

# The Experience...

A better life in 6 lessons



Flyfishing, flycasting and socks...

*Sexyloops*

The [Paul Arden](#) Fly Fishing Experience  
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## The Experience...

Here at Sexyloops we try to think out of the box.

For quite a while we have been thinking in terms of a beginners section. I could just have written a book on the subject, and then posted it up on site, but this is the WWW and that would have been boring. Flyfishing and learning how to flyfish are interesting things to do, and anything appearing in Sexyloops should reflect this.

When Karen became involved in Sexyloops, as the 'official' photographer, it was thought that here is an opportunity to good to miss. Karen is now the Sexyloops pupil and the inspiration behind The Experience. Karen has never flyfished before, but has bait fished regularly.

The section will evolve in real time as she learns and improves. Her lessons will appear on site. Everything I teach her will be written down and posted here. These are her lessons. As she learns she will take notes. These notes will be cross-referenced to my notes. This in itself should prove a fascinating exercise.

Her misunderstandings will cause me to look at the way I teach, the things I say, and should attempt to bridge that gap between what I as an instructor take for granted, and of what Karen, as a pupil has absolutely no grasp. Her questions, her mistakes and her thoughts will all go into this section. As will mine. As an instructor it is important to be able to alter my teaching to the suite the individual. People learn differently. I hope to be able to convey this observation in these pages.

The intention is to create something with which a beginner can learn and improve. Which raises the question; is it actually possible for someone to learn and improve their flyfishing by reading something on the Internet? The communication between instructor and pupil is not through speech alone. When teaching flycasting I often train pupils by physically directing their casting stroke.

### ***How can Sexyloops deal with this?***

What is needed is an online pupil. And so we have one of these too. Webmaster Steve is a complete novice flyfisherman. Steve lives in France and works in Switzerland. I am teaching Karen in Australia. You can't get much further apart than this.

Steve is going to try and improve his flycasting and fishing simultaneously with Karen. He will do this by reading the lessons and through email. Our interactions will also appear in the lessons, along with his thoughts.

Although the success of this venture could be viewed in terms of an end result (i.e. both Karen and Steve becoming experts and going on to become instructors and Troutgods:-)), everyone involved is far more concerned with the actual learning process itself. It's the 'walking of the path' that matters, not where it ends. Indeed, there is no end; all we have is a beginning.

### ***This is The Experience.***

Oh and it might get a little complicated...

## Lesson 1 - 'And I'm left handed'

Note well: the sequence of this lesson may appear a little unusual. I realise that if I had chosen to write this as a chapter in a book, it would have come out differently. This is not book writing; this is how I teach and *that* is the whole point.

### Setting up

Fit the sections of the rod together so that the rings are in line with each other. There are two methods of doing this. The first method is to slide the blanks together, so that the rings are at 90 degrees to each other and then twist them until they line up. This 'locks' the pieces together. The second method is simply to push the pieces together in direct line, without twisting.

The thinking here, is that one should never twist carbon rods since carbon is a brittle material. I am a 'twister'; I have had sections fly off during mid-cast due to not twisting - which is exciting and, on one occasion, also expensive. I have never had a rod break while twisting it together.

Karen: [Are they all carbon rods?](#)

Paul: [Nope. Some are made from split cane, others: fibreglass. The twisting of the sections originates back to these materials. Most rods are now manufactured from carbon fibre as most anglers consider this material superior for casting.](#)

Before you fit the sections together you should check both pieces for dirt or sand since these can damage the fittings. Also make sure that both parts are dry. If you slot wet sections together you may find them very difficult to disassemble later.

The next step is to attach the reel to the rod.

This is flyfishing and as such, there are two ways of doing everything. I recommend mounting the reel on the rod, so that if you are right-handed you reel in with your left hand. And vice-versa. Historically this is not actually how it was done, and you still come across the odd person who does it the other way, but if you want to make life easy for yourself, then this is the way to do it.

If you are using brand new tackle, you may find that the rod handle is vacuum-sealed with some plastic wrapping. Remove this; the purpose of this wrapping is to keep the handle clean when it is sitting around in a shop. If you do not remove it, water will seep between the cork and the plastic and rot the handle.

You may also find that you have to wind the flyline on the reel. [Go here](#) if this is the case! Your line should be set up so that there is a leader attached to one end and backing to the other. Follow the last link if you are confused!

The reel should be set up so that the line pulls off in the manner shown in the photograph. Any other way is wrong. If having mounted your reel you discover that the line is set up to be wound in by the other hand, then you are going to have to de-spool the line completely and rewind it the other way. Do this in a large field and not in your living room! Your reel's drag system will need changing as well. Hopefully you have bought a reel that facilitates this without the need of complicated surgery :-)



Karen: [What is the drag system?](#)

Paul: This is an adjustable braking system and enables a hooked fish to run without snapping the line.

The next step is to 'thread' the rod. Once again there are two ways of doing this. However this time, there is the easy way and the hard way. The hard way is to poke the leader through the rings one by one. It is a fiddly operation. I have seen children attempt to climb the rod in order to do this. It's great to watch, especially when the leader slips through their fingers and disappears all the way back through the rings.

The easy way is to pull some flyline off the reel, double it up and, leaning the rod on its side, poke the doubled line through the rings. If the line slips the doubled line hangs in the rings and you won't have to start again. It's less fun of course...

Some rods boast a hook-keeper. This is a small ring near the handle of the rod and has no use whatsoever. You should definitely not feed the line through this ring!! I have seen this done quite a few times which is why I mention it. (One reason that the hook-keeper ring should not be used for hooking the fly, is that the connecting knot between the leader and the flyline will be contained within the rings - the correct leader length is 1 1/2 times the length of the rod.

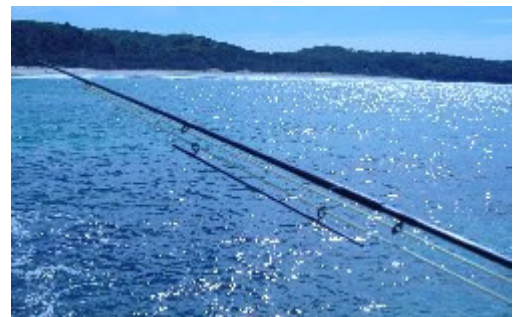
This knot can get stuck against a ring when the line is pulled. I have seen quite a few tips broken by pulling this knot through. The other reason is that the leader forms an annoying kink if left doubled around the tip-ring. The correct technique to store the fly is, leaving some six inches of flyline outside the tip ring, to catch the leader around the reel seat and hook the fly to one of the rings.

Steve: Why should the leader be 1.5 times the length of the rod?

Paul: Actually this is the *minimum* length and this is only a general rule. However, if you make your leader any shorter than this, you will find that it turns over too quickly and that there is still energy in the cast when the loop straightens. This causes the end of the flyline to kick over.

Pull all of the leader and a couple of yards of flyline through the tip ring and tie some wool to the end of the leader.

NB: When you pull line through the rings, you should always pull away directly away from the tip, and not bend the rod while doing so. Pulling the line through the tip ring directly towards the butt will very likely result in the creation of another, unexpected and unwanted, piece of rod.



### **What is fly fishing?**

Flyfishing is quite simply fishing with an artificial fly. It is not fishing for flies. Just in case you were wondering.

Of course some people would like to take it further than this. Many fisheries (and some rod licences) stipulate that flyfishing tackle must be used. I have seen it written that flyfishing is fishing with flyfishing *tackle*. So I've consulted the dictionary.

The first dictionary didn't contain flyfishing (even as separate words). No help there then.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, in 1964(!), fly fish is/was to fish with fly. That's it. No mention of tackle.

Which raises the next question.

### **What is a fly?**

The dictionary says that a fly is natural or artificial fly used as fishing bait. Which is a bit like saying a dictionary is a dictionary.

Actually this IS an interesting question. I don't want to get too technical, like, but the answer is not straightforward. You would have thought that it was, of course. I mean we *could* say that an artificial fly was an imitation of a natural fly. That would be easy. But this is fly-fishing and nothing is easy.

For a short while in history 'purists' decided that fly-fishing was the fishing with a floating imitation of a winged insect. If your fly sank you were not fly-fishing. Which is an interesting notion. Of course if your fly sinks you are actually wet-fly fishing. Someone should have told them. Actually people did, and they fought about it. In England we still have the repercussions of this strange behaviour; on many of the chalkstreams you can only fish using the dry fly until some time in June. And then after this you are then allowed to fish the nymph (which is a wet-fly) and then only upstream.

If you fish downstream you will be hanged. And if you fish the downstream lure you will be tortured first.

Karen: *Why tortured?!*

Paul: *This is to teach them a lesson before we hang them. In the good old days we used to ship them out to Australia.*

Anyway, flyfishing is not just the fishing with an imitation of a winged (or otherwise) insect. Salmon fishermen, for example, fish with flies and salmon don't eat insects and besides, no-one in their right minds would consider a salmon fly to resemble any sort of insect whatsoever, excepting, perhaps the odd exotic butterfly. Frankly if real flies looked anything like salmon flies I for one, would never go anywhere near Scotland and no one would live there.

Steve: *Why are salmon flies like that exactly?*

Paul: *Salmon don't feed in fresh water and therefore the only way to catch these fish is to induce an aggressive or territorial response. Salmon flies do this.*

Salmon flies are flies however. The definition of a fly could be an artificial bait constructed using natural fibres. This would be quite easy, would mean that spinners and worms aren't flies, and is a definition quite a few people actually use.

For rather a long time this *was* the definition of a fly. The problem occurred however, with the introduction of man-made fibres. Some people do have a problem with this and do not consider any fly created with man-made bits to be a fly at all. Which is a little harsh, especially if you use tinsel.

However, I will give you an extreme example taken from the other end of the scale: you can buy pre-moulded rubber shapes and glue them on the hook and end up with something out of the house of horrors. Is this still a fly?

I'll leave you to make up your own mind. For me, yes it is.

Steve: *What is the difference between a lure and a wet fly?*

Paul: *We are entering a rather confusing world now. You could call all flies 'lures', but most anglers would consider a lure to be a fly which resembles either a bait fish or *absolutely nothing on this planet**

(as well as using their mouths to eat, fish also use them for aggressive purposes and some flies are designed to stimulate this). Wet flies on the otherhand are designed to resemble drowned or aquatic insects. Dry flies float. There is a lot of crossover.

### ***What type of fish can you catch on fly?***

Fish feed using either sight, touch, smell, vibration or a combination of these. If they use sight then we can catch them on the fly. Almost all fish hunt using sight. There exists the odd deep ocean-dwelling fish that can't see. I don't know what these fish eat, but it is conceivable that they hunt through vibration, in which case we could catch them too. If they hunt through smell; we're stuffed. Of course we could dip our fly in blood, but this isn't fly fishing.

Karen: *Why is it not fly fishing if you use blood or a fish gut smell? (I'd like to take this opportunity to state that Karen, as well as growing up in Australia, also has Viking ancestry)*

Paul: *This is where I have drawn the line; it's more natural. (Karen is a vegetarian, who only eats organic, and as such will fully embrace this point)*

Although (nearly) every fish can be caught on fly, the most common are the trouts, the salmons and the chars - the 'game' fish. Grayling are also widely sought after with the fly.

Next in popularity (probably) is saltwater fly. Since we can tie flies to imitate small fish, crabs and shrimps we can catch fish in the sea. From the UK shores you can catch bass, mackerel, pollack and sea-trout amongst others. This is rapidly increasing in popularity.

In the US of A saltwater fly is huge. Bonefish for example, can be stalked off the flats in Florida and once hooked fight like hell.

I spend much of my time living in Australia trying to catch trevally, flathead or any damn thing that will take my fly. Sometimes they do.

Freshwater fly fishing for non-salmonoids (coarse fish) is also gaining in acceptance in the UK. In the US they have been fly fishing for freshwater bass for a long time now. On the Continent fly fishing for pike is extremely popular and this is taking off in the UK as well now.

As well as pike, you can catch chub (they have been doing this for a long time), roach, perch, carp, barbel, in fact any damn thing you want. Being consistent is another matter of course. But this is fly fishing .

### ***Why flyfish?***

Everyone has his or her own reasons of course, but a very impelling one is that there are times when flyfishing is the most effective method.

This comes as a complete surprise to many people. I hear it said quite often that we flyfish because it's harder, implying, if not actually stating, that this makes flyfishing a noble thing to do.

This is of course complete crap.

One reason that flyfishing can be the most effective is that it allows the bait to be presented extremely delicately. Since the casting weight is the flyline itself and not some additional weight, it is possible to cast the lure with very little water disturbance. This enables us to catch 'spooky' (technical term for wary) fish in very shallow water. The fly itself is virtually weightless; indeed the use of weight within the fly actually makes flycasting harder.

Of course this is a good reason to use flycasting tackle, but why flies? One answer is that many fish eat natural insects, including small ones from the water surface. You cannot bait a hook with a small natural insect (the wings fall off and the hook sinks it), but by the clever twisting of feathers and fur around a hook you can create something which resembles this natural beastie.

So it's a great method for catching trout, since trout feed and live in shallow waters and eat small insects, many of which are too small and delicate to bait. Best of all, and just to add some zing, is that there are times when trout will feed on one insect to the exclusivity of all others.

Of course it's not just about catching fish. Although flyfishing is often more successful than drowning worms, it is considerably less successful than throwing dynamite. What dynamite and flyfishing have in common, however, is that they are both very exciting procedures.

In other words they are fun things to do.

The actual process of *flycasting* is an enjoyable experience in it's own right. Just to prove this we have salmon fishing.

Also of entertainment, is the actual fighting of the fish. Because flyrods are both light and sensitive, and we often 'play' the fish (tire him out) with direct contact to the line, and because, for a little while at least, the fish can have upper hand, there is much more in the way of thrills and spills than with other methods.

Other attractions are: that we don't need bait, it's a minimalist branch of the sport (unless you are a boat fisher in the UK, in which case you'll need a small trailer just to get your stuff to the water), it's fantastic for travelling and many fisheries are fly only (especially when trout are involved).

It's also less harmful to the fish than many other techniques. Most anglers return their catch (I know it makes us really odd - but there are several million Coarse anglers in the UK and *they* return everything). In flyfishing many anglers do eat their catch of course, and for them this is yet another attraction.

Flyfishing is so enjoyable, at times, so utterly complicated, has such highs and can be so mysterious that many people, myself included, would rather die than catch fish any other way :-)

### ***How we invented this crazy thing***

Flyfishing isn't new.

As well as building roads, having orgies and keeping the Scots out of England the Romans were flyfishermen. One of the great incentives behind the building of Hadrian's Wall, for example, was to keep the Scots away from the chalkstreams of the South. As everyone knows, the Scots are devils with their wet flies and the Romans were purists.

Anyway they did fly fish. Whether anyone was flyfishing before this we can't say for sure, as there is nothing on record. It is just possible that Stonehenge has something to do with flycasting...

Of course they didn't have the sort of tackle we have nowadays. It was more do-it-yourself in those days. And this is how it happened:

Centurion Pisces fancying a bit of a flyfishing experience in between road building and orgy partaking nips off into the woods and chops down a fresh sapling. Probably willow. To the end he knots a length of braided horsehair attached to which is a fly.

A few interesting technical things come out of this. The first is that the 'leader' was generally the same length as the rod. This meant that our Centurion pal could only fish a maximum of twice as far away as the rod tip. Cunningly he got around this problem by chopping down long saplings in the region of 16 to 17 feet.

The second interesting point is that without a reel to store line in reserve for the playing of lunkers, a large fish, once hooked, would be played by throwing the rod in and allowing the fish to drag it around until tired. I am not sure as to the truth in this incidentally. But it's a nice thought and probably genuine.

Lastly, it is thought that flycasting possibly came about by the missing of takes and the angler flicking the fly back out again.

Modern flyfishing is different. No surprises there. The reel has done all this. This has given us the flexibility to cast greater distances by 'shooting' line.

Steve: *So when was the flyreel invented then?*

Paul: *Around the turn of the 18th Century.*

Now it's time to learn to flycast.

### ***Starting to fly cast***

Flycasting works by using the weight of the flyline ('Ah, that's why it is so thick!') to bend the rod like a catapult and then, by forcing the rod to unbend, it casts the line for us. This is not completely true incidentally, but it is a nice way to look at it.

There are several ways of holding the rod. The most popular, for mid-weight rods, is to 'shake-hands' with the handle and place the thumb on top.

Pull some line off the reel with the free hand.

Holding the free hand above the handle, with the tip of the rod pointing downwards, shake the rod slowly from side to side. The freed line should slide down the rings and join the other line that you had pulled out earlier. This works best over water since the surface tension gives you more resistance to work against.

Slowly sweep the rod tip behind you and then flick it forwards. The flyline should pick up, flick forwards and land in a straight line. This is actually your first cast, and is a roll cast. Well done! [\(See page 15 for more detailed instructions\)](#)

### ***Overhead Cast***

We are going to learn the overhead cast. The overhead cast is so called because, wait for it... we cast the line over our heads. It is the classic cast one thinks of when considering flyfishing.

For this cast, I would like you to have approximately 10 yards ([9m](#)) of flyline outside the tip of the rod. If you don't have sufficient, pull some more line off the reel and repeat the process laid out before. It is important to have the flyline lying out reasonably straight in front for the overhead cast to work.

Karen: *Why ten yards?*

Paul: *Because ten yards is the length of line manufacturers use to match the weight of the flyline to the flex in the rod. Therefore it's a good starting point.*

The next thing to do is to trap the flyline between your index finger and the rod. This is to stop any line being pulled off the reel when practising this cast. Stick your free hand in your pocket.

Karen: Why?

Paul: To stop it messing around with the rod or line.

Karen: Why would it do this?

Paul: Because this is something that some beginners do.

Karen: So this is a natural reaction?

Paul: Yes, it seems to be.

Now you are ready for the overhead cast. We can also call this the 'pick-up and lay-down' cast.

Karen: *(says something unprintable)*

### **Starting position**

Stand with your right foot forward (if you are right-handed), knees slightly bend and comfortably in balance between the two. Now I know that you will find yourself crouched behind thorn bushes, lying face down in ditches and hanging upside-down out of trees when you come to actual fishing, but for practising our first casts we may as well make things easy for ourselves.

