yellow) gravitates to become horizontally straight by the time the a loop forms at maximum counter-flex (for detailed explanation of the first image, see "What Is Casting Stroke?" March 2013, The Loop).

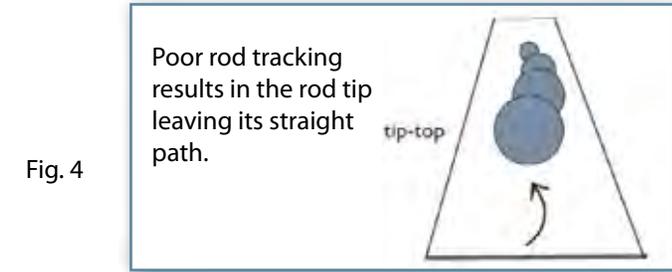
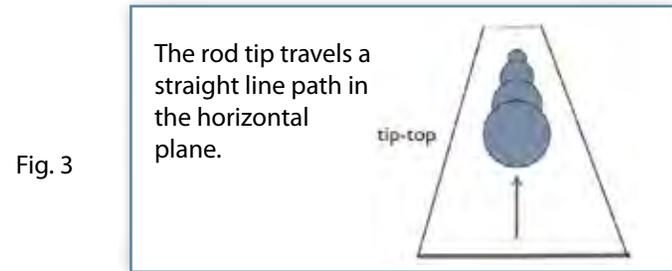
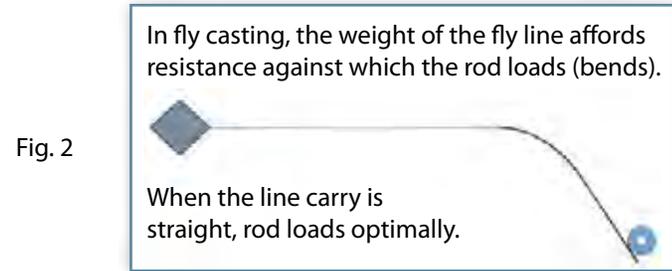
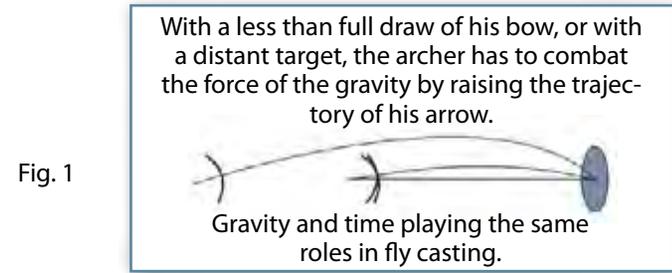
SLP and TWO NECESSITIES *continued...*

With a long line carry or relatively slow cast, the rod tip during casting stroke needs to travel with a convex lean to allow for the effect of time and gravity on the line. With a short line carry or a speedy cast, the rod tip during casting stroke may travel without convex lean at all. This is the same principle as the archer who aims straight at a near target or with a tight bow, but allows for a raised trajectory for his arrow with a distant target or with a slack bow (fig. 1). Of course to be fussy, even the speediest bullet shot point-blank will make an earthbound dip because of gravity to end—admittedly an infinitesimal remove—below the intended target. Just as we do not say that it is impossible to shoot a straight arrow or bullet, we should also not insist that it is impossible to have casting stroke with SLP.

SLP: Two Necessities

In fly casting, the weight of the fly line affords resistance against which the rod loads. When slack is eliminated and the line carry is straight, the full weight of the line is brought to bear, and the rod loads maximally (fig.2). How does the caster thereafter make the rod tip maintain SLP during a casting stroke in both horizontal and vertical planes?

1. Straight rod tracking makes the rod tip travel a straight path in the horizontal plane. Straight rod tracking (fig. 3) can be achieved with practice and discipline: the rod hand can be trained to habitually stroke the rod in a straight path toward the target. Curved rod tracking results in line hooking. Curved tracking (fig. 4) is only a problem for the occasional caster, but when it happens it can be obstinate and troublesome. If hooking occurs from a stubborn swerve, one remedy is to stroke with an opposite swerve to create the opposite hook, then backing off the swerve until straight tracking is regained.



