

# THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors  
Spring-Summer 2006*

---

## **The Underhand Cast - Classic style**

**By Dana Sturn**

The underhand cast with its associated technique and tackle is the subject of much confusion and misinformation, particularly here in North America. For some casters the underhand cast is simply the throwing of the line underneath the rod tip. For others the cast is nothing more than a single spey made with a shooting head. There is a lot of talk about the positive use of the bottom hand, which I tried a few times. I threw tailing loop after tailing loop and didn't achieve anything remotely close to a fishing cast. Like most of us with a touch of ego I quickly realized that underhand casting was going to make me look rather incompetent, so I quickly abandoned it and returned to my tried-and-true traditional spey methods.

Then a pivotal moment in my speycasting career occurred: I decided to teach my neighbor, Ben, to double haul. What does the double haul have to do with the underhand cast? *Tennis elbow.* I spent some time with Ben and his 8-1/2 ft 8-weight teaching him what little I knew about the double haul so that he could join me later that fall on the Thompson. It had been months since I picked up a heavy single hander. Three days later I had a serious case of tennis elbow which lasted the better part of a year. My injury was so bad that I couldn't even pick up a coffee cup without pain. Any serious speycasting was out-of-the-question. Every time I extended my right arm I would get a serious stab of pain in the elbow. *Yeeouch!*

Strangely enough, this was the best thing that could have happened to me, for the pain drove me

to experiment with new ways of casting a spey rod, and the cast that was most effective and least painful for me was the underhand cast. With my traditional spey method I extend the top arm during the forward cast, and use my bottom hand mostly to assist the final acceleration and stop of the rod. As I experimented with underhand casting I found that I was able to use my top arm in a more relaxed and less active fashion, relying on the bottom hand for the application of power, and using the natural body block of the lower torso to help stop the rod. This took the strain off my elbow and allowed me to continue to speycast and fish for steelhead despite my injury. With time and practice I discovered that the underhand casting technique is applicable not only to shooting heads, but all spey lines. It is a highly efficient method of casting a spey rod and the underhand cast has taken me a long way towards realizing my casting potential.

### **Origins**

The underhand cast was developed by Loop Tackle Design's, Göran Andersson, to assist him when fishing difficult waters in Scandinavia. Often severely limited casting room and the need for heavy sinking lines made conventional long-line speycasting extremely difficult. Andersson developed a method of speycasting short shooting heads (30 ft - 45 ft) which dramatically reduced the amount of rear clearance required for casting and allowed him to cover difficult water with relative ease. The shooting heads also enabled him

*(Continued on page 2)*

to cast as far as he wanted and cover tough to reach salmon and sea trout lies without all the effort of moving a heavy long-bellied spey line. A typical long-bellied weight 11 spey line for an 11-weight rod might weigh 900 - 1000 grains, while a modified shooting head for the same rod would come in around 450 - 500 grains.

Speycasters trained in the UK styles learn to use a very active upper hand during a speycast, and either share the effort of the cast between the upper and lower hands, or use the lower hand to a lesser degree. This works exceptionally well when the angler is casting in the traditional methods with traditional tackle as the strong use of the upper hand has the potential to move the rod tip a great distance, which is essential when picking up a long-bellied spey line or double taper line.

The underhand cast takes this approach and literally turns it on its head. During the underhand cast the upper hand is used as a support for the rod and a pivot point about which the rod moves during the casting sequence, but most of the work of the cast is done with the bottom or *under* hand, hence the name. If you shoot pool the concept will make sense immediately. The rear or *bottom* hand controls the cue and the forward or *upper* hand is mostly stationary and acts as a rest, guide and pivot point for the cue. A similar principle is at work during the underhand cast, although the upper hand does move to assist the lower hand to position the rod and support it during the forward power stroke.

The Scandinavians use short shooting heads of 35ft - 45ft, and long 17ft - 25ft+ leaders with floating heads. Strong use of the upper hand with such lines will tend to straighten the line out behind the caster without it ever touching down. By using the lower hand the rod tip travels a shorter distance and along a flat path during the set up and formation of the D-loop, which anchors the leader and in some cases a short length of line directly off the caster's forward shoulder (as in a single spey). From this point the forward delivery is similar to the single spey, although the Scandinavian casters favor the bottom hand in the application of power and the stopping point is much higher on the forward stroke than in a traditional speycast. Also, the underhand

cast is very compact --- the caster keeps the hands in close to the body and quite low.