Starting with the rod tip touching the lake surface, your elbow in a relaxed position by your side and the line lying directly in front of you, slowly raise your hand, lifting the line off the water. As the rod nears the vertical speed up and flick the line upwards, squeezing the hand as you do so. I would like you to imagine that you are trying to flick the line vertically upwards above your head.

What will happen, assuming that you do this correctly, is that the line will smoothly lift off the water and accelerate upwards and backwards. When the rod is stopped the line will continue to travel over the top of the rod and form a loop. This is the casting loop. It's an important concept to grasp. This loop travels through the air, constantly unrolling and the line straightens out behind us.

The position you should attempt to find yourself in, at this point, is with your hand slightly outside your elbow and level with your ear.

### **Pause**

After you have stopped the rod and completed the backcast (or upcast - both are descriptions of the same thing) what you do next is critical. It is this: nothing! You have to wait. The loop of line must travel backwards and fully extend before you start the forward cast. If you try casting forwards while the loop is travelling backwards, you are going to create several interesting effects. Firstly, you will be casting the rod like a whip, possibly breaking the sound barrier in the process, giving an almighty crack. Secondly, the energy of the line travelling backwards will negate the energy of the line travelling forwards and the whole lot will end up in a catastrophic heap at your feet.

### **When to start?**

So you must wait for the line to straighten. 'And how long does this take?' I hear you ask. Well this depends on how much line you have outside the tip, and how quickly the loop is travelling. Basically it takes as long as it takes. Not very helpful huh?

Some instructors teach you to wait for a 'pull' as the line straightens. I think this is a bad thing to teach. Not because you are wasting energy, but rather because any pull against the rod tip causes the rod to flex, and the line to bounce against it. This is an awkward position with which to commence the forward cast.

Other instructors teach you to watch your backcast straighten. If you can do this without twisting your waist and rotating your shoulders, then this is ok. (Either rotate the neck and *only* the neck, or stand side on using a separate foot position. Standing side on is called the 'open stance'. Facing forwards is called the 'closed stance'. In my teaching experience I find that most pupils learn far quicker with the closed stance).

For long casts in particular, I am conscious of watching the loop straighten. I turn the head *after* I have made the stop on the backcast and not before. I then return the head to the forward-facing position before making the forward cast.

Instead of watching for the loop straightening you can watch the line as it passes over your head. This gives you a fairly good idea of how long it is going to take to straighten out behind you.

Once the line has straightened you can start your forward cast. The way to make this is to slowly rotate the hand forwards and flick the tip. A nice analogy is to imagine you are flicking an apple of the top of the rod.

### ***Flicking the apple***

The line should now travel forwards and over the top of the rod forming a loop. This loop will unroll and the line will straighten in mid-air. The line will then gently fall, as one, onto the water surface. As it does so, follow it down with the rod tip. This is the pick-up and lay-down cast.

Steve: The Stop is not a 'sudden' act like breaking, but a smooth 'end of movement'. Yes ?

Paul: The 'stop' is actually both a sudden act and a smooth one. It is not is a violent act. You must stop the rod abruptly. The best casters have the most abrupt stop. Squeeze the hand. However you **MUST** relax the hand immediately afterwards, otherwise the hand continues to travel forwards, and the rod tip kicks.

To recap here are the five components:

1. The lift, which merges into
2. The upward flick
3. The pause
4. The forward flick
5. The lowering of the rod / follow through.

### ***Overhead Casting Faults***

The next stage is to make the pick-up and lay down cast consistently effective. This means practicing. What follows is a list of likely faults and their corrections. Use these to correct your initial technique. Perfection is not the aim here and you should practice this for no more than 10 minutes or so, because the next section is a very important tool for developing both feeling and proper technique for this cast.

#### **The line leaves the water with a splash:**

Ineffective lift. The line must gently clear the water before any attempt is made to flick it backwards. One must overcome surface tension.

### **The line travels very fast towards the caster at face level during the backcast:**

This is exciting. This is the same fault as the previous one, however this time the rod has bent against the surface tension, and then immediately unbent as soon as the line has freed the surface:

duck! Soft rods are especially good for this.

### **The line leaves the water with a splash, even though the lift was remembered:**

A short and meaningful pause was inserted between the lift and the upcast having the effect that the line has settled and stuck once again to the water.

### **The line travels over the top of the rod into the backcast but forms itself into a large open loop which proceeds to land on the ground behind:**

Either, no lift as above, or failure to stop the rod effectively on the backcast. It is important that the rod tip travels at an upward angle during the casting stroke. If the rod tip travels around the caster in a large circular path we get the above effect. A very common problem is a floppy wrist. Make certain that you really are stopping the rod when you think, and that your hand is travelling *upwards* into the stop. (Some instructors call the floppy wrist 'breaking the wrist', and many of these consider all wrist movement to be a fault. This is complete crap actually. What is important, indeed all that is important, is that the tip of the rod has travelled at an angle upwards (of about 30 degrees to the horizontal) and that it has been accelerated to the stop).

### **Line fails to straighten out during backcast:**

Either not a long enough pause or an insufficiently crisp stop.

### **Cracking noise during backcast:**

Not a long enough pause.

### **Line lands in heap during forward cast:**

Either the above or a failure to stop the rod on the forward cast, resulting in a large circular path of rod tip.

### **Line goes out but is wriggly:**

Very common and is an indication of a low backcast. The line has straightened out at an angle below the rod tip and as a result of this, has travelled at an upward angle on the forward cast. Fix by sending a higher backcast either by stopping the rod earlier, or by ensuring that you concentrate on forcing the tip upwards as you squeeze the hand into the stop. Also make certain that you are starting the lift with the rod tip touching the water. If you start in the horizontal position, say, then by the time you have finished the lift you will be too far around to be able to cast upwards with the rod tip.

These are the main faults. Notice one thing: virtually all of them occur during the backcast.

The only forward cast faults of significance, apart from failure to stop the rod are:

- A sort of lobbing action, where the hand travels up, forwards and around; don't do this, concentrate on rotating the hand and gently squeezing it into the stop

And

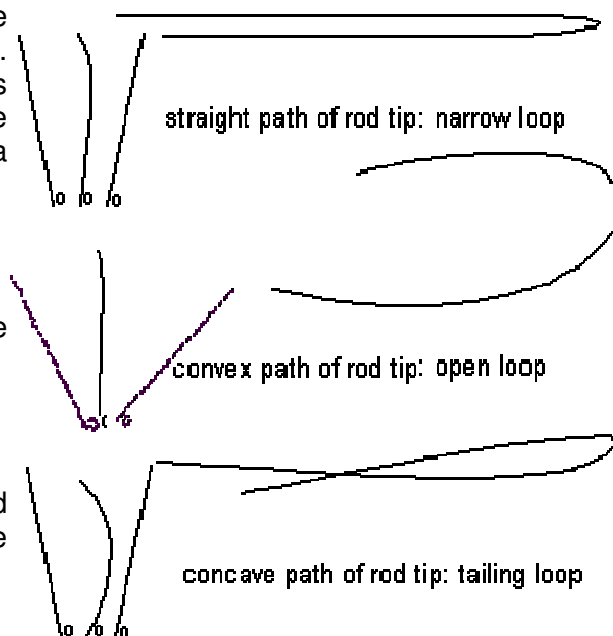
- A slowing down to the stop as opposed to a speeding up to the stop - concentrating on squeezing the hand will fix this.

## Casting Loops

As we have already discussed a casting loop is the loop of line that is formed when the line travels over the top of the rod. The dynamics of this loop are the main differences between good casters and crap casters. This site is called **Sexyloops**. Which is what it's all about really.

Sexyloops asides, there are three main types of loops: open or non-loops, tight loops and tailing loops.

The one you would like to have is a tight loop. Tight loops are aerodynamic and efficient. They are result of a straight path of the rod tip during the casting stroke (in-line with the angle of the backcast). Don't fall into the trap of forgetting that the rod bends when you make the cast (some instructors have done so). Rods do bend and this is not a design flaw but a very important quality!



Open loops are created through convex paths of the rod tip.

Tailing loops (the line crosses over itself) are created when the tip of the rod dips under the straight-line path.

Interestingly, beginners rarely throw tailing loops. This is a fault that generally develops later. Open loops, however, are rampant.

## False Casting

OK, you've made a few pick-up and lay-down casts. Now it's time to keep the line in the air. The way to do this is to cast backwards and forwards in a narrow arc, allowing the loop to straighten out both behind and in front.

The important thing here is to be aware of the amount of hand movement and force that you are applying. I am looking (and so should you) for the minimum amount necessary of each. I am very conscious that my hand hardly moves for this exercise. The amount of effort you actually require to cast 10 yards of line is very slight indeed.

Every single person I teach initially applies too much power. This applies equally to beginners, intermediate and advanced casters. Even trainee instructors!

This is how it works.

You cast.

I say: 'Less power.'

You cast with less power and say, 'Ah, yes, now I see.... much better. Thank you.'

I say: 'Less power.'

You say, 'Less???'

I say, 'Yep.'

So you cast with less power and say, 'Wow, fantastic NOW I have it!!'

I say: 'Less power.'

You say, 'No, not possible. Definitely can't do less.'

I say: 'Yep, you definitely can.'

Anyway this goes on for a while. I have the routine down to a tee. So when you practice this go through it in your mind.

I can assure you that by the end you will still be applying too much power!

### **Minimum power**

Try and cast the loop so that it doesn't straighten! Then stop with a *slightly* crisper movement and you should have it.

If the line collides with the tip of the rod when false casting, then you are in the right ballpark. So this is actually a good sign! In order to overcome this problem, try coming slightly downwards with your hand during the forward cast.

### **Flycasting feeling**

The main reason for me introducing false casting so early, is that it gives the 'fly-casting feeling'. Every time you stop the rod it should 'bounce' in your hand. This bounce is the unloading of the stored energy. If you are not getting this feeling then you are either holding the rod too tightly, or not using it effectively. Go and search for this feeling and once you have found it hang on to it! You want to get it every single time you stop the rod.

When practicing false casting most beginners tilt the cast so that the backcast is low and the forward cast is high. If this happens to you, then consciously rotate your cast forwards (aim lower).

Once you have established the flycasting feeling and are casting controlled loops during false casting, then you should go back to the pick-up and lay-down cast. Make sure that you remember to start the cast with the rod tip touching the water and that you remember the 'lift' movement (they always forget this...).

Steve: At no point have you mentioned the '10 to 2' bit. (This is not here to provoke you to make controversial remarks ) but the observation stands all the same. My first lessons were entirely 10 to 2 and with a wrist strap actually which makes it sound kind of like 'Oliver Twist' but I think I may be asking a lot of questions on this one part. (Unlike Karen, Steve is not a complete beginner)

Paul: Many instructors do teach using the rigidity of a clock face. I don't. This is because rods are progressive and you can *choose* how much it bends. A rod with a greater bend requires a longer casting arc. I will talk about this in the next lesson.

### **The Roll Cast**

Take a break from the over-head cast for a while. Now we are into the roll cast. There are only two types of casts. This is the other. Every cast has its roots in one or other of these.

First I'll describe the basic roll cast, teaching it and then I'll tell you exactly why we need it.

- With the line lying in front of us, we *slowly* sweep the rod tip up behind and to the side of us so that the tip of the rod is at about 45 degrees to the horizontal. (This actual position depends on

the stiffness of the rod. Stiffer rods should be slightly nearer the vertical; softer rods slightly further back).

- We want our hand to be level with our ear and slightly outside the elbow.
- The line must be laying half a rod length to the side of the body, and the rod should be leaned over so that its tip is directly above the line. The line will hang down beneath the tip and curve off towards the water. The rod and line resemble a capital 'D' and the line within this 'D' is cleverly called the 'D-loop'.

Karen: *It looks like a sail.*

Paul: *...or a big capital 'D'.*

Karen: *Well, it's a sail to me.*

- The end of the flyline should be lying stationary on the water (this bit of surface tension helps the cast). We are now ready for the forward cast.
- Flick the tip of the rod forwards. Think of that bounce feeling we created during false casting. Go for bounce (if you are having trouble generating this feel, try flicking a flyrod backwards and forwards in your hand without any line). It should feel springy. Emphasise this springy feeling for your roll cast. Hardly anyone gets this right BTW.
- The line should travel forwards forming a loop. As it does so, it will lift the remaining line off the surface. The line will straighten above the water, hover for a fraction of a second and drop gently to the water. As the line drops follow it down with the rod tip.

This is the roll cast.

We need it for straightening out a mess (if the line is in a heap, the roll cast will straighten it), for whenever we can't make a backcast (trees behind us or a really strong wind), for clearing a sinking line from below the surface and for a very important reason which will become clear very shortly (Mystery and suspense...)

### ***Roll Casting Faults***

The most common fault of all is a failure to use the bend in the rod effectively. The natural thing seems to be to try and lob the line out there, instead of flicking the rod. Forget all about the line, instead concentrate on the rod. Make it 'bounce'.

The most common faults are thus:

#### **The end of the line travels behind the caster and hooks around some bushes:**

The line was not slid slowly and gently across the water surface.

#### **The line goes out in a large circular loop and the end fails to straighten:**

Either a lobbing action was used instead of a flicking/bouncing movement, or the end of the line was not 'anchored' to the water surface.

#### **A bouncing feeling was felt and the loop travelled forwards but the line didn't straighten:**

Either not enough line in the D-loop / too much line on the water or not a crisp enough flick. The more line we can put in the D-loop the less force we need apply to the cast. You can stick more line in the D-loop very easily by reaching behind you with a straight arm, as you set the cast up (remember to position your hand level with your ear before you hit the forward cast).

**You hook yourself: :-)**

You failed to place the line half a rod length to the side.

NB a strong crosswind can blow the flyline into your body. Sometimes in the first lesson I teach how to deal with this predicament. However this is Karen's first lesson, and we didn't do this. Karen is left-handed and has excellent co-ordination with both hands, so instead of dealing with the wind in the usual fashion, I was more interested in developing ambidextrous flycasting ability. Left-handed people often (although not always) pick this up immediately. Dealing with awkward cross winds will be dealt with fully in lesson 2.

Now I wonder if Steve's left-handed too.

**Shooting Line**

Now that you have the feeling for the roll cast, I'd like to take you back to the overhead cast. Try and incorporate the bounce feeling that you felt in the roll cast. Remember the backcast! With the backcast you must make a crisp stop in order to send the line upward and behind. Beginners always seem to have trouble when going from roll to the overhead. Recap the overhead cast in your mind; lift, up-flick, pause, forward tap, follow through. Remember to start with the rod tip touching the water.

Once you have the overhead cast working again, it is time to start to try and cast a little further. Pull three or four yards of flyline off the reel and let this fall to your feet. The line is still trapped against your index finger remember. Now make an overhead cast concentrating on an abrupt stop in the *backcast*. On the forward delivery, after the stop, and not before, release the index finger.

If you get it right the momentum of the line travelling forwards will pull the spare line out through the rings. If you release too early the line shoots up through the rings, the rod uncompresses, some line wraps around the rod, other bits around your head, and you get the feeling that you have done something terribly wrong in your last life. If you release too late nothing happens. If you get an open loop, nothing happens.

Incidentally if you let the line slip through your finger during the lift element (or completely forget to trap it) lay it down as quickly as possible :-)

Make sure that you remember to lower the rod tip as the line is landing.

If it doesn't work the first time; don't worry, concentrate on the stop in the backcast (bit of a paradox that one) and remember to bounce the rod tip on the forward cast and not make some dramatic, yet ineffective, lunging motion.

Once you have successfully shot some line, you will need to bring it back in again:

Making certain that the rod tip is touching the water (so that if a fish does take you will feel him, and besides it's the best position for starting any cast), gently re-trap the line between the forefinger and the handle and pull the line in short 2 foot lengths from behind the finger. This is one method of moving the fly and making it look interesting and life-like to the fish.

You want to pull in enough line so that you have approximately 10 yards of flyline left on the water.

Now I'd like you to practise this. Continue overhead casting, shooting the line as you do so, and retrieving the line after each successful shoot.

The next stage is to go from trapping the line between your index finger and the handle, to holding it in your free hand. The position to place your free hand is in front of your chest. Make sure that you hold the line tightly between your forefinger and thumb. I would like you to consciously keep your hand here and not by your side, for at some point in the future you are going to use this free hand during the cast, and when you do so, it's going to be much easier to learn if it's already in the right place. (Good habits!)

Karen: [Can I take my hand out of my pocket now?](#)

### ***Putting it all together***

When we are actually fishing we often search the water using the fly. We do this by casting out and retrieving the fly back. Retrieving the line as in the last stage, is an effective means of doing so and is called 'stripping the fly'.

You could pull the fly all the way to the rod tip, but this is not a good situation to start a forward cast. In order to bend the rod it is important to have sufficient weight of line outside the rod tip.

So what we actually do is we pull the line until there is about 8 yards of flyline outside the tip ring, and then retrieve the rest of the distance by lifting the rod tip back until you are in the starting position for the roll cast. Then we roll cast the line out onto the water, and follow up with an overhead cast, shooting the spare line out again.

Once you can do this you can go fishing!

I'd like to draw your attention to a problem. Often you will find that a fish follows your fly in all the way and almost to your feet. You set up the roll cast and pause slightly to allow the tip of line to 'stick' to the water and then at this point, the fish suddenly finds his prey has stopped and he decides to eat it.

So how the hell do you set the hook? You can't strike backwards because of all the slack line in the D-loop. You can't *walk* backwards to take out this slack as there just isn't that sort of time. There is only one way to hook this fish. I have asked thousands of beginners this question. I have had the correct answer from about three of them. It's actually gotten to the stage where I don't expect the answer, and when I do get it I'm speechless. Karen left me speechless... and instantly.

The correct and only way to hook these fish is to immediately execute the roll cast. The momentum of the line travelling forwards will set the hook. I catch about one third of my fish this way. If you can learn to do it you will catch 50% more fish. Think about that! The short pause to allow the line time to anchor is critical incidentally, for not only is it necessary for the roll cast, but it also gives the fish time to open and close it's mouth!