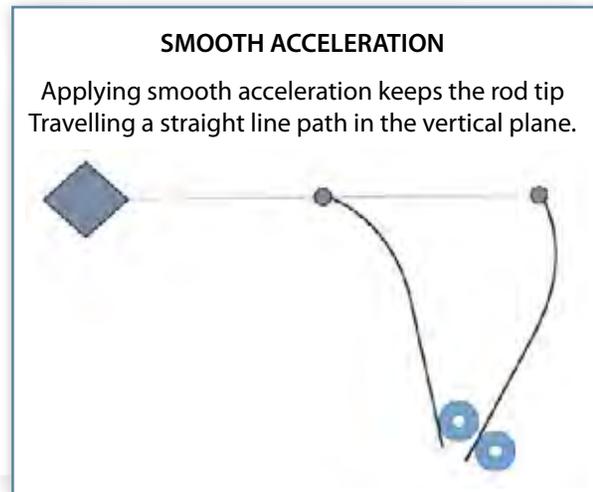
SLP and TWO NECESSITIES *continued ...*

Fig. 5

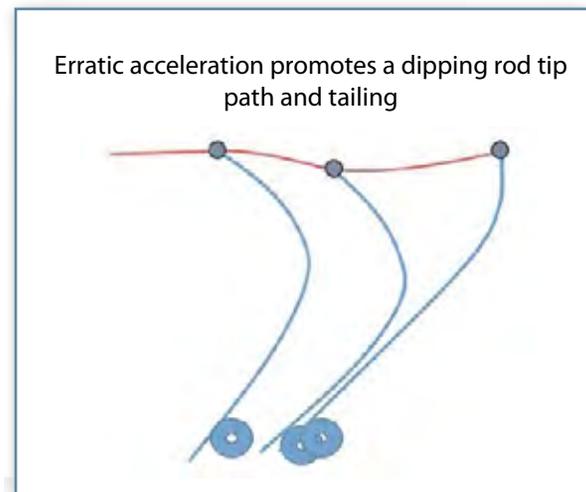


Fig. 6

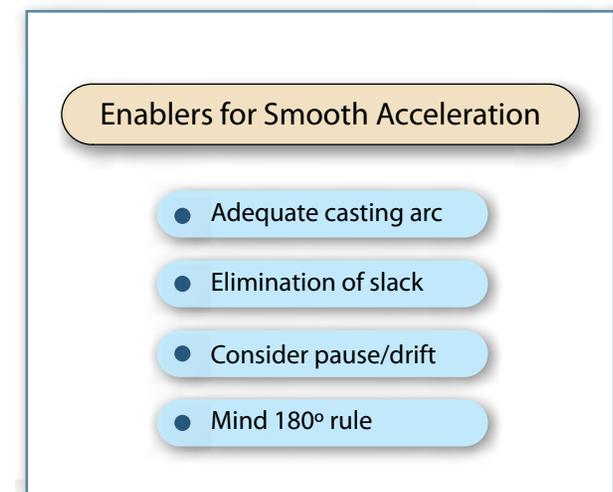


Fig. 7

2. Smooth acceleration makes the rod tip travel a straight path in the vertical plane (fig. 5). Erratic/extreme acceleration promotes dipping of the rod tip, resulting in tailing loop (fig. 6).

In combination, straight rod tracking and smooth acceleration are the two necessities to establish SLP during casting stroke. Of these two necessities, straight rod tracking is a matter of developing neuromuscular memory. Smooth acceleration on the other hand is accomplished more easily when some enablers are in play.

Enablers for Smooth Acceleration

Enablers for smooth acceleration (fig. 7) do not by themselves cause the rod tip to travel in SLP.

- Adequate casting arc:

The longer the line carry, the heavier the load. The heavier the load, the greater the casting force needed. The greater the casting force, the greater the rod bend. The greater the rod bend, the larger the casting arc needed to maintain the rod tip in SLP. In essence, a longer line carry needs a larger casting arc. (The reverse is not necessarily true: a shorter line carry does not absolutely require a smaller casting arc).

- Elimination of slack:

The initial motion of casting stroke is to get rid of slack, largely done by translation to save rotational motion for peak acceleration. The student should learn the feel of a fully loaded rod prior to commencing smooth acceleration.

SLP and TWO NECESSITIES *continued ...*

The rod feels progressively heavier as it bends, then levels off as the entire line levitates, whence acceleration largely by rod rotation may commence.