The term underhand cast or more specifically underhand throw has been around for a long time. In places where I've seen the term used in print it refers to the fact that the fly line travels beneath the rod tip during the backcast sequence (forming of the D-Loop) and seems specific to the single spey. Possibly for this reason the name underhand cast is controversial among some anglers, so Andersson's method has also come to be known as the Andersson cast. Despite squabbling over nomenclature, Andersson's formulation of his casting method involves more than simply throwing the line under the rod tip. In Andersson's underhand casting, *underhand* refers more specifically to the positive use of the bottom hand throughout the casting sequence but especially during the forward or delivery cast. Additionally, there are some very specific techniques and tackle considerations in this method, so I am quite happy to characterize it as a unique method of two-hand or speycasting, and leave it at that.

The evolution of my underhand style has been influenced by four key people, in order of my exposure to them: Leif Stavmo, Per Stadigh, Henrik Mortensen, and Göran Andersson. Each added significantly to my understandings of the various methods of underhand casting. Like traditional speycasting, the underhand style is evolving as more anglers adopt the method and experiment with it. Earlier this spring I had the great privilege of casting with Andersson, the originator himself. It was illuminating to see how effortless Göran makes it look. As father of the method, it is not surprising that Andersson is 'Mr. Smooth' when it comes to the underhand style. With minimal movement and effort, the line shoots out powerfully and gracefully.

An excellent reference for the classic Andersson style of the underhand cast is the footage of Leif Stavmo casting on the RIO International Spey Casting video.

I think what makes the underhand such an interesting and useful style is the economy of motion and ease that the shooting head approach affords most casters. With the classic underhand method

you can easily cover any fishing situation with excellent line control out to all expected fishing distances. As I am fond of demonstrating at casting schools, the shooting head system gives you excellent line control with the proper technique.

I think in many ways the underhand method is as much a casting philosophy as it is a casting method or style. Indeed, Andersson and other proponents can offer detailed discussion about the benefits of the underhand method. However, I think the underhand cast has been largely misunderstood in North America. While there are many aspects of the casting method and the tackle selection that go into the classic underhand style, I think that the most significant feature of the method is the way that the casting stroke is executed. Whereas in conventional speycasting either the top hand or both top and bottom hands are involved in moving the rod during the forward stroke, in underhand casting it is the bottom hand that is largely responsible for the movement of the rod during the forward stroke. In order to get the maximum benefit out of using this bottom hand it is important to hold the rod in a specific fashion (see *Use of Hands* below) so that the full length and power of the blank can be utilized to make the cast.

### **Underhand Basics**

Before you start underhand casting you'll first need to make sure you have the proper equipment. Several manufacturers make tackle suitable for underhand casting, but to cast in the classic style you'll need to following:

- a medium-fast progressive action two-hand rod
- a floating shooting head 35– 40 ft in length
- a long leader (20 – 25ft)
- suitable running line (I suggest PVC running line in .032 for most two-hand rods)

I prefer Loop tackle for underhand casting. My typical underhand practice casting set up would include the following tackle:

- a Loop Blue Line 9140-4 rod
- a Loop Adapted Low Float Shooting Head in line weight 9/1
- a Loop LNL Salmon leader extended to 25ft
- yarn fly
- Loop Adapted running line (.032)
- A Loop EvotecLW 8 eleven large arbor reel

I suggest you start underhand casting with a floating head just as you would start out any form of fly casting with a floating line. For all new underhand casters the floating heads are a little easier to manage than the sinking lines. All of the casting mechanics you will need to master casting all head systems can be learned with the floating system.

Breaking down the basic underhand cast is simple: think of a single spey, with some subtle yet very important modifications in style. The underhand cast has 3 component parts: the *lift*, the *pivot*, and the *cast*.

Let's look at the cast in detail.

### **The Lift**

The lift is the initial move of the underhand cast. As in all speycasts, the lift follows the all-important set up: tight line, rod tip at water's surface, rod tip pointed at the fly.

To start the underhand cast, face your intended target—say that log across the river at 45° from the downstream position. The center line of your body should face the target. Then rotate your torso about your hips to face downstream where the line is on the dangle. The rod butt is gripped in the classic method described below (see *Use of Hands*) and held against the lower torso at about hip level (higher of course if you are wading deep). The top handle should be gripped in the manner described below, and approximately 2/3's up the cork. You can experiment with different top hand positions to find one that is most comfortable, but I've found the 2/3 rule to be a pretty good standard on most rods.