Once you have successfully put this sequence together, you can aim your roll cast a little higher and instead of allowing the line to land on the water, pull it back immediately into an overhead cast.

Karen: [Why would you do this?](#)

Paul: [To avoid surface disturbance and because it's quicker.](#)

Many anglers will also false cast a few times in order to shoot a little bit more flyline outside the rod before the final delivery. One false cast is fine; it can allow you to shoot some extra line out (to start with, try this only after the stop on the forward cast). You will *not* cast further by making more than one false cast. The more false casting you do, the less time your flies are in the water, the more energy you waste and the more likely you are to scare the fish away.

The only time you can put lots of false casting to good effect is when drying floating flies.

## **After the Lesson**

You can now go fishing. We didn't. Well actually, I did, but I may as well not have done. Karen was more sensible and lay in the sun and took photos. But you are now in the position where you can go fishing.

If you do then please do one thing: WEAR SUNGLASSES.

If you are casting and you catch the hook in your eye you will lose your eye. The impact will very likely cause your eyeball to explode. I want you to think about that very carefully for a moment. I say this so that you will wear sunglasses. I always do and I *know* what I'm doing. I can cast really well and I always protect my eyes.



Also please be fully aware of your backcast. Children in particular are completely unaware of the dangers. Imagine how you'd feel if you hooked a child's eye.

Sorry for being graphic, but this is important stuff to get through.

Now I know that you are aware of the dangers and will be careful, however fishing is very absorbing and requires total concentration. It can be trance-like. Christ, it IS trance-like. For this very reason take care when passing behind another angler. Your backcast is going behind you 10 yards. An experienced caster can have a backcast travelling some 20 yards behind him. The safest option is to let him know you are there. A pleasant 'G'day mate' is often all it takes!

## **Practice**

Before your next lesson I expect you to practice. Go for that flycasting feeling. Try to fit in three to four hours of practice, half an hour to one hour at a time. Don't overdo it! Four hours all at once will just make you frustrated!

## **The Movie**

This is a short movie of Karen casting. It's worth downloading as it helps to give some atmosphere! It also explains something else...

## **Karen's appraisal**

Paul Arden and my 'Sexyloops' fly fishing experience

'How was my experience?' asks Paul.

Well, let me see now, 'my first experience?'

Mmm! After tracking through the mangroves of the Noosa river, and mind you! That so happened to be the long way around! So, I got in a little exercise on the way.

Hey guy's! That's my first paragraph ever, what do you think? You don't like it, that's okay! (I do) And guess what? This is my second paragraph! Anyway, the first lesson with Paul. Okay!

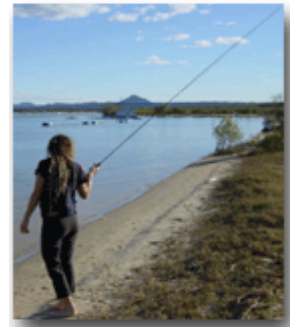
After the hike, we settled in to 'the' spot, Paul began to guide me through the practices of 'The Art of Fly Fishing'. I have in the past enjoyed line fishing, but this, fly technique of fishing is very creative, flowing, gentle and smooth as silk.

That's just my thoughts, but hey, this is my first time ever! My overhead cast 'does'! need a little work, and for the roll cast (that, does look like a sail) looks good...!

This first lesson was a lesson indeed. He is the best casting instructor in the world, but hey, what do I know, after all he is the only casting instructor I know!!

But seriously, I had a wonderful time, having my 'intro' to the world of fly fishing. Paul has a great talent with his methods for teaching, and plenty of patience!

Thanks Paul.



### **Paul's appraisal**

The teaching Karen experience

So OK, I showed Karen the mangroves. You know what they say about men: that we never get lost; we only explore alternative destinations. And the mangroves *are* nice.

Karen picked up the technique quickly - thank goodness :-)

She's left-handed which I think is an advantage. Most left-handed pupils I get pick up right handed casting very quickly. This is probably due to their initial attempts with the pen. But hey, what do I know; I'm right-handed!

Anyway I taught myself to cast with the left hand a couple of years ago - that's an article in it's own right. It took about 5 yrs to crack and can still annoy the hell out of me.

Karen's overhead cast had the usual beginners faults, mainly the low backcast windmill look-a-like display. The roll cast she picked up instantly, even if she does think that it looks like a sail.

I don't think I'm being sexist here, just making an observation, but women, in my experience, pick up the flycasting feeling quicker than men. I'm looking forward to Karen's second lesson. Now she has to go away and practice what she's learnt.

Thanks Karen!

## **1a Teaching Steve**

Steve has been busy practising hard with his flycasting in the park at lunchtimes. We have had a few emails backwards and forwards. Here is the discussion...

**Steve:** In general it *\*could\** have been seen as a pretty depressing experience but what I found was that I was taking a deconstructionist type approach probably as a result of conversations on the BB and between us and that remark you made about feeling the line unfolding with the mind. I practiced in a field which has 6 inch rough grass and mole hills so there was a lot of 'drag' on the line. I will need a new line after this ! I will also be doing this again today in a part of the same field where the horses have been so it is nicely trampled ( but there will be fresh mole hills! ) .

Immediate remarks are that I've never started with so much line out before when I started to think about it. I *\*think\** this actually revealed a tendency to overpower the act of casting throughout. The first 10 minutes were pretty wild. Since I never normally start with fully 10 yards 'out there' I showed

myself how much power I tend to put in the act of casting. That's a conclusion that was very much in my mind all the time actually. However; would this be a correct assessment to make 'on one's own' ?

**Paul:** This is interesting. With less than ten yards you are not going to fully load the rod.

You are going to have to forget a lot of what you have read on this site. But when it clicks it will all fall into place. The 10 yds will definitely make a difference and allow you to feel the rod bend

**Steve:** In a perfect cast should the rod 'stop' at the vertical or just past it?

By 'stop' do you mean actually motionless?

**Paul:** Past it. (about 1a m !) and Yes!

Keeping it as simple as possible, for now, what actually matters is the direction the tip of the rod travels. It should travel at an angle of approximately 30 degrees to the horizontal on the backcast stroke, and perfectly horizontal on the forward cast (under perfect conditions). It doesn't matter whereabouts you actually stop the rod. Indeed because rods vary in how much they bend, and since you can actually choose how much they bend, the actual positioning of the stop can vary.

Which is why I avoid the usual clockface analogy.

By stop I do actually mean motionless. Albeit for an instant. The rod must stop crisply for an effective cast.

**Steve:** What's the best position of the hand in relation to the wrist when performing the upward cast? You mention squeezing the hand towards the stop. My hand and wrist tends to be somewhat 'stiff' the entire time.

**Paul:** Whatever you find most comfortable; it's up to you. Mine is fully cocked over. You are a bit like me in as much as you have to dissect every little piece and analyse it, and then carefully put it back together again. I had a swimming coach (female) who said to me in a moment of absolute frustration, 'you bloody men, you just have to know everything, don't you? When you teach a woman how to swim she's not interested in the little things, just the feeling'. Well I want to know exactly what angle my hand should be at when it passes my body....

Ok I'm going to teach you something I have never read anywhere. It's a very important part of my cast. Place your hand in front of you palm facing directly upwards. Now cock the wrist backwards. Place a pen in your hand like the rod. Rotate from the elbow so that the rod is about 60 degrees. This is how I cast. Go and try it. Let me know what you think.

If your hand is stiff when you cast take the rod out and shake your hand about. Then try again.

**Steve:** I have a tendency to 'push' ( which I think is also the result of end gaining BTW – *reference to flycasting and visualisation where the Alexander Technique comes up -Paul* ) which means that when starting the forward movement my shoulder seems to 'lean into' it a little bit or 'push' the rod. Not at all sure about vocabulary here.

In one of your early videos you perform what really looks like a 'chopping' motion where the force \*seems\* to be following the direction of the elbow. Should my hand therefore be moving more quickly downwards in the forward cast?

I think I've translated this right. I took notes whilst doing this and they look a bit fractured now.

**Paul:** OK \*I\* think that pulling is a better motion. I use it. Mostly. However when casting a purely tip action rod like the XP say, then I will push. But THAT is for Ron. (as they say over here).

Try this. Put your right foot forward and put your weight on the back foot. When casting consciously come downwards and not forwards. If downwards doesn't work think 'around': rotate the shoulder and \*do not\* extend the elbow; keep it locked.

Don't think 'quickly'. Never think quickly with the rod arm. Think \*heavy\*. Feel for the bend in the rod.

**Steve:** In a previous email you wrote:

*'You are a bit like me in as much as you have to dissect every little piece and analyse it, and then carefully put it back together again. I had a swimming coach (female) who said to me in a moment of absolute frustration, 'you bloody men, you just have to know everything, don't you? When you teach a woman how to swim she's not interested in the little things, just the feeling'. Well I want to know exactly what angle my hand should be at when it passes my body....'*

Which of course makes it perfect for the experience. 2 totally different people and situations and ..... genders It is interesting though because whilst performing an action I find that my mind is trying to cover all the angles at the same time. Well at least when I'm doing this that is.

It's like yesterday I had a turn of the head to look at the backcast unrolling ( quite mesmerising actually ) and meanwhile another part of me is going ' Now what's my f'ing hand doing ? '

More on this later.... :-)

**Paul:** I still get this actually! There comes a time when you get so caught up in the mechanics and theory that you have to forget all about it and just do it! You will never completely relax when you are thinking about what you are doing, therefore it follows that in order to make the perfect cast one must forget everything. There's something for your wife! (*Steve's wife teaches the Alexander Technique – Paul*)

Now on to lesson 2....

## Lesson 2 – 'I'm freezing!'

My main objective with Karen's second lesson was to improve her confidence with the overhead cast. Although pupils always start their second lesson with a few crap casts, they seem to all of a sudden jump ahead and it 'clicks'. Lesson one is about understanding something completely new. Lesson two is really about enhancing feeling and confidence. Of course, I also wanted to teach Karen something new as well and so I decided it would be a good time to introduce the wind. So I arranged for some.

### ***Casting into the...***

Karen: *Icy cold winter breeze. I'm freezing!*

The first stage was a review of the overhead cast. There are 5 components:

1. Starting with 10 yds of flyline lying straight in front and the tip of the rod touching the water, slowly lift the rod. The entire line should move as well as the fly at the end.
2. Pick the line up and flick it upwards
3. Wait until the loop straightens. The line should straighten out behind and be horizontal.
4. Make the forward cast. It is very much like flicking an apple off the top of the rod. Make the movement too sudden and it drops off behind you. A slinging action is a nice description.
5. Lower the rod tip as the loop straightens out and the line lands on the water.

There are two things to concentrate on when practising:

1. Make a high back (up) cast. Imagine that you are going to cast the line vertically upwards.
2. Sling the apple out there.

Karen's first few casts with lesson two were fairly typical for a beginner. Which was good :-)

### ***Crosswinds***

Often a beginner can get away with a low back cast by choosing where to cast. Karen didn't have this luxury and I arranged for the wind to blow directly on shore. This emphasised any low backcasts. A low backcast will result in either a high forward cast, or an open loop. Stick either out into or across the wind and you're in for some fun!

We started with a crosswind. It is critical to get a high backcast. When casting with any sort of wind something psychological goes on. The pupil thinks 'hell, this is going to be hard' and automatically tenses up and attempts to force the line out there.

This doesn't work (as we all know). It is important with a cross-wind to consciously relax, make a high backcast (lift the elbow into the stroke) and *don't think about the wind*.

I was telling Karen this, and trying to get her to imagine that she had to throw a vertical upcast, when it clicked and she made her best cast so far.

Of course it went straight into a 'snag'.

### ***Snags!***

There are two sorts of snags. The first is behind you. The second is in front. Both can be either above or below the water surface, although if you hook one behind you and it's below the surface then this is

a good indication that you have made a serious cock-up somewhere and would be well advised to give up flyfishing and stay at home.

Karen: How can you hook it below the surface on the backcast?

Paul: Well, you could have a low backcast, the fly could land on the water, and then, during the pause, sink and hook a snag.

Karen: But what if there is no water behind you?

Paul: Then you should definitely have stayed at home.

Karen: That's your answer to everything.

Some snags are stationary. Some are not. Sheep for example would generally be regarded as 'moving snags', especially once snagged.

Karen: Here (in Australia) snags are also sausages.

Bulls are another example of a moving snag. If you hook one of these you would be well advised to drop your rod and run like hell.

Karen: And forget all about the barbie.

### ***Working the fly free***

Stationary snags are the most common. The way to deal with a stationary snag is firstly to try and ease the fly free. Point the rod directly at the obstacle and pull the line *gently*. Take care to apply some downwards pressure on the rod. If you are not careful, and even if you are, the fly can suddenly free and the stretch in the line will flick the fly very quickly towards you. Wear sunglasses at all times and keep your mouth shut.

If the slow stretch doesn't work, release the tension and feed some more line out. Take that line and form a D-loop, and roll cast the loop directly at the snag. This often works.

If it doesn't try the slow pull again but this time with some more 'oomph'.

Working between the roll cast and the slow pull often frees the fly. If this doesn't work you might have to walk up to the fly and release it yourself.

When this is impossible you can swim out to retrieve your fly, otherwise break it off. Point the rod directly at the snag and pull. Duck. If you are lucky you might still get your fly back. If you are unlucky it will hook you.

A very useful thing when your fly is up a tree is to use the tip of the rod as a disgorging. It works very well. Just poke the fly about with the tip of the rod. I unhook small fish this way.

Paul: But not up trees.

Oh and it sure helps if you are barbless. I *always* fish barbless; you hook more fish when you do.

Karen: Baa!

## **Dealing with a crosswind (wrong shoulder)**

Karen is left-handed and ambidextrous. When she encounters a wind that threatens to send a low cast into her, she can simply cast with the other hand. This is the ideal situation. It took me a very long time to learn how to cast with my other hand. It takes dedicated practice. Casting simultaneously with two identical rods is a nice way of learning to do this incidentally.

Anyway Steve is right-handed. I don't think he is ambidextrous, although I'm sure he could learn if he put his mind to it. In the meantime I'm going to introduce another simpler way of overcoming an awkward crosswind.

Simply by taking the tip of the rod over to the other shoulder we can send the line safely off to the other side.

There are two ways of doing this:

1. What I consider to be the American way: Tilt the hand, and nothing else, and cast as per normal. This makes hauling easier (something for a later lesson) but doesn't do it for me (I like to rotate the elbow when casting and I can't do this when using this technique).
2. The other method is to take the hand up to the other ear. When doing this, it is good practice to keep the back of the hand on top of the rod. This seems to both make the cast easier and give you a higher backcast.

I was taught to use the second method, incidentally, and one of the 'drills' I had to practise was to cast right ear, forehead, left ear. The idea being with the forehead bit, is that if you were to take the rod too far backwards, you would hit your head and that would remind you to stop sooner.

Pretty subtle I'm sure you'll agree.

## **AFTM**

When casting, the rod acts as a flexible lever. For the purposes of 'thinking' about casting it helps to think about flexing the rod. This is what gives 'feel'. The caster flexes the rod by moving the rod tip against the flyline mass.

You will probably have noticed that the rod has a whole bunch of writing just above the handle. I certainly hope so, otherwise are *you* going to have some fun! Somewhere in amongst that text you should find the AFTM number. AFTM #4 would be an example. Sometimes the rod has a range of numbers AFTM #7-9 say.

AFTM stands for the Association of Fishing Tackle Manufacturers. AFTMA stands for the American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Association. Just in case you were wondering.

The AFTM is a scale of line weights. The heavier the line, the greater the AFTM number. The manufacturers weigh the first 10 yards excluding the level tip and rate the line according to the table.

### **AFTM Table**

<b>AFTM number</b>	<b>In grains (range)</b>	<b>In grams</b>	<b>In ounces</b>
<b>3</b>	100 +/- 6	6.48	0.228
<b>4</b>	120 +/- 6	7.78	0.274
<b>5</b>	140 +/- 6	9.07	0.32

6	160 +/- 8	10.42	0.366
7	185 +/- 8	11.99	0.422
8	210 +/- 8	13.61	0.48
9	240 +/- 10	15.55	0.55
10	280 +/- 10	18.14	0.64
11	330 +/- 12	21.38	0.75
12	380 +/- 12	24.62	0.86

Incidentally, there is some controversy with regards to very end of the flyline. The level tip on some lines can be as much as 2 ft. This, I believe, was an industry standard. I have also heard that it was also a manufacturing fault and the level tip should in fact only be 6 inches.

The point of all this is that the flyline AFTM should match the rod's AFTM.

If you were to put an 8 weight line on a 4 weight rod you would probably break the rod. You would certainly overload the rod and make it feel slow and sluggish.

If you were to put a 4 weight line on an eight weight rod you probably would find that the rod failed to bend very much and the casting would be crap.

### ***However life is more interesting:***

The first point is that all quality rods have a progressive action. This means that the greater the mass used to bend the rod, the more the rod flexes. Therefore you can force a greater flex into the rod by either casting with a heavier line, or by aerialising more line outside the rod tip. Up until now we have been casting with 10 yds of flyline. Aerialising an extra 1 ½ yds of AFTM6 is the equivalent of 10 yds of AFTM7.

This alone is not very interesting until I tell you that the greater the flex in the rod, the further the cast. Of course you can still overdo things and overload the rod. If you stick too much weight outside the tip ring, at best you will make the rod sluggish ('soggy' for the technicians out there), at worst you will destroy your rod (either it will break just above the handle, beneath the handle, or at some other place altogether!)

We can get thoroughly involved in the AFTM system and disappear in to some dark black hole and at some point I certainly would like to do this. Believe it or not, it can get very interesting, especially when you realise that by dropping the AFTM number and aerialising more line you can bend the rod just as fully as otherwise, but you now have a thinner and therefore more aerodynamic flyline.