- Consider pause/drift:

Following the back cast with a long line carry, we pause to allow the fly line to unroll. (A short cast may not need a pause). The optimum time to begin forward acceleration is theoretically when the line carry is fully straight. In practice we start the forward stroke just before the line fully unrolls. This move, mostly translational, loads the rod before we commence forward rod rotation (Some mistakenly consider this to be creep, another term that needs definition. To the author, creep only applies if it is the reason for a blundered cast). If it is anticipated that the size of the following forward casting stroke may not be adequate to sustain SLP, a back drift to get ready a larger casting arc may be resorted to.

- Mind 180° rule:

To facilitate smooth acceleration toward a target, the back loop should be aligned 180° with the front loop. Generally speaking, loops separated by greater than 180° promote open loop (not wide loop), and loops separated by less than 180° promote tailing loop. These tendencies can be overcome somewhat by modifying either casting stroke or "stop." For instance, while standing off a high bank, a horizontal backcast can be followed by extreme acceleration (the dipping tip path of which would normally produce tailing) to deliver a tight loop to the river below. (This is not a recommended fishing strategy). In the other instance, a steeple backcast can be followed by a large "stop" on the forward cast to encourage a wide loop, counteracting the tendency to tail.

Gammels' Five Essentials

The Gammels grouped five essentials for the casting of a "good loop," that is, a true loop. Gammels' essentials provide only for SLP of the rod tip. The essentials play no role in dictating loop size. If a tight loop is called for, it is necessary to add the essential of a brisk "stop."

A Whimsical Note

Over the years we have failed to adequately define basic fly casting terms such as "tight loop," "open loop," "wide loop," and "non-loop." The term "casting stroke" as currently understood has caused confusion. One IFFF Governor lamented that we will never come to a consensus on the definition of "stop." Yet these terms are liberally used by casting instructors world-wide. Does this mean that we should perpetuate this ambiguity and confusion? Let us hope not. We should start anew with increased vigor to solicit fresh ideas, to think out of the box, to invite new approaches to defining these basic terms. The worst scenario is to stubbornly support flawed definitions because we have grown accustomed to them. In this series of articles several definitions have been proposed. The hope is that critique and recommendations from fellow instructors will help bring about final definitions that will stand up to scrutiny. We must not deem this a futile effort. It is a necessary effort.

*About the Author: **Soon S. Lee MCI & THCI** is a retired dermatologist and an ardent fly fisher. He recently resigned after serving a term with the Casting Board of Governors. He now serves on the IFFF Board of Directors. He is a frequent contributor to *The Loop*.*



THE INSTRUCTOR'S CASTING PROP

Improves Tracking, Application of Power, and Stops

Piotr Talma
Wroclaw, Dolnoslaskie, Poland

Many instructors have invented things that help them teach fly casting. When I was preparing for my MCI exam I came up with a teaching device which not only helped me but also helped my students. I used it to improve the use of my left hand as well as for brushing up my over all technique.

Nowadays, I use it to teach fly casting to both beginners and advanced students. I've found that the tool fosters student's understanding of proper tracking, the application of power, and the use of stops. It can also be used to perfect the double haul, the back hand cast, and side or horizontal casts.

Materials

You need two trolley hangers like the ones used to hang clothing. I'm talking about the ones with wheels so the clothing can be moved from place to place. Although nearly hidden by the grass in Photo 1, there are wheels on each of the trolley legs. You also need two pipes approximately 3 meters or 10 feet long. The other things you need are foam pipe insulation and some large colored rubber bands.



Photo 1 - The Instructor's Casting Prop

Assembly

As you can see in Photo 1, the long pipes are placed on top of the hanger bars of the two trolley stands. Photo 2 shows the location of the rubber bands that are used both as stops, and optical markers. The stops connect the two pipes, while the markers are on a single pipe. The stop bands block the rods movement. The stop markers should be adjusted to whatever distance is needed to perform the cast. The optical markers can be adjusted in a variety of ways. They can be used to indicate where a haul or stop begins. They can also be placed anywhere else you wish to direct the caster's attention.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S CASTING PROP *continued...*

Photo 2 - Stop and optical markers on the rods

Photo 3 - Foam covering (10 cm/4 in) on each end of the rods provides the proper spacing between the rods



Photo 2



Photo 3

Using the Casting Prop

Most of my students have tracking problems. Some of them perform a back cast that resembles a side cast. On the back cast they move the rod horizontally. While on the forward cast the rod moves more vertically, close to their bodies.