Make certain you have the leader, shooting head, and 15– 20ft of running line out the end of the rod tip. Now, strip in your shooting head so

*Continued from page 3 (The Underhand Cast)*

the back of the head is within a foot of the rod tip and make certain the tip is just an inch or two above the water's surface. With the line and leader tight below you, take a look at your top arm (right arm for right-handed caster; left arm for left-handed caster). If you look at the inside of your elbow you'll notice that the angle created there between the upper and lower arm is  $60^\circ$  -  $180^\circ$ . Now, use your top hand to lift the rod by closing this angle formed until it is  $90^\circ$ . Most of the shooting head will now be lifted off the water and the leader will be stretched out straight and tight on the water below you. Take your time when you make this move—there is no hurry. Just a nice, relaxed easy lift. The rod will now be at  $45^\circ$  angle in relation to the water. It is at this point that you begin the pivot.

Before we look at the pivot I want to stress that a key aspect of the underhand is the compact motions are made with the limbs very close to the torso. This is a critically important yet often overlooked component of the classic underhand style when contrasted with classic UK/traditional style speycasting. In traditional speycasting the top hand moves a lot farther during the casting movements. At the conclusion of the lift once the D-loop is formed, the top arm can be observed well away from the torso (*Figure 1*). However, with underhand casting the top hand stays in tight, and remains quite close to the body once the initial lift has been completed (*Figure 2*).

### **The Pivot**

The pivot incorporates three moves to complete. These are the *tilt*, the actual *pivot* itself and the underhand *push*. The tilt involves canting the rod tip out to the side. This is done by allowing the wrist of the top hand to turn slightly so that the palm is at a  $45^\circ$  angle, while at the same time using the bottom hand to begin moving the rod butt away from the torso. This is the beginning of the underhand push, which causes the rod tip to drop slightly and cant off to the side making it easier to anchor the leader on the water during the formation of the D-loop. Make this tilt move at the same time that you begin the pivot.

The *pivot* itself is very simple: once the rod is raised as detailed above, simply return the center line of the body back to its original position facing the intended target. This move is almost all body



**Figure 1**

with the arms seeming to simply swing with the momentum created by the body pivot. At the conclusion of the pivot the momentum created by the pivot is allowed to help the hands raise the rod to the 1 o'clock position. The top hand is kept very close to the body, almost as if the elbow is glued to the torso.

During this *pivot* the bottom hand executes the underhand *push* to move the rod butt directly out from the hip area and slightly upwards to stop somewhere in the region of the solar plexus. Once the pivot is complete and the rod is at the 1 o'clock position, the forearm and upper arm of the top hand should be pressed tightly together with the top hand around ear level.

The effect of the arm movement during the pivot reminds me of the old style of single hand fly casting instruction where single hand fly casters were taught to keep their elbow tight to their body and only use the wrist and upper arm to cast the fly. Various items were placed between the upper arm and the torso to encourage casters to keep the elbow close to the body. If you try to imagine this same technique with a two-handed fly rod and incorporate a pivot about the waist into the casting stroke you'll have the basic idea of the *pivot* portion of the underhand cast.

*Continued on page 5*





**Figure 2**

The final positioning of the hands seems to change somewhat depending on who is doing the casting. Generally speaking the final position of the top hand is usually no higher than the ear, but it can also be as low as shoulder height. Keeping the top hand down really forces the angler to push the bottom hand out, and allows the bottom hand a much longer travel distance when pulling in and down during the forward cast. Although many traditional spey casting instructors will tell you to avoid this situation in which the rod butt is pushed a good distance away from the body — known as the flying butt syndrome. In underhand casting this flying butt is a key to the cast.

### **The Cast**

The *lift* and *pivot* are now complete. The top hand is between ear and shoulder height and in tight to the body, the rod butt is at a position on level with the solar plexus, and the line has jumped off the water, swung around and back slightly forming a D-loop slightly upstream, and the leader is touching down on the water. Note the position of the rod tip is almost vertical. This is very different from traditional spey casting which tends to feature a pronounced off-vertical rod tip.



**Figure 3**

With a very smooth acceleration and application of power the bottom hand pulls the rod butt down and in toward the belt buckle—a move I call the underhand *pull*. The top hand assists the bottom hand by supporting the rod and also stabilizing it as it comes forward. During the *pull* the top hand moves forward about 12 inches so that the rod tip stops at about 10:30 or 11 o'clock at the same moment that the rod butt arrives at your belt buckle (**Figure 3**). This stopping of the rod tip needs to be firm so that the rod tip unloads at 11 o'clock. If the cast is correctly performed the line will sail out in a tight loop and turn over beautifully in the air. Don't overdo the movement of the top hand by dropping it too low. This will allow the rod to begin to unload before you've finished your cast, losing some of the 'snappiness' of the rod, costing you distance and a tight loop. When the tip stops, the running line is released and it shoots out along with the head and leader. Underhand casting has been characterised as casting the running line and if you watch it in slow motion this is indeed what happens. The running line proceeds outward in a tight loop, then picks up the shooting head and finally the leader. Really try to ease into the forward cast—don't rush it. You can actually start quite slowly as long as you are constantly accelerating and end up with that firm stopping of the rod at the point of greatest acceleration. Rushing the cast was one of my early faults with the underhand and I've learned that taking

it easy actually allows you to cast farther with much less effort.