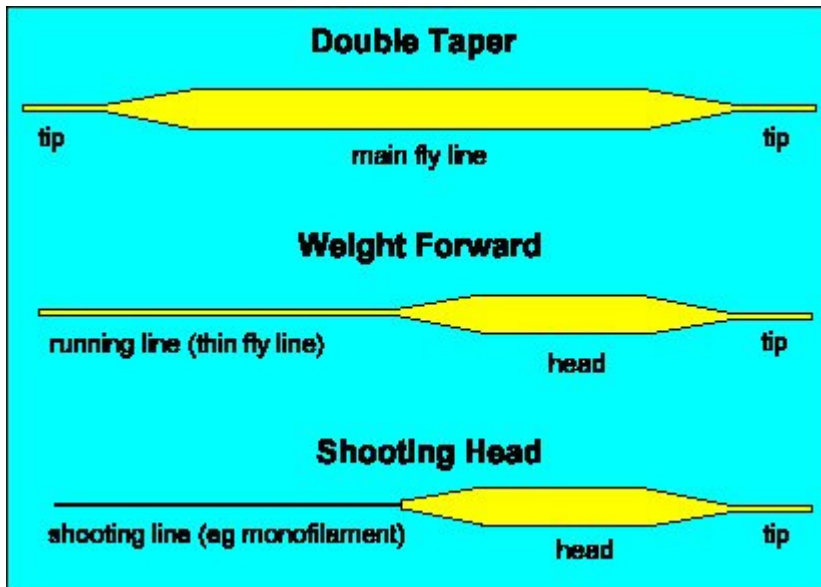
I've been paid in the past to assess rods and give them an AFTM number, and I can tell you that multiple ratings are bollox. ALL rods can be used to cast a variety of line weights, this is so that you can cast 5 ft and 105 ft. What the AFTM of a rod should tell you is what the assessor thinks is the best line fit for that rod and its intended purpose. This is one of the things you spend your money on when you buy a rod. Quality rods are correctly rated. Many rods, especially those originating from outside the US, are very ambitious in their line ratings.

Now that you have an understanding of the AFTM scale I'd like to briefly touch on some other properties of flylines...

## The flyline

The first thing I would like to talk about is the taper of the flyline. Believe it or not this is why I have introduced the AFTM system. All will become clear.

Flylines come in different profiles. There is the Double Taper, the Weight Forward and the Shooting Head.



I use a WF for virtually all my fishing. It has the advantage that the running line is thinner than the DT, and yet not so thin that it tangles as in the case of the SH.

Not all WF profiles are the same. Most importantly some are longer than others. The traditional length, however, is 10 yds. Aerialise much more than this ten yards and the line hinges and collapses (there are advanced techniques allowing you to aerialise the shooting line, but this is lesson 2...!).

Not only will you find the overhead cast difficult if you go into this thin line, but the roll cast is extremely hard.

DT lines have a following. It's a bit of a cult thing. They are pretty good if you want to make long roll casts, or if you are trying to make fancy slack line casts at long range. They also can be reversed when one end wears out, or so I'm told.

SH are great for long distance casts. If you are hoping to cast 50 yds plus then this is going to be the line for you.

As well as different profiles they also come in different densities. Some float, others sink. For now we are using floaters. They are easier, you can see your mistakes, and for practising the last thing you need is a line that disappears beneath the surface the moment it touches down.

So what does this all mean then?

## Tackle choice

So stiffer rods require heavier lines to flex them. The question is, how does one decide what is suitable for you? The answer is in the fly!

Small flies require thin tippets (the bit of leader material which attaches the fly to the rest of the leader). Big flies, on the otherhand, require both thick tippets and a heavy mass of flyline to carry them out there. Small flies are great for small streams. Large flies are great for the salt.

As a general guide I'll use a 4-weight for river fishing, a 6-weight as a general all-round trout fishing outfit, an 8-weight for general saltwater use and 10's and upwards for heavy saltwater / salmon fishing.

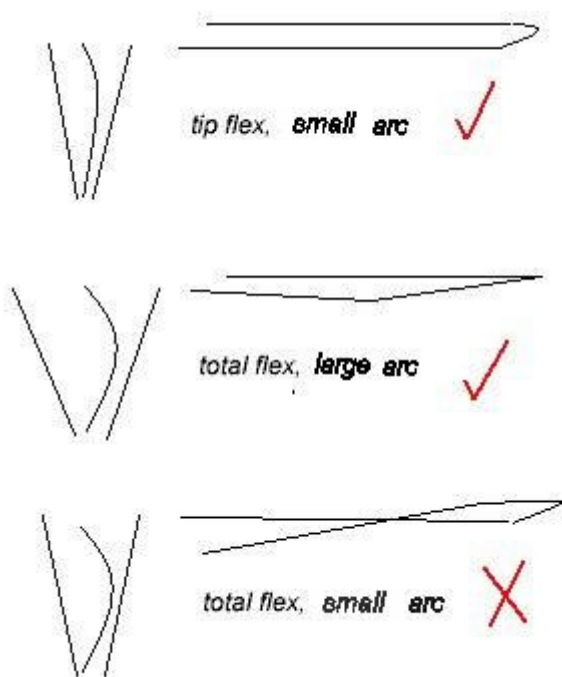
### **And so what of rod lengths?**

I use 9ft rods. The ultimate length for distance casting is 9ft 3 inches (I read somewhere) but this depends on technique and build. Longer rods allow greater line control *after* the line has landed. Shorter rods are superb for casting in tight overgrown places.

A good starting rod is a 9ft rod for either a 5 weight line (if you are mainly river fishing) or a 6 weight for general use. For reservoir bank fishing a 9 foot 6 inch AFTM 7 is standard.

If you are going to fish flies the size of turkeys you are going to need an AFTM15 and a broomstick

### **Casting further**



By increasing the flex in the rod, we increase the velocity it imparts upon the line. We can do this by aerialising more flyline. We can also do this by applying more power to the stroke. Either way, as soon as you increase the flex in the rod, you must increase the size of the casting arc to accommodate this, otherwise you get a tailing loop.

When you try this think 'heavy' not 'fast'. Stop hard into the backcast. And let it fly on the forward shoot.

Remember to retrieve that shot line back in again afterwards.

I got Karen to practice a few roll casts and then the sequence (roll cast, false cast, shoot).

And then it was time to face the wind....

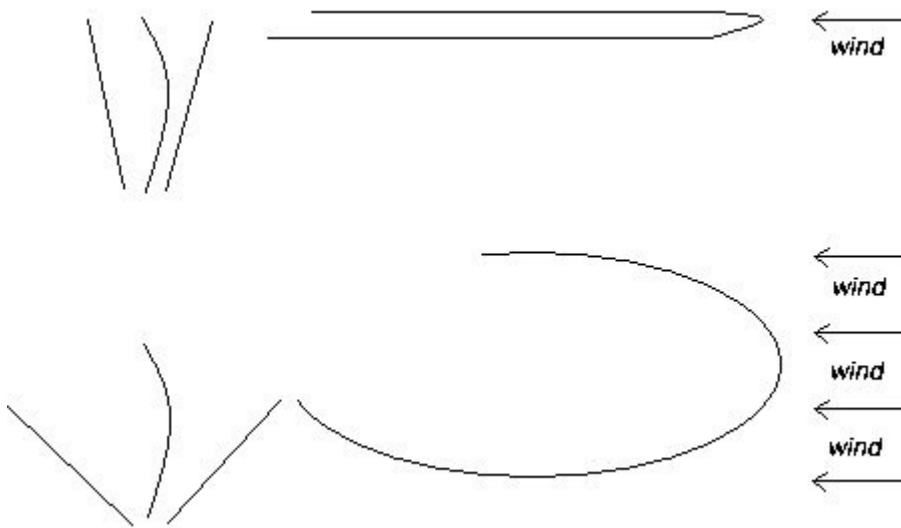
### **Into the wind**

In the case of the traditional overhead cast, we are aiming for the loop to straighten out, on the forward cast, at a height of approximately 3 to 4 feet above the surface of the water and then, lightly descend as one, landing ever so gently upon the water. This is an ideal world of course, and so everything is possible.

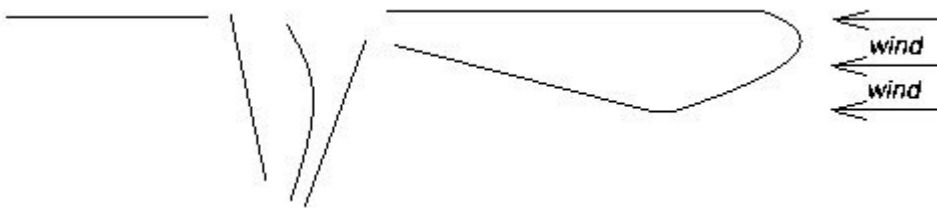
Bung this into the wind and it's another story. The line straightens out, and before it has a chance to land, the wind whips it up and delivers it straight back to your feet.

Brute force follows shortly after.

I did a truly fantastic demo with Karen (even if I do say so myself) where by applying superior force (and most importantly a large rod arc) I demonstrated how the line would end up in a crumpled mess at my feet, and then with the lightest of touches and a narrow loop, I sent the line out straight as a die into the wind. Of course I normally get paid for this sort of thing (I think she was impressed!)



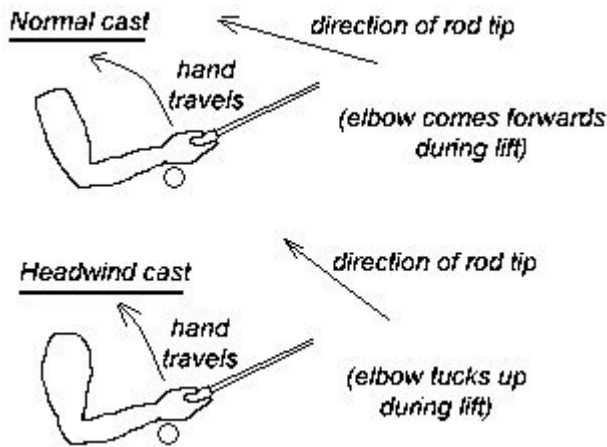
Anyway the real issue is angles. We want to angle our forward cast low so that when the loop straightens the line is on the water, and not some 3 to 4 feet above it. If you do this with a horizontal backcast, you throw an open loop on the forward cast. Bad move. The backcast and forward cast should be diametrically opposite.



This means that in order to cast the line onto the water, one must angle the backcast so that it straightens at an angle above the horizontal.



The best way to do this is to 'tuck up'. Instead of making the lift element by lifting the hand and elbow forwards as one normally does, try hunching the shoulder and lifting the elbow directly upwards. This changes the angle the hand makes during the backstroke, and therefore the angle the rod travels.



I have also made a short 10 second movie...

### ***Headwind casting faults***

Ignoring all the other overhead faults, it's actually rather simple.

#### **Line lands in a heap at your feet:**

Either an open loop (narrow the stroke, forget about applying power, this is time for technique baby) or the forward cast was high (concentrate on a high backcast; tuck up and cast upwards, not backwards).

#### **Line lands on the water, straight but splashy:**

Wow, don't think I've ever seen this, but it is possible... and is too low a forward cast.

At first Karen really struggled with this. It was pretty damn windy. Fortunately with my classic demo I was able to show her that it had nothing to do with strength. Immediately, her next cast was perfect. As was every cast which followed :-)

Paul: *Now you are flycasting. Well done!*

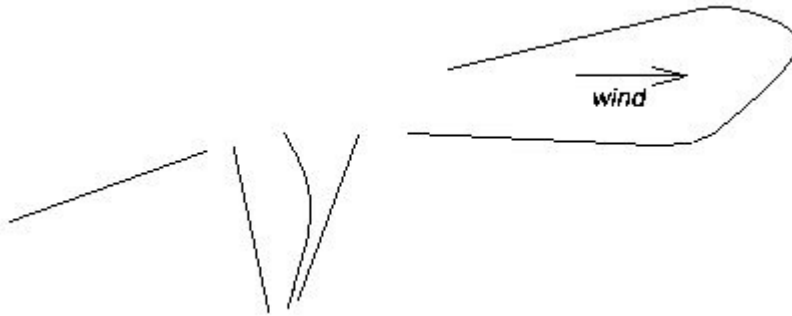
Karen: *Thank you!*

### ***Tailing winds***

When presented with a tailing wind, the casting stroke required is quite the reverse; a low back cast followed by high forward cast. You can angle this one like a javelin. And that's not all! An open loop on the forward cast catches the wind (like a sail!) and actually assists our cast.

The only problem can be the low backcast. Sheep and other snags can often be found down there.

When fishing out of boats 'loch style' in the UK, virtually all casts are along these lines. This can have a negative effect on the angler's casting especially when they return to bank fishing.



### **After the lesson**

Karen is ready to go fishing. Seeing as how I am having such great success in the salt what with breaking rods, and getting flattened by large breakers, I'm hoping to take Karen out very shortly. I might get her to bring her surfboard along as, although we have arranged for her to be given a couple of rods, they have yet to arrive and so we still only have one rod between us. (Sponsor take note) :-)

Anyway we also have a couple of videos. Teaching Karen is great fun as this video should truly attest. She is of course, like all Australians, completely mad, but this is something with which I have become familiar. After a while you just pretend not to notice

In an unsuspecting moment she also took one of me. I actually prefer these movies to the other ones I am busy taking as they are 'real' and not set-up.

Karen: HA! HA! Paul in his natural state. Always the best is the unexpected. I must say an excellent cast.

Paul: Worth breaking down at the end to watch the casting stoke...

### **Karen's after the lesson comments**

As Paul and I approach our destination of lesson two:

“OOOOPS” We have done it again, the decision whether to go on, or to go back, became very apparent after Paul had remembered 'petrol', and the gauge showing empty. And so just as the long way around was great for my exercise, the scenic drive through the woodland was, well..... 'scenic of course' .

Reaching the destination:

In reaching the destination we have become aware that the breeze is onshore and quite strong, but do you think that discouraged us, no way! Onwards we go..... It is FREEZING! Paul decided to take advantage of this natural condition. The lesson then became casting into the wind. I will tell you, it is very difficult indeed, for a learner of course.

The lesson involved revision of the forward cast and the roll cast. I found I really needed to revise. It did take me some time before I had confidence in my casting ability. Casting into the wind was very competitive. It took, it seemed, forever to perform a good cast, or, should I say, the best cast I am capable of at this stage (which, is rather good, I think).

I have mentioned before that I have the pleasure of being able to use either hand, under different conditions. To my surprise, after practising for so long casting into the wind, I found that using the less

dominant hand was more useful than using my dominant hand, since the less dominant (the right) hand, is much more gentle. Therefore, the cast was excellent.

Anyway, put a snag on the barbie.....!

### ***Paul's after the lesson comments***

See???? Completely barking!

Look I didn't forget about the petrol (totally). It just so happened that I *remembered* the fact that my car uses petrol, albeit some 5 miles *past* the last petrol station. And so we had to go back. With regards to the scenic woodland walk: I often find it appropriate to take beginners for a relaxing stroll before the rigours of flycasting. And besides I *like* woodlands.

Yes it was windy. Karen, of course, thinks that we arrived facing the wind by accident. Who am I to tell her otherwise?

At first she found it very challenging. However as soon as she had mastered it (and believe me, you have never seen such determination) her confidence knew no bounds. I was delighted (or 'stoked' to use one of her surfing expressions).

The left hand / right hand bit *is* interesting. Although her right hand was definitely her best casting hand this lesson, last lesson it was her left hand! The fact that she has grasped the concept that flycasting is a skill and not a matter of brute force, takes her to a new level: she can now flycast.

Now we have to stick a fly on the end...

## Lesson 3 – 'Get out there - you stupid son-of-a-bitch'

In this lesson we continue improving Karen's casting, by introducing a tailing wind and a fuller understanding of exactly how fly fishing works. Concepts such as retrieving the fly to make it look interesting and lifelike, as well as an understanding of how to play and handle fish are also introduced.

**This is lesson 3 of The Experience...**

As a bit of a prelude to this lesson I decided to give a short but poignant demonstration as to the importance of selecting a suitable fly fishing venue, as the following video will attest... 'Wipe Out'.

So we went somewhere else.

### **Setting up**

This time Karen assembled the rod. I mean, as much as I'd like to always be there to assist Karen on her fishing sorties (is there any straight guy who wouldn't?), there are going to be times when this is just not possible. So, just like every other pupil, it is important that she becomes completely self-sufficient. So I flung the rod tube on the ground in a dramatic manner and took on a meaningful facial expression.



Of course, it's one thing to do this with paying pupils, it's quite another to do this with a friend. An exciting argument ensued, the result of which, saw me going for a short stroll through the woods and Karen doing a bit of 'sunbaking'. I should point out that this is not normally part of lesson 3, and is currently only available by special request and never in the UK.

Karen, of course, assembled the rod expertly using the correct methods as demonstrated in lesson 1.

### **Karen's casting and The Experience**

It's now time for an honest appraisal of Karen's casting. It's good. Of course it should be, I mean I'm teaching her, right? However considering that she hasn't had any in-between lesson practise, that the lessons have been over a month apart, and that the rod has lost 6 inches off the tip section; I am damned impressed. So what we have here is no normal pupil. This, of course, was not the idea. The idea behind The Experience was to have a typical pupil. Not some gifted natural. Still if it makes me look good, then all the better...

What Karen does lack, however, is self-confidence. Considering the circumstances, this is not surprising. All she has, with which to judge her abilities, are my abilities. I've been a mad flyfisher for over twenty years. I've been taught by some of the best instructors worldwide. Of course I'm going to make it look easy. This is my living and my life. I have spent far more hours with a flyrod in my hand than doing anything else.

This is also Queensland Australia. This is not some small stillwater in the UK. If it was the UK, I'd be able to show her just how well she is doing. As it is she just has to take my word for it. This inevitably leads to problems. She thinks that I'm telling her that she's doing well in order to raise her confidence. Well I'm not like that. She is doing well. This girl has been flycasting three times; throws nice loops, and sticks 20 yards plus of flyline out there without too much thought.

She is without doubt one of the quickest pupils I've taught. So I have to ask myself why? In effect what is it that makes a natural flycaster a *natural*?

I know that I'm not a natural flycaster. People who think that I am a 'natural' have no concept of the work that has gone in. There are naturals out there. I have met a few. They are very few. I am not one of them.