As you can imagine the rod tip travels in an elliptical manner. I found my device invaluable in eliminating tracking problems.

The first thing I did was place the student's rod between the two pipes (see Photo 4). Then I adjusted the distance between the rubber band serving as stop markers. About 5-7 m (15-21 ft) line is beyond the rod tip. The student begins the cast and the construction helps him preserve correct tracking.

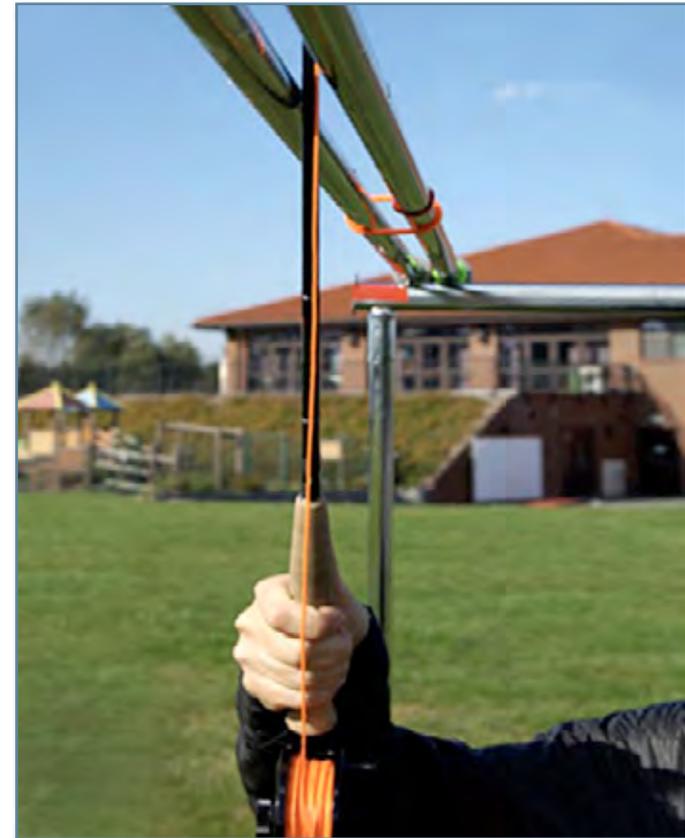


Photo 4 - Parallel rods eliminate tracking problems

THE INSTRUCTOR'S CASTING PROP *continued...*



Photo 5 - Teaching the stops

I set the markers up in such a way that one of the rubber bands marks the beginning of the stop and the other blocks any possibility of further movement. (See Photo 5)
 I recommend that students do not touch the rubber with their rods. I encourage them to stop the rod just before it.
 By adding another rubber as illustrated in Photo 6, I can teach