A really interesting dimension to this part of the cast that I saw both Göran and Henrik do is to turn the body about the hips to face almost back downstream again during the cast, particularly when distance casting. This is the reverse of the pivot move, but it has the effect of adding more rod load and creating increased line speed and distance. After the D-loop is formed the torso rotates about the hips again as the rod butt is pulled downwards and into the body by the bottom hand. In the classic style used by Andersson it seems that the top hand plays less of a roll than the methods practiced by Mortensen, but for both anglers the bulk of the work of making the forward cast is taken by the bottom hand, and also the movements of the bottom hand are enhanced by the pivoting of the body.

### **Use of Hands**

The use of the hands during the underhand cast is very specific. First let's look at the grip on the rod. Your thumb and first finger of the top hand make a circle around the rod so that the rod can pivot easily inside them. Your second finger traps the running line against the rod handle (**Figure 4**). The thumb and first finger of the bottom hand encircle the handle, but this time right at the bottom of the handle, with the rod butt resting on the middle finger (**Figure 5**).

The grip of the top hand is all-important. It allows the rod to move easily and bend right down into the butt section. I notice a real difference in casting power and efficiency if I grip the rod tightly with the top hand or if I have the loose relaxed grip described above. With the recommended grip the rod loads easily and casts effortlessly. When you get it right it is really amazing.

It is important to remember that the bulk of the application of power during the underhand cast is made with the bottom hand, with the top hand assisting. I would say that the effort breakdown is 75% bottom hand and 25% top hand, but for some casters it might be closer to 80/20. Think of the bottom hand as leading with the top hand following in the area of 75% bottom hand, 25% top.

In the underhand cast the top hand is like a good supporting actor in a movie—vital, but not the star. I think that some underhand casters will try and convince you that they do everything with their bottom hand, but this just really isn't possible. Since the top hand has to move forward in order to make the cast, it is adding power to the cast, if only a little.

### **Controlling the Running Line**

With shooting heads you of course have to get used to controlling the running line, and there is a very simple method that you can use for this. I control all of my running line using the pinkie, ring and middle fingers of my bottom hand. Depending on how much running line I have out, I will usually lay a few strips of line on the water then hook one loop of line in the crook of the second joint on my pinky, then strip in a few more strips of line and hook another loop in the crook of my ring finger, and so on. Of course you will vary the amount of running line you use depending on the distance you are casting, but by way of example let's say that I'm making a cast that requires 12 strips to recover. Here is how I would manage all that running line:

1. make 4 strips and hook the 5<sup>th</sup> strip on my pinkie
2. make 3 more strips and hook the 4<sup>th</sup> on my ring finger
3. make 2 more strips and hook the 3<sup>rd</sup> on my middle finger if necessary (I often won't as the remaining line is now stripped in for casting and is being held by the top hand)

The effect of this approach is to create a series of loops that gradually decrease in size so that when you shoot the line you minimize the potential for tangling (**Figure 6**). Some anglers prefer to make larger loops than these as they feel that larger loops help you to avoid tangling. I've found that this system is a good trade-off between shootability and potential for tangling. As long as I properly stretch my line before I cast I find that I rarely experience tangles when using PVC shooting line of 0.032.

*(Continued on page 7)*



**Figure 4**  
**Variations on a Theme**

Once you've completed the change of direction move, simply continue on with the set up for the D-loop in the underhand cast and carry on to completion. The only major consideration is the length of the shooting heads compared with lines you might be used to using for some of these other casts. Since the heads are shorter, your rod motions will most likely need to be smaller and made with less effort as well. Experiment with this and you'll find the right mix.



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

I'm still a long way from what I would consider to be highly skilled at the underhand cast. As a traditional long line spey caster I had to re-learn many things in order to make the underhand method work for me. But to be honest I wish I would have been introduced to the underhand cast early on in my development as a spey caster, because I probably would have adopted it due to its ease and usefulness. Even with long lines I now use a variation of the underhand method and I find I cast much better in this manner than I did with my original style.