And they are mainly women. It has to do with something with which many men struggle. That something is called 'feel'. Karen is a 'feeler'. I grew up a 'see-er'. I have to see things in order to grasp them. I analyse problems in my mind and then solve them analytically. This is why this site is so technical. And why at university I studied engineering.

I'm changing. I am consciously becoming a feeler. I have been doing this for about 3 years with my flycasting. And my casting has transformed in that time, as has my teaching. I am also doing this with the rest of my life. I am letting go. But I digress slightly.

A few years ago I was fortunate enough to spend some time with Mel Krieger. Mel isn't very well known in the UK. Which is a shame. He is a great caster and one of the best instructors I've met. He's also a really nice guy. Mel teaches for the 'engineers' and the 'artists'. He actually differentiates between the two. It is a wonderful concept.

Flycasting instructors really have to know both the mechanics and the feel. This is flycasting. And is what makes it so fascinating. Science and art blended together. Just like life.

And this is why Karen throws beautiful loops but is still confused as to how exactly it all comes together.

Frankly this is what, for me, makes The Experience. It's not that we are using the Internet in a new way – Sure, I'm teaching a pupil and posting these lessons exactly as they occur on my site, using this information to teach another pupil in a separate country, and posting these lessons on site to teach the world. This truly is something pretty incredible. But what really makes The Experience, for me, is my learning. By teaching Karen, and us both taking notes, I can really analyse my teaching methods. I am the instructor and I'm learning.

In this particular lesson 'Get out there – you stupid son-of-a-bitch!' I believe that I actually learned more than Karen.

### **How it works**

It's amazing what you take for granted. In this lesson I have had to break down precisely how fly fishing works. When fly fishing we are imitating something that fish eat. We are not using bait. There is no blood or fish gut smell. Viking ancestry will get you nowhere.

Karen: **Actually Paul, aren't there fish that only go on smell for there food?**

Paul: **Damn, I was hoping to sneak that one in.**

It is often necessary to draw attention to your fly. We achieve this through 'movement'.

I guess most people will have watched cats hunt, or play at hunting; movement stimulates them. Poke your finger from underneath the duvet and the cat will poise. The sudden movement will focus all of its attention. Wiggle it around a bit and it will prepare to leap. Stop the movement and the cat will strike. This is *exactly* how fish operate. It is the *movement* that draws the attention and creates the urge to strike. And the cat most often strikes at the moment when the movement either stops, or starts. It is the *change* that is important.

In flyfishing it is the movement of the flies that draws the attention of the fish. Of course we don't always have to make this movement ourselves. Often water movement will do this for us. Wave action

and currents can provide the most realistic actions. We can take this further still, by incorporating mobile materials in the fly dressing. These materials pulsate and wiggle in the water, giving a greater resemblance of life.

So when fly fishing, we need to cast the fly out to the fish and move it in an enticing manner.

For much of this time we are 'fishing the water'. This means that we are searching the water for fish, by casting the fly out and retrieving it back in a lifelike manner, to our feet. This is very much like the spin fisherman. We cast out and retrieve, fishing all the likely looking spots – 'snags' are good locations. However I personally feel, that flyfishing actually gives more control over movement than spin fishing. Most plugs and spoons have to be moved quickly, and although baitfish can move rather quickly, they also hang around, doing not-a-lot for extended periods of time. Flyfishing gives *me* more control.

Of course one of the most exciting things in fishing is the knowing that you are actually casting to a fish. Sometimes you get to see the fish, at others you just get to see signs of a fish, such as an unusual disturbance of the water. However, with the exception of trout fishing in spring creeks and chalk streams, for most of the time we are actually fishing blind.

The procedure is to cast the fly out and retrieve it *all the way* to our feet. There are two reasons for this. The first is that often there are fish lying very close in, the other is that fish will sometimes follow a fly all the way to the bank, waiting until the very last moments before deciding to take. There are specific ways of catching fish that follow the fly and we will be discuss these later in this lesson.

The reason that I take you through this theory is that I want there to be no misunderstanding as to why we firstly roll cast and then overhead cast. Karen was uncertain, and I watch many anglers' fish without this knowledge.

Karen: *With myself never having seen anyone fly fish before, it is of course hard to grasp the concept. It was great to go through all the procedures, the whys and the if and buts.*

Simply, if you fail to leave sufficient flyline outside the rod tip, you will struggle with the overhead cast. The *only* way to fish the fly to your feet is to raise the rod tip and slowly sweep it behind you. This will enable you to retrieve the fly to your feet *and* allow you to keep sufficient line outside the tip to bend the rod.

You now find yourself with a loop of line off to your side forming a D-loop. You must now flick this line out in front of you before you can make the overhead cast. This flicking of the line out is a roll cast and is a very essential part of the flyfishing sequence.

In lesson 1 I asked the question what to do if the fish takes *after* you have set up the D-loop. To which Karen (to my great surprise) answered quite correctly; you execute the roll cast. The momentum of the line travelling forwards sets the hook.

### ***Line control during flycasting***

The Experience is not just about teaching Karen or Steve; it is also about the analysis of flycasting instruction methods. It is also perfectly honest. There are no hidden agendas here. Everything that is written in these pages *really* happened and as they appear here. Nothing has been omitted.

When I teach flycasting, I initially teach the pupil to trap the line between the cork handle and the index. This stops the line slipping off the reel then, once the initial casts have been made, and focuses the pupils attention on the timing of the release of the line when shooting line. The finger operates like a trigger.

Later on after a modicum of line control has been enabled, I then switch teaching so that the line is then held in the free hand.

Karen: *Why?*

This is where life became rather interesting. I had always taken it for granted that holding line in the free hand offers greater control. If that was the case, then why do I teach it to be trapped beneath the index finger? So this cannot be the reason.

I thought "well, maybe it's to allow greater control when shooting only a small amount of line during false casting." But this also is not the reason since I try to teach fly casting with the absolute minimum amount of false casting. False casting is time consuming, spooks fish and is often unnecessary.

So I had to analyse my methods. There are two reasons.

The first is that, with experience, holding the line in the free hand does allow more control during the shoot, specifically if the caster requires the shoot to be finished prematurely in order to turn the flies over. There are times when the forward momentum of the line is not enough to enable the loop to completely unfurl. An experienced caster can recognise this and check the forward momentum of the bottom part of the loop, forcing the remaining energy to be used in turning the loop over. This is called 'checking the shoot' and is also useful for short-range accuracy.

The second reason is that the free hand can be used to make what we describe as a 'haul'. This technique uses the free hand to pull the line back through the rings during either the forward or backstrokes, and enables far greater velocity to be imparted to the line.

To this end I gave a short demonstration, where by casting without a haul, I threw approx 20 yards of line, and then by utilising a haul I chucked another 15 or so. There was no difference between rod-arm actions. The only difference was the use of an effective haul.

Karen has not yet reached the stage where I can teach her hauling. Shortly I will be able to do this, much to many readers excitement :-)

Karen: *I personally can't wait because where I am fishing I need to be able to get the line out further, so as you can imagine, it is very annoying to be only able to cast a short distance.*

So the question is why do I still want Karen to hold the flyline in the free hand? Basically I think I am trying to instil a feeling for the use of the free hand in flycasting, so that when I do introduce hauling it will not feel quite so unnatural.

When spin fishing or beach casting one doesn't use the free hand to hold line. The only reason we do so in flycasting is because it either facilitates a more controlled shoot or it allows the use of hauling.

Now that I understand this I must now make a more conscientious effort to teach this fact in a clearer manner.

### ***Tailing winds***

Last lesson I arranged for a headwind. This week I chose a tailing wind. I mean, these lessons have to flow together, this is Sexyloops after all and it's what everyone has come to expect.

So I checked out Karen's casting for a little while. In teaching there is always an analogy that works best for each individual. Perhaps, for the forward stroke, it may be slinging an apple off the rod tip. That's a good one, but it doesn't work for everyone. Some people are best imagining that they are throwing a dart. Some like to chop with a meat-cleaver. Karen flicks the tip.

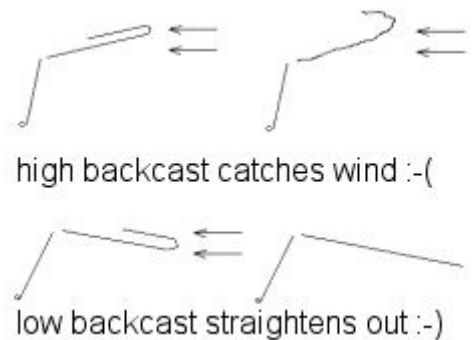
It's interesting this bit of a human psyche. As an instructor I just run through the list (and there are others) until we find the one that works best. Then whenever the casting starts to suck, I just say; 'pop the top!' or 'stab the beast!' or 'sling the old lady!' Often I can actually tell what will work for a person before we go casting. Thing is, it's all the same movement. Isn't the human mind an amazing thing? Or just rather odd.

Whatever, I'm also a flick of the tip kind of guy.

Anyway, tailing winds can play havoc with your casting. When confronted with a tailing wind it is critical that you send the backcast low. If one sends a backcast high the wind catches the line and it fails to straighten out. Tragedy rapidly follows. So we must send the back cast low. Although there are all sorts of clever things we can do, hooking the ground is not one of them. For this reason tailing winds are not easy.

Which is ironic, for one often sees beginners *choose* to position themselves so that the wind is behind them :-)

It is definitely the case that beginners struggle to go from high backcasts, to low backcasts and back again. Which is, of course, why I earn so much money.



### **The retrieve**

The first thing I would say is 'think about the fly'.

This is one of those fascinating aspects to flyfishing. We are trying to imitate the movements of a creature swimming through the water, by using our fingers. If you visualise the fly with your minds eye, as you make those subtle movements, you are going to discover that fly fishing is both effective and interesting. This, I believe, is why an angler will always outperform a computerised fishing machine (if there was such a thing); it is because we 'feel'.

So the first thing to do is to angle the rod, so that the tip touches the water and points straight down the line. This is because the first thing we often know about a fish biting the fly (the 'take') is a sharp pull on the line. If there is slack line between the rod tip and the water, we are not going to feel this take. If the rod tip is at an angle to the line on the water, the take of the fish will merely bend the rod tip and not necessarily set the hook.

But this is life, and in particular flyfishing, and as such there are many interesting variations, many of which contradict each other.

For example when fishing dry flies (flies which float on the surface) if we were to touch the water surface with the rod tip, we would catch very few. This is because in order to hook fish, it is preferable that they have closed their mouths. Hence we have to place slack line between the water and the rod tip, so that the fish first has a chance to close its mouth before feeling the resistance of the line. So for dry fly fishing, it is best that the rod is held horizontal.

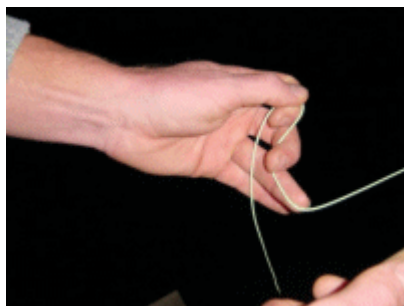
And there are times when the fish doesn't give a violent hook setting tug. They can take very subtly indeed. So the angler



has to get cunning. Leaving a gap between the rod tip and the water, and watching this small loop of line for unusual movements can detect takes. It's a bit like the coarse fisherman's swingtip.

But for much of the time pointing the rod tip straight down the line, with no slack, is the preferred option.

The retrieve we have so far discussed is the 'pulled' or 'stripped' retrieve, whereby the fly is moved in pulls of anywhere between a couple of inches and a couple of feet. The line is trapped between the index finger of the rod hand and the cork handle in-between pulls. This is pretty important since many takes occur during the pause and this gives the resistance necessary to set the hook.



Another very useful retrieve is the figure-of-eight retrieve. This is where the thumb and forefinger hold the line, and the other fingers are used grab a small bunch of line, the wrist is twisted and the thumb and forefinger grab some more. This can be a smooth controlled retrieve, and is most popular for nymphs and dries.

There is another retrieve. By sticking the rod under your armpit, both hands can be used to strip the line hand over hand. This exhilarating retrieve is called the roly-poly in the UK, is actually *banned* in some competitions, although (a) why anyone would ban such a retrieve (b)

why anyone would want to perform such a retrieve outside saltwater and (c) why anyone would find it necessary to turn trout fishing into a competition are all completely beyond me. But there it is.

So back to basics. When I retrieve I visualise the fly in my mind. Visualisation has been quite a feature of this site in one way or another. When moving the flies, it is very important to impart life to the fly. Imagine the fly, see it with your mind's eye and you are on your way to becoming an angler.

Karen: [Great technique Paul](#)

Paul: [Ta!](#)

A great thing you can do is to build yourself a small aquatic environment and place it in your living room. A fish-free fish tank makes for a perfect home for nymphs and bugs. It can become a sort of 'feature'; a talking point for guests and family alike. People will stare into the tank looking for Goldie for a very long time indeed. Whatever you do, do not (a) let on that Goldie does not exist or (b) stock the tank with Goldie.

The point of this is, that through observation, you will be able to tie very closely related patterns and you will understand just how they behave.

They spend a very large amount of time doing nothing. Actually I hate to say that they are doing nothing. It only *appears* that they are doing nothing. They may very well be meditating. This should tell you something about what you should be doing with your flies.

Although it is often the movement that grabs the attention, it is the pause that often generates the strike. On very hard-fished waters, it is important to keep fly movement to a minimum, as excessive movement is unnatural and can spook the fish.

## The half blood knot

I haven't yet taught Karen to build leaders. We made mention of the fact that the recommended minimum length of leader (fly to flyline) is one and a half times the length of the rod. And this is as far as we have taken things.

Karen: *Could you please refresh the reason why one and a half times the length.*

Paul: *Certainly. As the loop unfurls it is important that it loses energy, so that the fly lands gently and not with a dramatic splash. With regards to common fishing situations this leader length should be one and a half times the rod length. With regards to saltwater fly and heavy hooks this leader length can be shortened slightly.*

We *have* however discussed the half blood knot. Karen being a 'line-fisherwoman' of notoriety does indeed already know the knot.

However there is a trick.

Before we go into details, let me first discuss the properties of leader materials, since they are rather different to those of rope. The knots you learned as a Boy Scout (Girl Guide - Karen) and shoe wearer are unsuitable for sticking bits of leader material together. This is partly because leader material (which includes monofilament, copolymer and fluorocarbon) is slippery and partly because it deforms under pressure.

A good example is the old faithful overhand/granny/wind knot. This sort of knot can be rather useful in string. The same knot in your leader can weaken it by 50% one to avoid then.

So let's tie the half blood.

First poke the tippet (the end section of the leader) through the eye of the hook. Now you want to twist the 'tag end' (the end bit of the line) around the main line about 5 times. The hard way to do this is to conscientiously twist turn the tag end around and around; it's all fingers and thumbs. The easy way (the 'trick') is to turn the fly. It can be even easier if you stick the tag end between your teeth. You *may* only have one set of hands, especially if you're a guy, but you *probably* have a mouth.

Poke the tag end between the loop you created at the eye (my, I'm pleased that I can draw, as this scanning from my book will no doubt demonstrate) and stick the tag end back in your mouth, hold the fly and pull the main line tight.

Half blood (for attaching hooks to leader):



It is very important that you tighten this knot by pulling the main line and not the tag end. If you were to pull the tag end you would create a little pigtail just before the hook. In terms of interest this ranks highly, in terms of presentation it sucks.

A variation of the half blood knot is the tucked half blood knot. The difference here is that the tag end is taken through another loop. I only bother tucking the tag end back through with large hooks. Size 8 and above gets the tucked treatment by me. I've hardly ever had the knot slip below this hook size.

Do check the knot before by giving a bit of a tug. Then you simply clip the tag end leaving approx 1/8th (couple of mm) spare.

Karen will be getting the full leader treatment in lesson 4.

## The take

A question I am often asked is "how do you know a fish has taken the fly?"

Let me put your fears to rest: you will know. There are plenty of fish out there that will take the fly so aggressively, that they obviously intend to pull you in. These ones are fairly easy to notice. Hooking them can be another story. How on earth a fish can manage to take a fly, almost pull the rod out of your hand and yet *not* get hooked is an absolute mystery to me. But there it stands.

Down the scale on subtleness is the solid fish-hooking take. This is often immediately followed by a large amount of splashing, and in the case of surface feeding fish, a dramatic 'here I am' joyous leap.

Along the same lines (pun! – sorry) is the 'everything just stops' take. You are pulling the fly back and everything just locks up.

When fishing dry flies, the best clue we have as to fish taking our fly, is it poking its head out and slurping it down.

Of course these are all pretty easy, but with imitative fly fishing, especially dead drift, the takes can be far harder to detect. Sometimes we watch the end of the flyline for a movement, at other times we can grease up some of the leader and watch that.

Karen: Paul, would you please brief me on (grease up) thanks.

Paul: This made me smile :-). What we sometimes do is apply some floatant to part of the leader. This makes the leader stay in the surface film where we can watch it. When a fish takes the fly a bit of the leader disappears. This only really works well at close range and under calm conditions. BTW it is very important not to get any grease on the leader close to the fly as a floating leader looks like a streak of lightening when viewed from below.

Strike indicators can be attached to the leader (where allowed – it's a bit like float fishing and hence frowned upon by some, but you can get around this by fishing a big colourful dry fly half way up the leader, assuming the rules allow two flies).

The flyline near the tip of the rod can be studied – I do this with sinking lines during pauses in the retrieve.

Subtler still, are surface disturbances in the area where we expect our flies to be. When a fish turns on the fly it displaces water. This can be a good indication of a take.

Harder to see are flashes of silver of a turning fish. Glimpses of white can be an indication of a take (the inside of a trout's mouth is white – now we are really getting optimistic).

Harder to describe but certainly as important, if not more important, is a feeling. It's a sort of "not sure why but something just ain't right" feeling. This is *always* a fish.

So the next question is what do you do next?

Let me first tell you what you *don't* do. You *don't* give the line a good yank with your free hand. I point this out because I have seen it done. If you want to pull the fly out of the fishes mouth, then this is a good technique to try, of course, no doubt, if you want to miss the fish, the rules of these things state that every fish will be well and truly hooked.