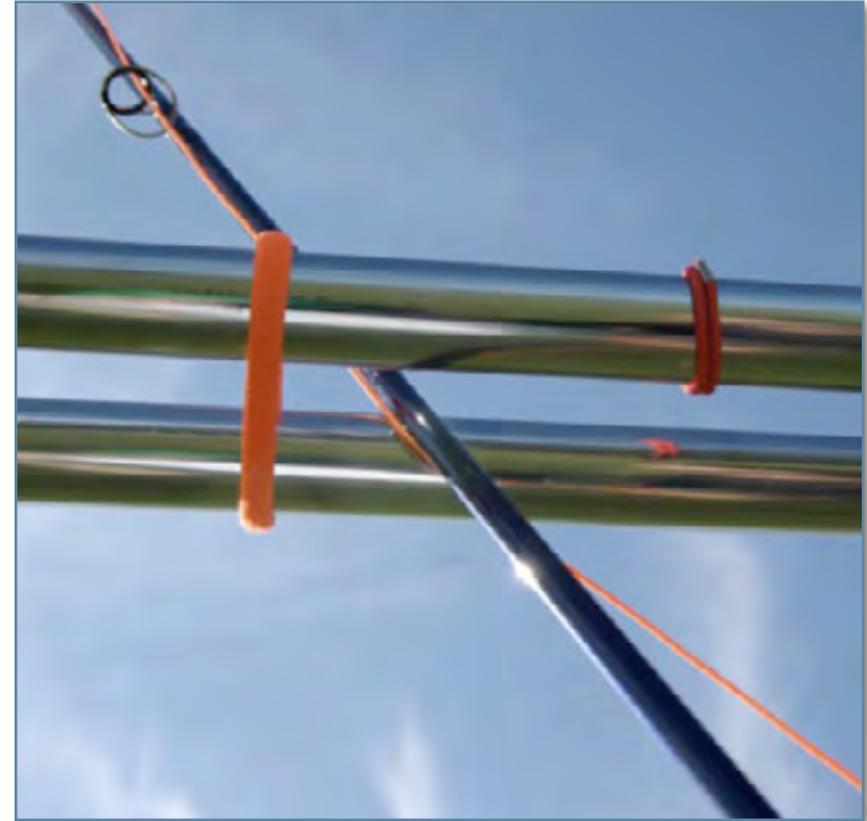


Photo 6 - Teaching the drift

students to introduce drift into their casting stroke. Similarly, using rubber bands, it is easy to teach the double haul. The first thing you do is mark the beginning of the haul. Then, using a second band, you indicate a complete stop and the end of the haul. I find it very useful because many students don't know when to begin the haul. As a result they have a lot of trouble with it.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S CASTING PROP *continued...*



Photo 7 - Encouraging a proper casting posture.

Another benefit of the device is that it helps students understand the importance of maintaining a proper casting posture. You need to have an open posture to be able to reach far behind as well as far forward. Through moving the rod between the horizontal bars, problems associated with body rotation such as a curved rod tip path can be avoided. (see Photo 7)

Depending upon the student's and your imagination you can use the device many useful ways. That means you can set the apparatus anyway you want so you can work on various parts of the casting stroke.



Photo 8 - Teaching backhanded casting

If you lower the horizontal bars as illustrated in Photo 8, you can use it to teach the backhand cast. As a bonus, if you throw a big party, the hangers can be used to hang your friend's jackets.

*About the author: **Piotr Talma***

Poland's Piotr Talma received his MCI last year in Ireland. He graduated from The Academy of Fine Arts as a glass designer. Piotr is a fly fisherman by vocation.





YOUR PRIVATE LESSON

Rod McGarry, Portland, Maine, USA

The keys to an efficient, instructive private casting lesson are three: the student, the subject and the skill the student wants to practice or learn. I offer the following thoughts and concepts I use in my fly casting instruction. These are concepts you can build into your relationship with students, and that will make your private lesson more effective, and make your student a better caster and fish catcher.

Students learn differently. Some learn best by watching, some by watching and hearing, some by doing. But what is known is this: Students learn best by using not just one of their senses, but using multiple senses. It is up to us as instructors to determine how a student learns best, then teach to their strengths. We need to help our students use all their senses to learn. We can do this by using practices, techniques and coaching that is geared to that particular student. A first-rate instructor is the key to building a first-rate student caster.

Begin with the end in mind. Stephen Covey said it so well in his *'Seven Habits of Successful People'*

1. It's Not About You

Imagine going on a first date, sitting down with your companion and saying, 'I would like to begin our date by telling you all about me.' Spend your first five minutes together finding out what's important to your student, what he or she wants to accomplish, what goals, what problems. Ask a lot of questions Who, What, Where, How and When — then LISTEN.

These kinds of questions position you as a valuable resource. They build trust and establish a bond. And they will help you establish the pace they are prepared to undertake. This kind of conversation will take you only five minutes or so and it will energize their casting more quickly and confidently.

2. A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Visualization makes it possible for a person to absorb large amounts of data quickly (reflect for a minute on how many images you see in day). Similarly, a complex concept (rod stop position, angle of the fly rod, or plane of the casting stroke) can be conveyed with just a single still image.

Are you taking photos of your student with your smart phone or tablet? Are you sharing them right there, right now, for instant feedback?

And are you using the capability of video on that same device? Think about how many video images they may see in a day on their own smart phone or tablet. You will help your student make quicker progress when you show them what they are doing. Casting movements get into muscle memory more quickly when you can reinforce / ratify good moves.

Computerized simulator programs like *Ubersense*, *Coachseye*, or *Replay Booth* will help you reconstruct their casts for reinforcement and/or correction.

YOUR PRIVATE LESSON *continued...***3. Your Favorite Number Should be EIGHT**

Do a little math with me. What is your favorite number? Take your number and double it. Now add 16. Then take half of that and subtract your original number. What have you got? Yeah, Eight! Eight minutes is about the reach of the attention span/ concentrated practice period of time for most people. It is up to you to be prepared to introduce a bridge, a transition, some reinforcement, confirmation or correction about every eight minutes. It can be the snapshot or video we mentioned earlier. Or it can be your demonstration, or an opportunity for them to give you some feedback about how they feel. Your student needs these plateaus and rhythms. You have to be the voice on the GPS that calls out the turns or stops on the road to casting success.