*Special thanks to Göran Andersson for his assistance with this article. All underhand casting tackle provided by Loop Tackle Design.*

---

*Dana Sturn is the creator and host of the Speypages.com and Speyclave.com websites. He serves as a consultant to the THCI program and was the first Canadian to earn the THCI certification. This article originally appeared in The Speypages Newsletter at [www.speypages.com](http://www.speypages.com) and [www.speyclave.com](http://www.speyclave.com) and is reprinted with the author's permission.*

**AGENDA FOR TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2006**  
**Casting Board of Governors, Federation of Fly Fishers**  
**Bozeman High School • Bozeman, Montana**  
**Tom Jindra, Chair**  
**Dusty Sprague, Acting Secretary**

---

- 9:00 A.M.     **Call to order:** Chair Tom Jindra  
                  **Call the roll:** Acting Secretary Dusty Sprague (5 minutes)  
                  **Introduction of guests:** Jindra (5 minutes)  
                  **Additions to agenda:** Jindra (5 minutes)  
                  **Minutes from 2004:** Sprague (15 minutes),  
                  **Accept retirements:** Jindra (5 minutes),  
                  **Election of governors:** Jindra (5 minutes),  
                  **Emeritus nominations:** Jindra (5 minutes),
- 10:00 A.M.     **The Loop:**     Denise Maxwell and Liz Watson (10 minutes)  
                  **Awards:**        Tony Vitale (10 minutes),  
                  **Continuing Education:** Vitale (25 minutes),
- 11:00 A.M.     **Instructors Test Update:** Chuck Easterling (60 minutes),
- NOON **Lunch**
- 1:00 P.M.     **Masters Test Update:** Sprague (60 minutes),
- 2:00 P.M.     **Two-Hand Instructors:** Al Buhr (15 minutes),  
                  **Ethics:** Phil Gay (5 minutes)  
                  **Web Site:** Jason Borger (10 minutes),  
                  **Glossary:** Gordy Hill (15 minutes)
- 3:00 P.M.     **Conclave Casting Program:** Joe Libeu (15 minutes)  
                  **Strategic plan:** Jindra (5 minutes)  
                  **Bylaws Revisions:** Jindra (5 minutes),  
                  **International:** Jindra (15 minutes)  
                  **Election of Executive Committee:** Jindra (5 minutes),  
                  **Comments from the audience**
- 4:00 P.M.     **Adjournment**

All Casting Instructors and Master Casting Instructors are invited to attend the meeting. Come meet the members of the board and other certified instructors. See how the Casting Board of Governors is working to improve the program. Master instructors are encouraged to become involved in many of the working committees. See you there!



## ***DEMONSTRATE THE OVERHEAD CAST IN SLOW MOTION***

*By Mike Kaul*

One key aspect of teaching someone to use a fly rod, is to ensure the student can visualize how to move the rod. A live demonstration by the instructor is a very effective way to show a pupil the correct technique in using the fly rod. However a live demonstration has some limitations. Often during a live demonstration, the student is trying to watch the whole sequence in real time and may miss seeing some key aspects of the stroke.

I recall the golf lessons I have taken. At some point the pro will take the club out of my hands and give me a live demonstration on how to execute the swing properly. The pro will be emphasizing the correct hand and arm positions but I have trouble seeing exactly what is happening at these critical junctures of the swing. Ultimately I find myself watching the ball sail out onto the driving range, marveling at how effortlessly the pro strikes each shot. Obviously, I am not capturing the technical execution of the swing in my mind's eye. The first thing I learned as a student, I put into practice as an instructor.

Eight years ago I developed a training aid to help novice and continuing flycasting students see the elements of an overhead cast in slow motion. The training aid consists of a hand and arm super imposed on a half circle clock face. Many casting instructors use the clock to help students relate to various rod positions. The training aid hand holds a rod handle with a reel replica attached. Extending from the hand is a rod tip with a short length of fly line and leader with yarn fly. The hand and arm are on a pivot so I can move them from one position to another in the casting sequence. I placed another pivot at the wrist so I can move it back and forth. Using the training aid, I show the students what occurs at each rod position in a pick up/lay down cast and the effect it has on the line. Using the

wrist pivot, I can show the students the proper wrist position throughout the entire casting stroke and point out what effect that it has on the rod tip position. With this slow motion demonstration I can instill a visual image in the student. The training aid is also useful in showing the student the rod bend (loading) as they apply progressive power to the rod in the rearward stroke. You can then demonstrate what happens to the rod at the stop (unloading), discuss transfer of power from rod to line and show how the line unfolds at the pause. The forward stroke can also be demonstrated in slow motion and an explanation given as to what is occurring in each element of this movement. The training aid is a valuable supplement to the live demonstration and is particularly effective in giving the beginner a visualization of what movements they will be making with the rod. After this slow motion demonstration, I have the students assemble their rods and attach the reels. Before extending any line, I have them move their rods in a drill following the movements shown in the demonstration.