Another thing you *don't* do is leap backwards in a dramatic manner, simultaneously violently striking the rod and yelling 'fish on' at the top of your lungs. Not unless you want someone to come along and throw you in.

So what you *do* do is you smartly lift the rod tip. This movement set the hook. Easy.

Now let me give you a tip. Strike sideways. You will hook more fish. This goes double if you are fishing with a sinking flyline.

### **Fighting fish - part 1**

I have a video. Download this one!!

So the first thing that a fish does is take line. It is extremely rare that the fish will run towards you. Life can be extremely exciting if the fish *does* decide to run towards you. When fish do come at you, don't panic (unless it's a shark of course – hey look one never knows) simply try to catch up with the fish by bringing the line in quicker.

If you are boat fishing and this happens and you have a big enough net, it is quite possible to land the fish as it reaches the boat. It suddenly dawns on the fish that it has made a mistake, and that a change of plan is in order. Now is the time, for the smart angler to net the fish, and believe me, this is a smart thing to do, because if he realises his blunder and buggers off in the other direction, he will take a lot of coaxing to come back again.

Anyway, most fish don't do this. Most decide that they'd rather put as much distance between you and them, and as quickly as possible. Now is the time to keep the rod up and allow the fish to take line. If you try stopping the first run, you will either get broken or pull the hook free. If you point the rod at the fish it will pull the hook free (nice trick if you *want* to lose them – 'Sure, right,' Karen is thinking).

Keep the tension on the fish at all times. Keep the rod up – it will act as cushion against head shaking. We are trying to tire the fish out, not pull him in. This is not tug-o-war (normally).

So let's have a bit of a discussion about the reel. For a short while in history fly-fishermen played the fish off the reel and made life even more complicated for themselves by changing hands before doing so. Don't ask, ok?

On the whole, it is best not to worry about trying to play the fish off the reel. There is almost always slack line at your feet. If the first thing you do when you hook a fish is to try to get this slack line on the reel, then you are going to end up in a muddle. Those first few seconds are critical for playing fish and many fish are lost during these moments. It must be said, that there are those who would rather wind in the 30 yards of flyline at their feet, before playing fish. Of course what makes this a really bad move, is the fact that the line they are attempting to wind onto the spool, is at the bottom of the pile. I'll leave the rest to your imagination.

BTW, this raises an interesting issue: how to wind the line on the spool. The *only* safe way to wind the line on the spool is to cast all of the line out and retrieve it in by winding the handle. Run the line between your index finger and the cork so as to give some extra tension. If you are fishing a stillwater and have caught your limit (rather strange this fishing isn't it?) then you should snip your hooks off first, because fish *always* take when you are reeling in to go home.

Actually this reminds me of the guy we once saw who simply cast out, reeled in, pulled the line off the reel again, cast out and continued this procedure all afternoon. I can only surmise that he figured out that that the fish wanted this retrieve. Interestingly there was a little gadget marketed a few years ago, that one was supposed to mount on the rod and pull the line through. This apparently gave the same vibrations (See?? I told you it was a strange sport). Anyway we never saw him catch anything. The secret is to use the technique sparingly, otherwise the fish get wise and realise that it's just a ruse.

So what do you do with all that line at your feet? Well the thing *not* to do, is to stand on it. Generally this is a bad idea and once discovered requires a special Native American Indian dance to untangle. My feeling is to just 'be aware' of it. Treat it with respect and all being well, it will not bunch itself into a huge knot (assuming that you are worthy of landing the fish in question of course).

If the fish does decide to take all of your flyline and most of your backing, do make certain that you wind the backing back on the reel with every chance you get. It's one thing to have 30 yards of flyline at your feet, it's quite another to have an additional 20 of backing.

## ***Fighting fish - part 2***

So apart from avoiding the pitfalls of tying yourself and the flyline into knots there are a few other tricks.

Trout, in particular, like to jump around when hooked. It makes the fight that little bit more exciting. Whenever a fish jumps lean the rod over to the side at 90 degrees. Do not keep the line under tension. If you do one of two things can happen, neither of which are good news; the leader could break or the hook-hold could pull out. What we don't do is to give the fish slack line by pointing the rod tip at the fish, for when the fish takes out the slack again, the direct angle will pull the hook out.

As well as leaning the rod over to side with no tension, leaning the rod over under tension is very useful. We call this side strain.

Changing the angle of the pull on the fish often forces the fish to change direction. It can knock the fish off balance. I know many good anglers who actually hit the side strain to emphasise the effect. We want to land these fish as quickly as possible. It is inhumane to play a fish slowly for your pleasure. If you can't respect the quarry then you certainly shouldn't be fishing. If the fish is to be returned it is absolutely critical that the fish is landed quickly. A long drawn out fight will cause a built up of lactic acid which in turn can kill the fish. It is far better to bully a fish and lose.

Use side strain whenever you need to turn a fish. If the fish is running headlong into a snag: side strain. If the fish is thrashing around the surface: side strain. In fact throw the rod over at random intervals; it's always a good move.

Another useful trick is to give your rod-arm a bit of a rest during the fight, by holding the rod with your free hand about 2 feet above the handle. It's a question of levers.

When the fish does finally give up you will know, because it will tell you by lying on its side at the surface. Now is the time to be careful. More fish are lost here than any other time. Gently put the net in the water and slowly ease the fish over the net. Don't poke the net at the fish – this just pisses them off.

As soon as the fish is over the net lift the net upwards and clear, slacken the tension on the flyline and place your other hand at the rim of the net to offer more support. Once again it's all a question of levers.

If you don't have a net then you will have to bring the fish carefully to hand :-)

## ***Handling fish***

Fishing is very much about respecting the fish. This means that if you are going to keep the fish you must kill it as quickly as possible. If you intend to take fish home then I thoroughly recommend



carrying a heavy stick or 'priest' (so called because it delivers 'last rites' – no kidding). Knock the fish smartly on the top of the head, above the eyes. All we are doing here is knocking the fish unconscious. The fish will die shortly afterwards through oxygen starvation – they can only breathe in water.

It is very important that you understand how to correctly handle fish. Firstly you must wet your hands. This is partly to wet them and partly to reduce heat shock. Fish have a protective slime. Dry hands will remove this and make the fish susceptible to disease.

Handle the fish away from the eyes and gills, gently but firmly. If you hold the fish upside-down it will struggle less, which is rather interesting. I can't tell you why: only that it is so. I have often wondered why it is. I think I would struggle like hell, but there; I am not a fish, no doubt if I were, I too would lie in a calm trance-like state.

Another thing to be aware of is spines and teeth. Trout don't have them; well actually they have teeth, but are extremely unlikely to use them to bite you. Some fish may do so. I have yet to be attacked by a landed fish, and am looking forward to the day it happens, albeit with some trepidation. Some fish are spiny and being spiked is not very pleasant, by all accounts, and being spiked by a poisonous spine, is downright unpleasant.

A fish to be returned should be unhooked as quickly as possible. Carry some surgical forceps for the task. I certainly hope that you are fishing barbless – you will catch more. If the fish is hooked deeply it is best to cut the leader as near to the fly as possible and return the fish. Messing around will only cause the fish to bleed. A bleeding fish is unlikely to survive. The hook will corrode very quickly, often in a matter of days, especially for either deeply hooked fish or fish in saltwater.

In order to return the fish gently place him in the water, cradling him in your hands. Take your time. They deserve it. Allow the fish time to recover. If there is a current place the fish pointing head upstream. It is necessary for water to flow over the gills in order for the fish to breathe. In stillwaters you may have to walk the fish forwards in order to help it breathe. I get the impression that as soon as the fish realises that you are going to return it, it takes it's time and trusts you. It certainly appears to be the case.

Being capable of returning fish unharmed is essential.

### ***After the lesson***

Karen went fishing. We chose a nice looking estuary with a bit of a flow happening. It wasn't a particularly easy place to fish, but she performed admirably. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the fish. Of course I'm not the greatest saltwater flyfisher in the world, it is quite conceivable, in fact, that I am indeed one of the world's worst, and so it is possible that we were doing something tragically wrong. Anyway had we been trout fishing Karen would have caught something.

This is Queensland. No trout hereabouts. Still, if the mountain won't come and all that jazz...

So the plan is to (a) understand saltwater fly well enough for Karen to catch some large angry trevally and (b) fly Karen to some wilderness trout fishing in New Zealand. This is The Experience after all and *no* expense will be spared, and if any airlines/lodge services wish to get involved then we will be most pleased to hear from you :-)

### ***Karen's after the lesson comments***

First of all I would like to thank you Paul, for being so patient and understanding. I am a hard student, because I have expectations of my ability to learn, and when I am struggling I start to doubt myself.....!!!!!! THANKS

Lesson three really tested Paul's ability as an instructor to deal with these situations and that he did very well.

The wind again was difficult to contend with. It does tend to make it extra hard to practise casting when you have only had a few lessons. It seems like I have to do this the hard way.

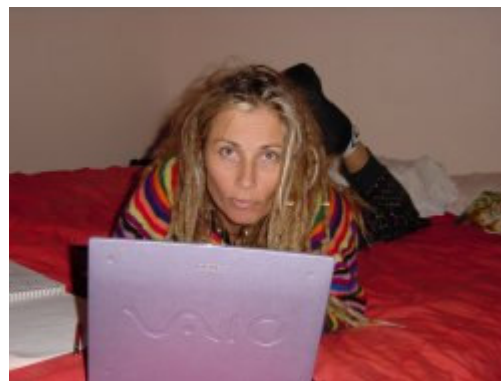
I find myself having conflict with momentum. When I first arrive I have to reduce the power in the cast by at least half, and this does take me a little time to do so. Also I have to tune into the, flick back and the flick forward. When I settle in and start to watch these actions, then I see improvement. Looking forward to the next lesson Paul, thanks again.

***Paul's after the lesson comments***

I am now back in the UK and Karen is busy fishing on her own, and she is fishing! I have sent a replacement tip section and have left my saltwater flies behind. So there are no excuses! My plan is to fish NZ this winter and so I'll drop by to teach her the double-haul on the way. I think she is probably ready for this now, and she certainly will be by the time I return.

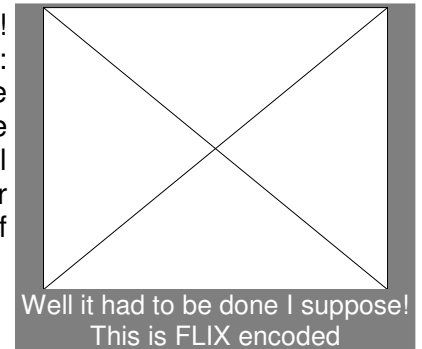
This was an interesting lesson for me (they are all interesting lessons). And I look forward to hearing about her first fish on the fly!

Good luck Karen; and in the meantime be sure to keep us updated on your section of the bulletin board!



## Lesson 4 – ‘Teaching Steve’

This is the first clip which Paul is going to have fun with! Here are the disclaimers: It was cold and this was the first attempt at proper filming by the camera(wo)man. What follows is, I hope though, going to be some very useful comment including supporting stills. These pages will change as the experiment and the experience of putting it together gets in to proper gear. I have started by putting in the 'bare bones' of the email that Paul sent and then we'll take it from there.



**Paul:** OK first up please take top half of the body pictures ie MUCH closer, not only can I not see the line anyway but I don't need to. Yes there are a lot of moles about :)

The casting a *little bit* wishy-washy; I'd like to see you take more positive control over the rod. Don't be too hasty to get it out there, take your time and feel your way through the stroke.

I'd like see more of a chopping movement on the forward cast. The third cast in particular sees you lift your hand in a curve. This is unnecessary.

Please trap the line between your index finger and the handle, this will stop it flapping about so much and stop it coming off the reel at critical moments.



A good tip would be to try locking the elbow, yet still allowing it to travel upward and downwards. A direct up and down movement is far more preferable and many of the good modern casters do this. You are *\*end gaining\** BTW.



For the next videos please take close ups. All I want is the top half of the body. All of the rest is scenery. And try to make that backcast an up-cast...

## Lesson 5 – ‘Teaching Nick - The APGAI’

APGAI stands for Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructor and is the top UK flycasting instructor's qualification. You are assessed in your ability as a professional game angling instructor in a one hour on-the-water examination.

I've been going on about how great an organisation the APGAI is and how all the members are such fantastic dudes (although by and large a bit of a disreputable bunch) when Nick Hart writes to me that he's taking his APGAI examination in April and could I help.

So we are going to teach Nick and try and get him up to APGAI standards, at first via email and later in person. In order to make this exciting (like Nick doesn't have enough on his mind already) we are going to put these communications on the Web.

A hop, a skip and an enormous jump from the beginnings of the Experience, it is an extension of the Experience (we'll have to fill in the gaps later of course - and we will :-). Nick may not be as good looking as Karen or Steve, but we won't hold that against him.

Nick is a STANIC (Salmon and Trout Association National Instructor's Certificate) qualified instructor and he teaches in the West Country. He's a very nice caster BTW.

### Nick writes

Hi Paul,

Hope you are doing well.

You had to bloody do it, didn't you. Going on about how great APGAI are so great and what it's done for your career, (career!? bumming about abroad?) and so what did I go and do?

Well I rang up Michael Evans who came on the phone, and in a shaky voice I asked for the APGAI prospectus, which he said was absolutely fine, except that it was a syllabus, and not a prospectus. So now he thinks we are all thick from Exmoor (which is partly true of course) and no doubt I have been failed already for such a poor general knowledge of the English language.

Anyway, I went on to give him my address so he could send out a "syllabus", during which I hurried him a little on the address and got asked to slow down. So, not only does he now think I am thick but impatient too, so I am sure I have failed now. Having said that I did use that funny Tango, Alfa, Romeo job to spell out my postcode which I think he found incredible from an illiterate Exmoor Yokel, so maybe I am still in with a slight chance!

Then in an even bigger fit of APGAI wonderment I wrote a cheque, ran across the road and posted my application. So, no going back from here!

Practice/Coaching advice? I realise I should be out every waking hour with a rod, but that just won't be possible due to work load. I am out in Africa from 23rd March for 2 weeks, one of which will involve a week of chucking large colourful flies at even larger and very toothy fish, not exactly the best way to be sweetening up your loops.

Do you have any advice as you are the only APGAI I know (and trust) plus you don't wear knee high breaks and talk with a plum in your mouth, which I find very reassuring. Should I be have a few sessions with APGAI instructors or am I up to the exam already. Tell me honestly Paul (and I know you will) as I want to be prepared and able enough to pass this qualification.

Hope to hear from you, all the best,

Nick.

### ***The Plan***

So a cunning plan is devised. It is decided that

(a) Nick should get a couple of lessons from Michael Evans - Michael is an extremely good instructor, secretary of the APGAI, an international flyfishing star and often one of the examiners :-). And so money worth spent we feel.

(b) Nick should get a couple of lessons from me (paid for in curry and beer) - we've done this before and although I'm slightly more laid-back than Michael it should be an experience :-)

(c) we should start a train of email communication in the build up to his examination on April 19th. Sounds like fun actually :-)

### ***The Syllabus (Prospectus)***

#### **Nick writes**

Hi Paul,

I am about to open it, here goes... Right so we have the forms about money, except I have already applied and paid so let us see what else is here. Here it is, the TEST SYLLABUS (I knew it wasn't a prospectus) O.K. so I am being examined on my ability as an Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructor, that's a good start, no mention of having to possess a bushy moustache or war medals.

I need to provide my normal teaching aids, that's O.K., got a few of those. Yarn rod to demonstrate timing, line on the end of a rod tip to demonstrate the catapult/unload effect, handle section to show grip. At the very least I need a river rod, reel and leader with a tag. Plus a distance rod kitted out as above. (Any suggestions here or should I just go for the tackle I regularly use? For distance I could take along a variety of rods inc. my treasured 8 weight T&T. I have a load of river rods, plus some in the 6 bracket)

*(I just took a 9ft aftm6 since that is all I use anyway - Paul)*

I need decent weather proof kit, (i.e. waders etc.) No worries there.

**So to the TEST.**

During my examination I should be prepared to answer questions regarding my choice of tackle and it's suitability for practical fishing and/or teaching purposes.

*(OK what's the yarn for? - Paul)*

So, in my view, I am not going to want just fast actioned rods but something with a little more middle to tip. In my opinion, easier for the beginner to get to grips with. WF line of course, but with knowledge of DT properties.

*I've come to the conclusion that a good rod is a good rod in anyone's hands and that there is no such thing as formula 1 rod that only the very best casters can handle. I don't equate speed with action either and will show this on site in the next month or so. Why DT btw? - Paul)*

I need to be able to demonstrate and teach the following :-

### **a) basic safety measures.**

My thoughts:

So things which, spring to my mind immediately are of course quite obvious to an experienced angler/instructor. But for the benefits of a novice .... Wind on opposite side of casting arm or on back (no casting in gales when a novice). Ensure people stand to opposite side of casting arm, and watch out for people walking behind. Sunglasses (very important). Cap (possibly with Mugwai logo for extra protection :-). Wading, never in too deep, wading staff, felt soles and all that jazz. Life saver including knowledge of difference between a BUOYANCY AID and LIFE JACKET.

*(no hooks spring to mind - Paul)*

### **b) Assembling the tackle.**

My thoughts:

Be able to explain backing, line and how to work out reel capacity. Plus demonstrate relevant knots. Make a point about winding side (i.e. in my opinion left for a right hander, right for a left hander). Explain parts of reel, inc. drag, reel foot. Set up rod, detailing points about matching lines and reels to rods, plus detail the butt, blank (cane, fibre glass, carbon and actions), rings (snakes, lined, inc. the keeper which many novices thread!) and reel seat. How to thread correctly without breaking tip off! Where to put rod when not in use and various ways of transporting.

*(I doubt you will get asked this, you will arrive and depending on who examines you they will probably say - "go to it" - as I will when I see you :-)* - Paul)

### **c) Description of rod, reel and line and the AFTM system.**

My thoughts:

Whoops hadn't read this far, so see above for most of it. The AFTM system, what a crap system! Stands for American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers or Association of Fishing Tackle Manufacturers.