4. People Love to Buy . . . They Hate to be Sold

This axiom works even better in fly casting instruction than it does in business. Reflect on all the television commercials we see in our consumerist society. They all espouse some values (some appeal to logic, some to fashion, some to snobbery, some to fear). Keep watching and you will see an underlying pattern.

They are all based upon a climactic moment. Here we go back to #1. In the commercials: The cake has been baked, the family is gathered to see the adorable three-year-old blow out the candle. The race has been run and won and beautiful young people jump up and down in ecstasy as they reach for a diet cola. Men are shown working their jobs for all of a second and a half, then it is Miller time — life at it's best.

Build those same kinds of climactic moments into your instruction. This is the reason Item #1 above is such an important first step in a private lesson. Learning takes place in spurts. To help folks stay motivated to keep on learning, we have to go back to what's important to them. I found out a long time ago that people do things for their reasons, not mine.

5. BONUS - Value Added

Give your students something they did not expect in your private lesson, something that adds another measure to the experience. Maybe it is a map-point reference to a back pond near the stream where they are going to fish, a knot they should know, a C-Cast for those times when they are frustrated, a hand-tied fly you use on waters you fish. Whatever it is, give them something that contributes (adds) utility (value) to the services you gave to them.

*About the Author: **Rod McGarry** lives in Portland, Maine, USA. His mission is to help individuals develop better fly-casting and fly-fishing skills so they can have a unique outdoor experience. He is an IFFF Certified Master Fly Casting Instructor and a recipient of the IFFF's Harger Award for Lifetime Achievement in Fly Casting Instruction. Rod is also a registered professional Maine guide, and is the fly casting staff instructor for L L Bean's Outdoor Discovery Schools Programs.*

NEW REGISTERED INSTRUCTORS

Certified between August 1 to October 31, 2013 listed according to test date.

First Name	Last Name	City	State/Region	Country	Certification	Test Date
Dennis	Otsuka	Alta Loma	California	United States	CI	08/30/13
Agustin	Tjendra	Jakarta Selatan	DKI Jakarta	Indonesia	CI	09/05/13
Kai-Shun	Chen	New Taipei City	Xindian District	Taiwan	CI	09/06/13
Billy	Johanes	Jakarta Utara	DKI Jakarta	Indonesia	CI	09/07/13
Oka	Fransiska	Jakarta Selatan	DKI Jakarta	Indonesia	CI	09/07/13
Robby Sunarto	Karunia	Jakarta Utara	DKI Jakarta	Indonesia	CI	09/07/13
Bryce	Clark	Provo	Utah	United States	CI	09/26/13
Jared	Hinkley	Minneapolis	Minnesota	United States	CI	10/06/13
Akira	Nishida	Kanuma	Tochigi-ken	Japan	CI	10/10/13
Hugo	Moreno	Mendoza	Mendoza	Argentina	CI	10/17/13
Mark	Benson	Orlando	Florida	United States	CI	10/17/13
Tony	Ertola	East Yaphank	New York	United States	CI	10/24/13
John	Boon	Heswall	Merseyside	United Kingdom	MCI	08/22/13
Phil	Ratcliffe	Bowdon	Cheshire	United Kingdom	MCI	08/23/13
Scott	Loudon	Coatbridge	North Lanarkshire	United Kingdom	MCI	08/24/13
Rene	Gerkin	Odense C	Fyn	Denmark	MCI	08/24/13
Jonathan	Walter	Wheat Ridge	Colorado	United States	MCI	09/02/13
Dino	Frangos	Mobile	Alabama	United States	MCI	09/06/13
Willy	George	Alamo	California	United States	MCI	09/25/13
Ally	Bremner	Melrose	Roxburghshire	United Kingdom	THCI	08/24/13
Marty	Tannahill	Tiny	Ontario	Canada	THCI	09/15/13
Todd	Somsel	Issaquah	Washington	United States	THCI	09/25/13

For upcoming IFFF Casting Instructor Certification Program and Casting Continuing Education events please visit: <http://fedflyfishers.org/Casting/CalendarofEventsTestingDates.aspx>