This pantomime drill, conducted by the numbers, starts the muscle memory process and gives the students a feel for the rod movement without concern about line entanglements. After this short pantomime drill, I have the students extend approximately thirty feet of line and execute a basic pick up/lay down overhead cast.

Working with dozens of beginning students each year, I find this regimen allows the student to make a decent flycast on the first or second try. This initial success is important to alleviate some of the mystery and apprehension about learning to cast a fly line.

We all know this is just the beginning, but it is a good start.

---

*Mike Kaul is a FFF certified instructor from Pinedale, Wyoming. He guides and conducts casting classes during the fly fishing season in Pinedale. He also spends several months promoting fly fishing in Wyoming and conducts casting classes for continuing education programs.*

## Teaching Beginners Fly-Casting -- My Method

By Soon Lee

In my early years, I felt it difficult to teach beginners flycasting, especially in a group setting. I thought that perhaps I had not yet honed my communication skills, and was not using appropriate key phrases to explain my thoughts to the laggard student. However I have watched other instructors, some nationally renowned, struggle with their occasional student too. It is true that we as instructors eventually succeed in imparting a modicum of skill to most, even all, beginners. However it seemed to sometimes take a lot of effort and more than a little frustration.

It dawned on me that in a group setting each student is carrying a different and unique rod. It may be of different material (glass, graphite, cane) as well as different lengths, stiffness, quality or line-weight. Further, each student has a vague reasonable length of fly line out of the tip top (line carry). The different actions (slow, medium or fast) of each rod, combined with the different loading characteristics from different lengths of line carry, will to some extent require different strokes for different folks. In a group setting it is difficult to deal with these variables.

The experienced flycaster with his feel for the cast, cultivated after hours and hours of casting, can pick up any rod, whether noodle-like or rim-rod and after a few trial casts, find the rhythm to make parallel loops. Good form such as grip, shoulder - arm - wrist coordination, casting arm position, and body stance may be fairly easily demonstrated and copied by the beginner in the group. But the casting stroke is so significantly influenced by rod action and line carry that it cannot be easily demonstrated visually or verbally. The rhythm of the casting stroke has to be felt.

I thought the solution was to find a way to learn to cast a parallel loop by feel. As I explored this concept, I observed that a beginner would readily learn to cast a perfect loop if he was not encumbered by the complicating inputs of rod loading. I noted that this could be achieved by having the student cast a very short line when the effect of

rod loading was minimal. As soon as he learned the rhythm to produce a parallel loop, he might then be exposed to the effects of rod loading by casting a longer line. He would build on this feel that he had developed with a short line to progressively modify his cast to fit the new circumstances.

With these considerations in mind and having the opportunity to experiment with the membership of two local fly clubs, I have developed a method of teaching that is gratifyingly successful and worthy of sharing with my colleagues. Fellow FFF instructors who have assisted me in group teaching have found the method simple to follow and have incorporated it into their own teaching program. While I developed this methodology with group teaching in mind, my fellow instructors and I find that it is also eminently applicable to individual student teaching.

With a line carry of half a rod length or less -4 feet of line outside the tip top with a six to nine foot leader sans yarn fly (yarn fly snags on the lawn), I demonstrate to the student the desired parallel loop. I instruct the student to make short casting strokes horizontally, letting each forward and back cast rest on the lawn before continuing. He can see his own progress. He makes adjustments by feel so that parallel loops are produced. He shortens or lengthens his casting stroke, speeds up or slows down his stroke, and notes that he needs to stop the rod to produce a perfect loop. With a short line carry, all the student needs to do is to develop a rhythm with short casting strokes to cast a decent parallel loop. Rod loading does not come into play ; the stroke is a piston-like motion. Wrist play is counterproductive. After practicing most students acquire the feel of the stroke. This is a critical skill. He must know that he can cast a parallel loop before continuing on to the next stage.

The student is encouraged to lengthen the line carry to one rod length (up to 10 feet). Rod loading begins to play a small role. The student learns by feel that he has to increase his casting stroke

*Continued on page 12*

## From The Editors

Wow - its Conclave time again. We hope that you are planning to attend this year. (*Despite the high price of gas, I wouldn't miss it. This is the second year of camping for me -- I even have my own tent this year. One thing I learned last year was never visit Montana at any time of year without a set of long johns and lots of fleece clothing. I'll keep you updated. Denise*)

Some of the events to attend and participate in are the Danish Casting Games. *Instructors are needed at the games throughout the week.* Even if you miss the Conclave this year, investigate the games as a fun casting event for your club.