The idea behind this is to provide a rating for each fly line in grams, or as is commonly stated, grains. The grains came from the fact that the system was based on the weight in grains of wheat! This was then applied for line numbers 1 - 15 although in recent years lines 0, 16, 17 have also come into production. To work out the weight for each line the first 10 yds or 30 ft of line is weighed and then matched to a scale to determine weight. The lower the number, the lighter the line. Worth considering very carefully depending on size of flies to be cast, distance required and presentation needed. It is true to say that it is easier to cast an 8 weight further than a 4 BUT this very much depends on technique. Light lines do go a long way.

Incorrectly many believe that the perfect moment to "shoot" line is when this first 10 yds of line is aerialised, thus providing the perfect "load" for a given rod so long as it has been matched to it's "perfect" line. Of course this cannot be true to the infinite amount of different rod/individual casting actions!

There are also a number of different names used to describe lines including taper (the profile of the line, and sections which decrease in diameter both forward and rear), head (the front portion of the line which is physically cast), belly (the majority of the line which is physically cast) and running line (only present in certain profiles)

So what are profiles ? This is how the line looks from the side (I have diagrams and can draw them freehand, of course!). For example a weight forward has the majority of it's weight at the front, i.e. it has a larger diameter. This thick "head and belly" section is on average 10 yds in length before running into a rear taper and finally running line which has very small diameter when compared to the belly section. These lines are ideal for beginners who can use the short belly section to load the rod before "shooting" the thin running line which has little drag back effect on the rings. In complete contrast the double taper has a forward and rear taper, no running line and a very long, thick belly section. Ideal for presentation due to drag back on the rod rings, but difficult for a beginner to get to grips with, and certainly more difficult to obtain distance using this line. Other lines include the Long Belly (long belly section, of which over 15 yds can be aerialised, so bang goes the AFTM system! Ideal for experienced casters. The triangle taper is based around this line), Shooting head (around 10-14 yds of thick fly line connected to ultra thin running line. Excellent distance, poor presentation) and Level Line (cheap, crap, no use!)

The AFTM system codes lines as WF (weight forward) or DT (double taper). Add the weight of the line and you end up with WF7 for example. But there is one more thing to remember when looking at the AFTM system and that is line density. Lines can float, sink slowly and super fast. A floater is therefore coded F, a slow sinker, commonly refereed to as an Intermediate, is coded I and a fast sinker FS. To conclude therefore a Weight Forward, # 7 line in an intermediate density would look like this : WF7I. This is the basis of the AFTM system.

*(I would say it is much simpler than this and that the AFTM system is simply a means of measuring the first ten yards of the flyline and sticking it in a table. The problem with the AFTM is not the concept, only that it's implementation is by nature subjective - Paul)*

#### **d) Stance and Grip**

My thoughts:

This is very much a personal thing, and I would always advise that an angler chooses a stance which is comfortable to him/her. However it is widely recognised that there are 2 main stances, refereed to as OPEN and CLOSED.

The open stance is probably the most common and comfortable. Ideally stand with your rod in the preferred hand. If the rod is in your right hand then an open stance would be created by having your left foot leading forward, and vice versa. This stance is ideal for distance casting where accuracy is not the most important consideration as it allows the angler to open up his/her body and gives a longer casting stroke.

The closed stance is more traditional, and is superb for accurate casting. When using this stance the foot on the rod side is placed forward. Excellent for river fishing but not so comfortable for long periods standing still. It is still possible to obtain good distance with this stance so long as techniques such as "drifting" are employed.

Grip. Again, quite personally. However there are important points to remember. Firstly the grip should ALWAYS be relaxed, in fact everything about casting should be so. Rods have a balance point once a reel has been attached, this is commonly just in front of the forward section of the cork handle. For this reason it is best to cast with the thumb on top of the rod facing forward towards the tip.

*(I don't understand the connection - can you explain please :- ) - Paul)*

If one imagines a loose hand shake and picks up the rod with thumb on top, as far up the cork as possible, this is a reasonable grip. When casting like this the line will touch the blank a certain amount. To eliminate this some anglers use a grip refereed to as Chinese Style. This requires the rod to be rotated in ones hand by 90 degrees, so that the reel is parallel to the ground (face down). When casting like this the line only touches the rings and is therefore excellent for distance. The common statement that where the "the thumb goes, the line follows" is pure fallacy.

There is another grip with the first finger up the rod. Personally I find this uncomfortable and impractical. It is more tiring as the first finger is not so strong as the thumb, however some anglers believe it aids accuracy. The name of this grip escapes me!!!

*("Finger pointing grip"? One thing it does acheive is a good stop position on the backcast. If you have a pupil who continually takes the rod tip too far backwards, this grip sorts it out - Paul)*

#### **e) Methods for initially working out line.**

My thoughts.

Not talked about enough. Basically the rod requires a certain amount of line to begin the loading / casting process. Once the line has been threaded there are a couple of ways of working out line. Firstly a length in the region of 2 rod lengths can be pulled through the tip and thrown on the water, this is then rolled cast out to provide a straight line which is very important when commencing a cast. Alternatively a short section of line can be placed on the water from the rod tip. Then by moving the rod tip backwards and forwards in horizontal movements loose line can be pulled from the hand using the anchoring properties of the water. This is commonly called "line stick" Having worked out a couple of rod lengths of line, perform a roll cast to straighten everything.

(or gripping the fly in the free hand and flicking the line out - Paul)

The next part is the casting. But, let's deal with this stuff above first of all! Basically what I have done is jotted down straight off the top of my head the knowledge I already possess. I am sure I have missed a few bits which are already there, but from "My Thoughts" above you can analyse the extent of my knowledge and pick out any gaping holes you may notice.

*(No gaping holes. And you will probably find that they don't ask this stuff since they assume (quite correctly) that you already know it :-)* Bring on the casting :-)

Look forward to hearing from you. This is starting to be fun already,

All the Best,

Nick.

## ***The Basics***

**Continuing on from last week, Nick writes:**

Hi Paul,

Took a look at the site, looks really cool. Bollocks to your comments about Karen and Steve though, have you taken a look in the mirror recently ! If you ask me, YOU are the Mugwai.

Right, here are my responses to stage 1 of our journey. I will then hit the casting.

"I just took a 9ft aftm6 since that is all I use anyway."

So why are they asking for at least a river and a stillwater rod? Or, were they happy that a 6 falls nicely in the middle of both (although a little heavy for river work in my opinion)

*(My opinion was that it fitted both. I guess it depends on the size of the river :-)* What do you normally use for teaching? - Paul)

"OK what's the yarn for?"

The yarn rod is excellent for demonstrating loops (especially indoors) and also shows that if the timing is correct that even a length of highly air resistant wool can be cast.

*(I've played around with these before when Redington brought out their Kidstart... quite effective I think - Paul)*

"I don't equate speed with action and will show this on site in the next month or so."

I don't equate line speed with just the action by any means. I certainly believe it helps, but speed is really generated by the casters technique, with things such as wrist snaps and of course a very fast haul. Most people haul too slowly in my opinion.

*(Sorry I didn't explain that very well. I mean action of the rod, ie whether it is tip action, progressive, mid to tip, through action is not the same as speed. The speed of the rod is how quickly it unloads (which can be measured as it's vibrational frequency. A graphite rod is quicker than a cane, although you can buy graphite rods that flex more. - Paul)*

"Why DT btw?"

In what context ? If you mean "what's the benefit": good presentation provided by drag back effect of the thick belly section on the rings. Thus slowing the bottom loop down and causing the top loop to turnover.

If you mean "why do I need knowledge of a DT": In case I get asked!

*(Sorry I meant why WF :-) - Paul)*

"The problem with the AFTM is not the concept, only that it's implimention is by nature subjective."

By this do you mean that the weights can overlap and that trying to think in grains of wheat is confusing? Or what?

*(No I mean that although the AFTM is very specific, the number on the rod is someone's opinion. - Paul)*

...For this reason it is best to cast with the thumb on top of the rod facing forward towards the tip. "- I don't understand the connection - can you explain please :-)"

The connection is that with the thumb up the rod the rod will feel balanced in the hand. Further more the leverage produced by the rod when casting will be better with this grip than if one placed the hand further down the handle.

*(Interesting. Personally I don't place the thumb directly on top, but the palm underneath. I don't think that this matters but it may be interesting to go into this into greater detail - what do you think? - Paul)*

"If you have a pupil who continually takes the rod tip too far backwards, this grip (finger pointing) sorts it out"

So does putting a strap around their arm, asking them to bring the rod to their eye or not let their hand go past their head. But I take the point. The only problem I would have with using finger up the rod when starting a novice is that they may find it tricky to switch over to the thumb, which I think most casters agree is the best and most obvious grip.

*(Personally this is new to me. Like you, I have been doing other things, but I think that this is quite a common technique in the US and it works and very well indeed. I picked it up through Jason Borgers new book (excellent btw). The wrist strap I do not like at all; it inhibits good stroke. Rod to the eye or forehead I don't like since it puts the hand inside the elbow. Finger on top stops the rod going to far back and is brilliant. Don't foresee any problems changing the grip after the stroke is built in, but not sure that thumb on top is necessarily the best grip anyway. Depends on your casting style. - Paul)*

"Or gripping the fly in the free hand and flicking the line out"

True, but I find some novices actually have trouble controlling the line in the first place. Using the method I detailed above I then like to teach a roll cast. Very important for straightening the line and of course the safety aspect of actually having a straight line when commencing the cast. But yes, with a more advanced angler of course holding one end and flicking out is of course the best way to get started.

"No gaping holes."

Well, in that case the above was probably a little long winded and unnecessary, but what the hell it is all good practice just in case ME has remembered that I think a syllabus is a prospectus.

*(I'll remind him if you like :-)* - Paul)

## ***On with the Casting***

### **Nick writes:**

Hi Paul,

So here we go then, the nitty gritty. I am going to do this bit by bit. So my brain doesn't overload and so you don't have too much info all at once!

Various Casts and their uses:

Overhead Cast: My understanding... so far.

BASIC: The most common of all casts. Usual basic start point (based on a right hander) is moving rod between 1 & 11, learning timing so that the rod loads and looking at wide/tight (sexy) loops.

*(do you want me to spin you out a few questions on this? such as:*

- a) *how does the basic flycast actually work?*
- b) *what is a loop and how is it formed?*
- c) *what causes a tight loop, open loop, tailing loop?*
- d) *why 1 and 11? (this is a trick question btw :-)*
- e) *why is the flyline so thick?*
- f) *how long is your leader? - Paul)*

HEAD WIND: Usual to stop the rod slightly earlier into the back cast and push down on the forward cast. Thus slicing the line through the wind. Double haul will help by decreasing loop size and increasing line speed.

*(A far better way is to tuck up - check out the [second lesson of the experience](#) (I learned this at the APGAI btw :-))*

*"Thus slicing the line through the wind" I would say is inaccurate. We are trying to take out the hover on the forward cast.*

a) why does DH decrease loop size? (another trick question:-))

b) how does hauling work?

c) can you explain the timing of the haul? - Paul)

WITH SIDE WINDS: Right hander, wind from left etc. Plus teaching casting over opposite shoulder when wind is on wrong side or of course learning to become ambidextrous. I also think it is quite acceptable to stand with your wind on your back, cast up the bank and effectively use your back cast to present the fly.

(I think so too. A double forward cast (Galway Cast) may make this more acceptable to your examiners. They \*might\* want to see that thumb behind the spine :-)) - Paul)

FOLLOWING WIND : Couple of possibilities. Good haul to create a tight loop which will slice through the wind on the back cast, thus allowing the rod to load. Another possibility is to stop the rod further back and then when coming forward stop high allowing the wind to get in behind the loop and give the line more time in the air. Add both of these together for maximum effect.

(I think that the most important point is the need for a low backcast. See [same section of the Experience](#).)

a) how do you get a low backcast?

b) what about timing of the hauls? - Paul)

What I have done here Paul is given a quick glance set of notes for you to assess my basic knowledge so far. I think the more in depth section will come when we look at this section of the syllabus ....

"You will be examined in detail on your knowledge of the mechanics of each cast and your ability to teach, in a clear and concise manner :- Stance and Grip, wrist, arm and body movements, the arc of the rod and correct power application. You will also be tested on your ability to diagnose faults, clearly demonstrating both the fault itself and its correction"

(Henry Lowe APGAI differentiates the Stanic and the Apgai on fault demonstrating and diagnosis. Can you throw tailing loops at will? - Paul)

I reckon that this part will provide some very interesting content. So I guess that once you have looked at this we need to discuss the above paragraph for the overhead cast.

(Agreed. That will be the next email - Paul)

### **What makes the Apgai**

Here's why I support the Apgai and feel privileged to be a member. First and foremost all the best flycasting instructors in the UK are members. The list is long (well, about 80) and I hope to include it within these pages in the near future – it makes for some very interesting reading.

It is the qualification that everyone seems to want to attain. It is held in high regard within the UK (and internationally as far as I can make out; but only among those in the know) and this is because the entry standards are so exacting.

It is important to be able to teach and cast, but what makes exam so difficult is that you are expected to be extremely good at both. Crisp, neat, effortless loops are essential and they must be performed under pressure – which the examiners seem to take pleasure in applying! It is a small elite organisation and, as such, manages very successfully to maintain its high entry standards.

In my opinion an Apgai member has to be a credit to the organisation; in this respect it is niche. But so is expertise.

There is a huge pool of knowledge and a personal affinity that I don't get anywhere else. However this is not why I respect them. I respect the open-mindedness and the thirst for improvement amongst the membership. Let me tell you a story...

When I first decided to become an instructor I rang Michael Evans and asked him how to go about this and was told that I had first to become a Stanic instructor before I could take the Apgai.

I took some lessons from Henry Lowe who is APGAI (and now friend) from Cambridge. I had two lessons of two hours and in that time I realised that I had no idea how to teach, I couldn't roll cast, cast into the wind or double haul. It was quite a revelation.

While taking the STANIC, I met Ali Gowans, Steven Mear and Jim Curry - it's a small world, but it was while watching Vic Knight, Henry Lowe and Robert Gibson-Bevan cast together, that I decided that I really wanted to become Apgai, and that here was another level.

It might interest you that after I'd passed RGB took me aside and told me that I should to dress smarter. Which I do of course ;)

I had an awful lot to do with the STA. I worked for Guide Flyfishing as Sales Manager and one of my jobs was to be their representative for the Salmon and Trout Association's children's courses. I did this for a couple of years.

One year after the Stanic I took and passed the Apgai. In preparation I'd another two hours with Henry Lowe, two with the late Peter MacKenzie-Philips (head examiner and then president of Apgai) and gave Vic Knight a fly rod (Vic was one of the examiners ;))

Later that year I met Mel Krieger and my perception of casting immediately changed. I changed from pushing the stroke to pulling. I learned something very new to me and I immediately took it back to the Apgai at one of the CLA Game Fairs. What followed impressed me, for although I was expecting criticism for a non-traditional cast, there was none, only a desire and willingness to learn (Peter Sutton BTW revealed himself to be already a puller).

This has always been the case as far as I can tell. During PMP's lesson I showed him how I overpowered the curved cast by pulling the rod tip back and under itself during the forward stroke – he immediately said that he had never seen this and wanted the rod so he could try it. When I first met Michael Evans he said that he wanted me to teach him my loops. Henry Lowe, who first taught me, is now a confirmed puller of the rod.

I've always found a love of casting, teaching and a thirst for knowledge across the entire membership. It is a state of mind and one I hope to keep throughout my life.

That's why the Apgai is the dog's bollocks.

## **Nick's Knowledge**

There is a massive amount of information here and I have done my best to try and put some order to it. *All italics are my text*, the order of the text is not how it happened exactly. But that didn't make much sense either! So what I have done is try to discover Nicks current knowledge and lead him into a fuller understanding. The last part of this latest information does just this. I respect the fact that Nick has been so open and willing to publicly do this.

### **The Questions**

#### ***a) what is a loop and how is it formed?***

"Loop" is the description given to the shape of the fly line while being cast. During to and fro casts this shape is visible on both the forward and back casts. During continuous motion casts it is only seen during the forward section.

*??? do you mean like roll casts?*

Yep, continuous motion, roll cast, spey, switch etc.

Ok never heard the term. Mind you roll cast doesn't have to be continuous motion...

What else can it be? They certainly aren't to and fro.

*Well you can set up a roll cast and wait 5 minutes before the delivery. That's not a continuous motion!*

Yes I see your point. But, I think that it is quite a nice way of splitting up the Speys etc. Although you can wait 5 minutes to do a roll cast, most anglers would not and if you look at the whole cast there is certainly more "continuous" motion than "to & fro". Do you see my point here or not ?

*No, the roll cast needs a pause to anchor the tip of the line.*

The loop is formed by the caster loading the rod with the line. The rod travelling backwards/forwards in a horizontal position then tows the line backwards/forwards, in short the rod acts as a catapult. Technique and to less of an extent, tackle, will determine how successful these loops are.

*The loop is formed when the flyline passes the tip of stopped rod.*

Right, but hang on here. Technically your question is "how is the loop formed" which I answered above, several movements are needed prior to stopping the rod, right ?

*Yes but you didn't mention the above bit :) and it's a really good thing to think about. The flyline is being pulled by the tip of the rod. The tip of the rod stops. the flyline passes the tip of the rod. A loop is formed. Forget about shooting line. This is absolutely key. This is flycasting. It's about loops. This is how the loop is formed. That one point, the moment when the rod tip stops and the flyline continues is so important.*

See this. That's why it is good practice to take the rod in one hand, trapping the line with a finger and then practicing loop size by varying tip stops. Find this helps me relax my casting and provides some nice looking loops.

***b) What causes a tight loop, open loop, tailing loop?***

A tight loop is created by a small rod arc. Tighter loops come from well timed double hauling and by speeding the rod up with an abrupt stop.

An open loop is caused by a wide rod arc, but can also be caused through bad timing.

A tailing loop is caused by the rod top dipping below the path of the line. The rod top dips below the line through common errors such as uneven power application and miss timing the back cast.