The CBOG Meeting is on Tuesday and open for both Certified Instructors and Master Instructors to attend. We might have to get a bigger room if this meeting gains popularity. The agenda is printed on page 8. We can't promise you fun and

games but come and meet the Board and see what we do the rest of the year.

Certification testing for CI, MCI and THCI will occur at the conclave. Master instructors are encouraged to sign-up and participate in the testing process. We all learn by doing this!

Its been a great year for the Loop! We have gone totally electronic and so far it's working well. We publish articles that are submitted by you. In fact, our whole newsletter relies on *you*. We welcome your articles for *The Loop*. Please keep those articles coming. Let us know if you have a special topic of interest or want to see a particular instructor's written work.

See you at the Conclave,  
Denise Maxwell and Liz Watson

## CONCLAVE 2006

**What:** FFF 41st International  
Show & Conclave

**When:** July 25-29, 2006

**Where:** Bozeman, Montana

### Date to remember:

Tuesday, July 25

Casting Board of Governor's  
Meeting  
Masters & CIs are invited to  
attend

## THE LOOP STAFF

### Editors: Denise Maxwell & Liz Watson

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

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

### Program Coordinator:

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

### Chair, Board of Governors: Tom Jindra

*tjindra@bellsouth.net, 504-392-7511*

### Fly Illustrations: Jason Borger

**You can have a link** from your FFF website listing to your own e-mail address.

We welcome your submissions via e-mail or disk. Please attach a short (1-3 sentences) instructor biographical statement, including your location and Certification level. Please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow your submission's possible republication on the Program's web site. Any illustrations should be in TIFF or JPEG format.

*The Loop* reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission. Submissions may be to the editors or the National Office:

### FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program

215 E Lewis

Livingston, MT 59047

Fax: (406)-585-7596

E-mail: [castingcert@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:castingcert@fedflyfishers.org)

in both length and power. Because the short line cast requires only a relatively short casting stroke he finds no need for wrist action. As soon as the student feels comfortable making parallel loops on the lawn, casting in the air, he is encouraged raise the rod off the lawn to 45° degrees off the horizontal, false casting in the air. He feels the effect of gravity and rod loading and adapts to them. Within 15 minutes, 95% of my students learn to cast parallel loops of eight to ten feet.

The line carry is lengthened progressively to two rod-lengths ( up to 20 feet). The student almost automatically lengthens his casting stroke. He feels he has to accelerate more assertively and to stop the rod more briskly. He is confident he is able to cast a parallel loop. He is only adjusting his stroke to accommodate the increasing rod loading. At this time he is false casting in the air with the rod at a cant that he is comfortable with.

As the student incrementally increases the line carry he re-affirms the need to make a smooth acceleration, ending in a brisk stop. At three rod lengths (30 feet) of line carry, he learns he may include wrist action at the end of the casting stroke to complete the acceleration prior to a brisk stop (aptly described by Joan Wulff as a power snap). The instructor brings up the possible need for a drift at the end of the backcast.

By this time over 95% of the group of students are casting parallel loops at a fishing distance. It is remarkable how quickly each student progresses, as soon as he finds he can make a parallel loop at a half-rod line carry. As he lengthens his cast he is making adjustments with his casting stroke, all by feel, building on what he already observed was successful in producing parallel loops at the outset.

I have refined my group-teaching programs so that 15 minutes of casting is separated by 15 minutes of lecture. This eliminates monotony and allows for student's questions to be answered. Indeed students often prefer their own cures for each other's casting ailments. It also allows instructors to go over information of a more elementary nature in a staggered manner to avoid boring the students who are somewhat more knowledgeable.

The following is an example of the teaching program.

**0000 hrs:** Introduce instructors. Statement of objective: To cast parallel loops at 30 feet. Comments on fly rod (line weight, length, action, graphite vs glass vs cane) and reel (weight, single vs multiplier action, drag, click, saltwater use, equipment balance).

**0015 hrs:** Lawn cast to one rod-length of line carry. The aim is to develop a sense of rhythm in a short casting stroke to produce a parallel loop. This step is critical and must be learned before proceeding.

**0030 hours:** Fly lines (weight, profile, floating vs. sinking vs. sinktip, shooting head, line backing) and leaders (knotted vs. knotless, taper, tippet); choice of each in different fishing situations.

**0045 hrs:** Casting up to two rod lengths of line carry, in the air. The student starts to feel the effect of rod loading and appreciates the need for a longer casting stroke. Emphasize stopping the rod briskly (dead stop) at the end of each cast.

**0100 hrs:** Instruction on getting the equipment together for fishing, assembling and disassembling the rod, right vs. left hand reel wind and knots.

**0115 hours:** Casting to three rod-lengths. Importance of smooth acceleration and ending in a brisk stop are re-emphasized. Wrist contribution to the power snap and back drift are commented on.

**0130 hours:** Mechanics of flycasting. The varieties of grip, stance and casting styles are introduced. (These are brought up late in the program so as not to burden the student with new ideas before he learns to cast a parallel loop). Further casting skills such as slack line and distance casting, including double hauls are demonstrated to the students for their future study.

**0145 hours:** Casting practice. Q & A

**0200 hours:** Adjournment



## Congratulations New Instructors

### Master Instructors

**Jeff Barefoot  
Mike Caranaci  
Alastair Gowans  
Steve Johnston  
Lasse Karlsson  
Peter Lami  
Marty Tannahill  
John Till**

### Two Hand Instructors

**Alastair Gowans  
Neil Holding  
Okada Hiroshi  
Christopher King  
Dwight Klemins  
Leroy Teeple  
Rick Whorwood**

*Continued from page 12 (Teaching Beginners)*

It is noteworthy that the teaching session lasts just two hours. At no time is the concept of casting to a clock face, ie. 11 o'clock, 1 o'clock etc. alluded to. I find that almost all students are casting parallel loops at the end of the session. Many students are so encouraged by their progress that they stay longer to show each other their loops. Some students discover that casting their friend's rod has a different feel ---a very illuminating observation indeed.

I also find that when an absolute novice graduates from this program, he astonishingly does not know how to cast a tailing loop. Indeed he has to later learn how to foul up his casting rhythm in order to learn this skill so that he may pass his instructor's certification examination!

It is very rare that a student cannot cast a parallel loop with a line carry of half rod-length within 15 minutes or so. This skill is critical. He has to be able to do this in order to build on the feel of his casting stroke as he progressively casts a longer line. Often the failure to perform is the result of defective equipment. One student has a rod with a tip section dented so that it hinged with each cast. Another beginner attended the class with a Leonard

38L cane rod. Many cane connoisseurs favor this rod for its extreme noodle (soft) action. Rod loading was already in play when he attempted to cast four feet of line.

As mentioned earlier, my instructor colleagues and I use this teaching method also for individual student instruction.

I find it a particularly useful method to re-train a veteran fly-caster who struggles to cast 50 feet because he is mentally mired in long-instilled habits.

Finally, casting a short line of half-rod length is a most effective drill to help the student to remember the feel of casting parallel loops. Students are reminded that should their loops falter in the forthcoming days, they should repeat this drill.

I offer this outline as a simple but logical method of teaching fly-casting to beginners. I would also recommend it as an alternative approach to teaching the occasional difficult student.

---

*Soon Lee is a FFF certified Master Instructor in California.*

**Federation of Fly Fishers  
6 Month Membership  
FFF Certified  
Casting Instructor Program**

**Please fill out student's name and contact information, sign form, and return to  
FFF Headquarters in Livingston. One membership per family is offered.**

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**M or F /18 or under?** \_\_\_\_

**Location of lesson:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Lesson:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of FFF Instructor & Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: FFF**

**215 East Lewis**

**Livingston, MT 59047**

## **2006 Danish Casting Games Bozeman, Montana**

Back by popular demand! The Danish Casting Games will be a part of the FFF Conclave Casting Games 2006 in Bozeman, Montana.

The Danish Casting Games will consist of 12 different casts to nine different targets, ranging from 30 to 100 feet. The games are designed to allow the caster to experience many challenging casts that can apply to actual fly-fishing situations.

We encourage all levels of casters to participate in this fun non-competitive event. Certified and Master Certified Casting Instructors will be available to assist at each target. The object of the Games is to have fun and improve your own casting skills. There are no regulations on equipment for this event.

To offer good quality coaching for individuals participating in the games, volunteers are needed.

We are asking Certified and Master Instructors who will be attending the Conclave to donate a window of time to work the games. Volunteers must be knowledgeable and willing to work at a scheduled time.

If you can help please e-mail or call the Danish Casting Game Chairpersons:

Don Simonson or Marilyn Vitale:

Don Simonson  
[donjoans@earhlink.net](mailto:donjoans@earhlink.net)  
209-932-4925

Marilyn Vitale  
[marilynvitale@verizon.net](mailto:marilynvitale@verizon.net)  
425-868-7593



***FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS***

*Fly Casting Instructor Certification Program*

215 E Lewis

Livingston, MT 59047