*A tight loop is caused by straight line path of tip and open loop by convex path of tip. By matching the flex in the rod to the size of the arc you can always throw a tight loop. With a through-action rod or a deeply loaded progressive rod you have to open the stroke to accommodate the increased flex. Loop shape is determined by the path of the rod tip (although a low backcast followed by a horizontal forward cast will also throw an open loop)*

I'm a bit lost here. O.K., so let us take a rod that I have used, the T&T Paradigm. Described as an "ultra smooth progressive action fly rod" I have cast good loops with this, in my mind by slowing down my action to compensate for the action, yet still using a small arc. I was NOT opening the arc. This does not follow with your statement above. Can you explain further what is going on here. And Can you clarify the brackets. I will play with this theory on the field tomorrow.

*The brackets first: a low back cast will deliver either a high forward cast or an open loop. check out the 3rd drawing on [this page](#)*

Will check in a mo.

*There are two things going on. One you need to know, one is beyond apgai exam.*

*The one that you need to know is this... firstly I don't know how small your small arc is, but if you were to cast with half the amount of fly line outside the tip you would use a smaller arc still right? This is because you have half the weight and therefore the rod bends less. Less flex in the rod means that in order to get a straight line path the arc must be smaller... right? This is what I mean by adjusting the size of your stroke to match the bend in the rod.*

Bingo! Got it. Explained simply this is why (some) beginners have such a problem when casting small amounts of line, their arc is often huge. However with a more experienced caster once the loop has been formed and sent on it's way the rod can be sent to the point required for maximum flex in the rod. Have I got it, or am I dreaming?

You've got it! :-)

*The second thing that is going on here is not widely discussed. It's simply this: When we fly cast we do two things, we pull the line through the air with the tip of the rod - leverage - and we flex the rod by pulling it against the mass of line - the catapult effect. Both are important. An anchored rod in a field will not cast very far. A broomstick is also a pretty poor tool. The catapult effect is important since it imparts velocity as the rod straightens. That's the bit you need to know - it's how casting works and everyone should know this and why I've asked certain questions. So when you cast you are doing two things. You are moving the line in the direction you want to cast and you are storing energy in the rod which (when you make the stop) will be transferred to the line to get it moving quicker still.*

Here's the crunch and is related to you slowing the stroke down. If you make the stroke too quickly what happens is that the line moves through the air and the rod doesn't flex as much. Most flycasters do this. They use too much leverage and not enough flex. Slowing the stroke down will allow the rod to flex and this is why you are getting narrower loops for your given arc when you slow down. The rod flexes more and the tip travels a straighter path.

Easy.

But I thought you said yesterday that the catapult effect had nothing to do with it. Your statements above fit exactly with my own thinking. I understand each section no problem. Where I am slightly confused is on the rod stopping section of your thoughts. When you make your initial backcast, where are you expecting the rod to stop? And then for the forward. What about for a fast rod, and a slow?

Give me some ideas about slowing down. Would I be right in thinking that casters who push are working on more leverage rather than flex?

## **Nick's Knowledge part 2**

### **c) why 1 and 11 (this is a trick question btw :-))**

Well let's forget tricks for now !!! 1 and 11 is a good point for the novice to begin with. It helps to create both high backcasts and reasonable loops. The term 1 and 11 refers to the basic system regarding stopping points for the rod. The student is asked to visualise a large clock on their rod side, imagining their head as the number 12 position. This helps them to learn the correct rod arc.

*Q. what is the correct hand movement during the forward cast? What should the elbow be doing?*

The hand should follow a small snap from the wrist and remain upright. And the elbow should remain in a relaxed position and pivot. For longer casts rise up with the rod ( creating drift ) and then coming forward pull down to the side to create a more abrupt stop.

*Yes - I think I should always be allowed to travel upwards even for shorter casts - yours does btw. And this is how to throw nice high backcasts btw (high back cast follows angle the rod*

*tip travels, that angle is steeper if you lift the elbow - which is why you can completely wipe out the clockface - the tip of the rod is key. I can throw a low back cast stopping at 12.30 and a high one at 2. Depends entirely on the tip of the rod.)*

Umm, trying to think this one out. Think you are going to need to show me. You see the way I think about it is that you stop the rod early to get a high back cast, after this you can do what you like to create more time. Drifting for example to tighten loop and give rod more time to load. How do you get a high back cast if you stop at 2??

**The clockface** *Next thing we should discuss is that I think that you should also be prepared to teach without the clockface. I don't use it and I know that when I was examined my examiners didn't use it and didn't want me to either :) Problem with the clockface IMHO is that it's too restrictive, and depends on the tackle and the stroke. What matters is the what the **\*\*tip of the rod does\*\***.*

True on the rod tip of course. I still think you need some sort of gauge for a novice. After this it is easier to teach without for more experienced casters. I certainly don't always refer to 1 and 11.

#### **d) how does it work?**

1 and 11 will work so long as the rod top remains in a "horizontal position" during the stroke. This action will flex the tip of the rod and create the catapult effect. A wide arc of say 2 - 10 will not flex the rod correctly, thus eliminating the catapult effect explained above.

*Sorry I mean how does casting work. What does the rod do? Really really basic question but possibly the whole crux. How and why.*

The rod works by helping to create the necessary speed and shape in the line ( weight ) to present it. I am guessing that you are going to tell me this is the wrong answer but when I go through the many hundreds of people I have now taught, including with Simons school, I have always worked on the theory that the weight of the line bends the rod and then catapults it forwards. Reading on I see that you say this is NOT the case !

*You mention catapults a few times. Tell me the physics behind the overhead cast. (just the forward stroke will do for now!)*

The physics are that the rod creates the necessary speed ( velocity ) in the line ( weight ) to fire it forwards, which comes from the backcast.

Now I well remember PMP ( Handbook of Fly Casting ) banging on about the backcast being the most important. Although I do not agree with many of his other statements I would back this one.

*The backcast is important. The first statement is inaccurate. The backcast puts the line into a position so that we can make an effective forward cast. Angled up for into the wind. Angled down for a following wind.*

Understood. Easy to visualise.

*It doesn't load the rod - but you know that. Anyway the above stuff should be clearer from the stuff I wrote at the top*

So the backcast doesn't load the rod? So where is the flex coming from, the weight of the line surely? Isn't this loading the rod? If not why are we always talking about loading the rod? Surely casting is about creating load on the rod with a backcast and the fly line weight. Then by varying stopping points we can determine how the loop will be formed and can add in double haul techniques to increase line velocity thus making it more accurate and when required, go further. Is this still STANIC level? It certainly doesn't feel like it!

**e) why is the flyline so thick?**

The fly line is the casters weight and is needed to load the rod. If it were not thick this would not be possible.

**f) how long is your leader?**

Depends on the kind of fishing you are doing and the weather conditions, but a good start point is 10 ft ( or roughly a rod length ).

*For trout fishing I think 1.5 rod lengths. Anything else is too short. That is the standard answer. Less than this and the energy doesn't seem to dissipate fully and presentation is screwed.*

Sorry Paul, don't agree. For a start there are plenty of 7,8 and 9 ft KTL. Now surely these are not still being produced if they are effectively useless. Plus when it comes to presentation I think this lies very much in the hands of the caster. Allow enough hover on the line and it is possible to present a 10ft leader very easily. Plus, as I said, it depends on fishing conditions. There is absolutely no point in fishing a long leader on very fast sinkers for example.

*Do you use tapered leaders?*

Yes.

**Nick's Knowledge part 3****Casting into the wind**

*Leading on from your answer a far better way is to tuck up - check out the second lesson of the experience (I learned this at the APGAI btw :-)) ("Thus slicing the line through the wind." I would say is inaccurate. We are trying to take out the hover on the forward cast)*

Fair enough and point taken, when talking to a more advanced caster. I would still prefer the term, slice, when talking to a novice. I will check the lesson out.

**b) why does DH decrease loop size (another trick question:-))**

It speeds the line up even more so that the top and bottom of the loop pass closer together. Enough tricks !

*We could go off on a limb here, but DH doesn't decrease the loop size to my knowledge of physics*

Oh now this is getting confusing. You see I definitely see my own loops tighten with a haul. In fact I think even you spotted this last year. My explanation for this is that by hauling you are effectively slowing down the lower section of the loop creating more speed in the top section which in turn narrows the distance between the 2. This all comes from increased flex on the rod.

*It may be a pleasant side effect: explanation is that you have increased the flex in the rod and the tip has travelled a straight path. BUT that is not the important bit. I (and you) can bend the rod to it's maximum without hauling - simply aerialise enough line. read on :)*

Understood. Reading on.

### **c) how does hauling work?**

It works by increasing the flex in the rod. This is done by taking the slack up in the line, hauling. The product of this is higher line speed. See your trick question !!!

*Of greater significance is that it increases line speed and directly. When you haul you are pulling the line through the air and therefore directly giving it momentum whether or not it increases flex.*

*Think about your handcasting.*

Interesting point. It is possible to get very tight loops without a rod, there goes the theory above. Perhaps I will stick to STANIC!

*The most important thing is that hauling imparts velocity directly to the line. That is why fast hauls are better than slow hauls, and is why it's best to do it at the stop.*

*It's actually simpler than you are writing (I think!) BTW please go through the advice section and read through that stuff. I think that will make some sense :)*

Will take a look. Let me just think about this and make a statement. So, the real reason we put the haul in at the last moment is because that is the point at which the rod is unloading and then we are adding more speed to the line.

*No, this is the point the rod is fully loaded and we haul as we are completing the stroke.*

### **d) can you explain the timing of the haul?**

At the very last moment, just before the rod halts on the back / forward casts.

*OR you can haul through the stroke for a more open loop.*

In your opinion when would this more open loop be necessary ?

*When making curved leader casts, casting a loop in the same direction as the wind and when presenting a weighted fly on a long leader.*

### **Across the wind**

I think it is quite acceptable to stand with your wind on your back, cast up the bank and effectively use your back cast to present the fly.

*I think so too. A double forward cast (Galway Cast) may make this more acceptable to your examiners.*

Not heard of it. Please explain "the double forward cast"

*Thumb behind the rod on both forward and back casts. During the pause you rotate the hand so that the thumb is behind the rod again. Useful tricks in the flycasting section... rotating thumb.*

I remember you showing me this now. I will have a go tomorrow. Plus we need to cover this when I visit.

*Make sure that you are comfortable bringing the hand to your left ear closed stance btw*

O.K.

*They \*might\* want to see the thumb behind the spine :-)*

Good point. So what about the Chinese cast then, when the rod is effectively turned 90 in the hand. The thumb is surely not along the spine then ?

*OK Q. So what about the Chinese cast then, when the rod is effectively turned 90 in the hand. The thumb is surely not along the spine then ? :-)*

So here we are learning that the rod can be at any angle ? Yes / No ? What about the rods changes of shape during casting, it being a hollow tube ?

*Some rods need to be cast through the spine. When I pick up a rod this is one of the first things I check. Otherwise I don't think it matters. But be prepared for an examiner who does and be prepared to demonstrate using a more "conventional" style. You have to be able to teach PMP tradition if the examiner wants this. "Chinese" style is definitely a variation. Haven't heard it called the Chinese cast btw.*

It is called Chinese Style, don't know why. Picked that phrase up from SG. How do you tell which rod is which?

## **Nick's Knowledge part 4**

### **Following Wind**

*I think that the most important point is the need for a low backcast. See lesson 2 of the Experience.*

O.K. Will check it out in a minute.

**a) how do you get a low backcast?**

Tilt rod tip down, cant the arc. Whoops, there goes 1 o'clock !

*There is a much better way and it's a bit technical see advice section tailing winds. You need a Belgian cast for the more advanced caster.*

O.K. getting the printer fired up now.

***b) what about timing of the hauls?***

No different than before, accept that they need to be VERY well timed and FAST.

*see above :-)*

Righty O.

**Some discussions...**

*I think that the questions could be a good way of doing this. There may be some knowledge gaps I'd like to fill in.*

There are a few things in this mail which are technically not spot on. That's ok since I'll lead you into them.

The Apgai will not just test your ability to teach beginners, but you will be assessed in your technical knowledge as well - and that's ok - in fact it's a good thing.

If we really get into this we can create the perfect platform for a stanic instructor to understand what is required in the apgai.

I am sure I do have knowledge gaps, but at the same time remember that we are using \*your\* opinions and thoughts to base \*my\* learning. One "wannabe" instructor ( he is doing STANIC in April ) has already clocked what we are up to and contacted me regarding it, no doubt some of those at the exam will have done so too. Being very aware that APGAI do quite like to fail people I would rather not have my fate determined by what I have written for the Experience Pages. I hope this is O.K. with you.

*I think that you'll be examined by what you do on the day. They don't like to fail people. People who fail say that. They like to pass people. If you are good enough on the day you will pass. How is your casting btw?*

Well I think it is O.K., but then again it can always be better. I look it like this, I know I can teach, I have a pretty successful business now and that didn't come because I don't know what I am talking about. BUT, everyone can better themselves and I do love casting. Basically I realise I have gaps in my knowledge but they are based around more technical sections of the casting game. I think the spring, catapult, weight thing is an easy and pretty successful way of teaching a beginner. I would like to be able to help more advanced casters too.

*Agreed. I use it, but I also make the point that it is not the whole truth. The most important thing (I think) is that your casting is spot on no matter what happens! Nice loops :)*

*I don't look at it as we are using my opinions and thoughts. We are using my knowledge. :-)  
For example flycasting is NOT a catapult effect. Have you ever tried it? Anchored a rod in a field pulled it back to it's max and let go? The line will not pass the rod. And yet you can cast 40 yrds.*

Sorry, that was an unthinking statement on my part. Re worded what I meant was that we are basing this whole thing on your knowledge which is bound to differ from other instructors. After all there are enough theories. The one thing I believe is very important is to provide a broad base of analogies and teaching methods to suit style. Something I see lacking in much of today's tuition.

*The physics of the cast do not change. Just because someone says that the backcast loads the rod for the forward cast doesn't mean they are right. I have heard that and I have read that in books. It is wrong. In what we are doing there are two things. One: the engineering behind everyones cast. That is not opinion, that is physics. Two: my personal style. Whenever that comes up I say so. This is not important and I only throw it in to show that variations are acceptable. Most of what we are writing here comes under the first category.*

Mechanics will differ for each caster and that is important. Guess the best instructors spot the differences quickly.

*Are you confident in your casting - from what I remember it was certainly good.*

I am confident in my casting, no worries. I think my advanced knowledge is lacking or re phrased I am having to think hard about this stuff rather than being able to understand it like I do the basics. Ah, this is the APGAI!

*Let me know what you think. I want to make this the learning curve between Stanic and Apgai. That only works if we bridge that gap!*

Agreed. Happy with everything above.

*Henry Lowe differentiates the stanic and the apgai on fault demonstrating and diagnosis. Can you throw tailing loops at will?*

Yes. Especially on the forward, find this very easy. Maybe need to work on the back a little more, although I am still pretty good at putting them in and taking them out.

*Here's what I suggest. We get technical. We can do the how do you teach stuff when you get here. Although I might start to drop some of this stuff in too. We'll see how it goes.*

Technical is fine Paul so long as it isn't confusing. Remember that we are quite different in our approaches. I cast to fish, you cast ... well to cast. While I would like to heighten my tech knowledge I also want to have revised and practised relevant material for the exam.

*Well actually I cast to fish - this is an unbelievable comment BTW - but you are going to get asked technical stuff I think the point is that it is actually simpler when you have the knowledge then you teach clearer and have confidence.*

True.

## **Nick's Knowledge part 5**

### **Rods and loops**

Let's look at my thoughts then. Soft rod, stop rod, rod carries on moving forward, loop opens, BIG air resistance. Line velocity lost. Vice Versa for Fast Actioned. Plus, slow rod takes longer to unload, thus slow line speeds. And again, vice versa. Now if I am way off, please explain the gap.

*2nd part is correct. 1st part isn't spot on - next email will explain - it has to do with path of tip. A cane rod will do this since it the tip flexes the other way after the stop under it's own weight.*

Not just because it has a soft action then ?

*The tip bouncing forwards won't open the loop up by very much esp since it bounces back again. What is far more important is the path the rod tip travels during the stroke. That is key.*

Sorry I just don't follow. Soft rod, tip goes forwards, opens loop. Even if there is a bounce back the loop has already been opened. Answer me this then, apart from cosmetics, weight etc., why have we changed almost exclusively over to fast actioned carbon rods if we could get the same effect with cane or glass?

### **AFTM continued**

*No I mean that although the AFTM is very specific, the number on the rod is someone's opinion.*

Ah Ha ! Got you ( O.K. thick, I know ). Of course I should have realised this really as people often ask me why rods are 6 - 8, 5 - 7 etc. Huge jumps in weight really and surely if we adhere to the concept of the AFTM ( A ! ) scale, clearly incorrect.

*Q. Let's say a rod was rated 5/6 what weight line would you use and would you use a different weight between DT and WF. If so which way and why.*

I would choose a 5 weight DT and 6 weight WF. The DT is thick throughout it's length so by choosing the lower line size more overhang can be created from the rod tip, thus producing more load on the rod. Too much overhang with a 6 weight DT could effectively overload the rod.

*Ok I understand but overhang is only relative to WF. The point really is that you can aerialise more DT and therefore more weight (mass).*

Conversely the WF has less thick "belly" section b4 it meets the rear taper and running line. While it is fine to have some overhang using a WF too much and the line will not turn over properly as the thin line is not stiff enough to turn over the thick belly section.

*The thin line produces less friction. This can make presentation more difficult. Stiffness is not relevant.*

I understand the less friction thing, no problem. Shooting heads are a good example. But I think stiffness is relevant. Turn a KTL back to front and try and cast it. Not possible. Surely this is similar to the WF extending from the rod tip. Great example of this is watching someone false cast many, many times until they have more running line out of the rod tip than they can handle. It collapses in a heap. But let's think DT, is my explanation regarding overloading with the 6 correct?

*Mass and diameter are important. Not stiffness. Same for leaders. And see below.*

Yes, got this. Mass and diameter, understood. I am thinking too literally. God if only we had been having these discussions 14 years ago, I may have taken Physics as an option !

*Most rods have a progressive action. And since you can vary the amount of line outside the tip you effectively change the loading. You are right to state that ten yards is not correctly loading the rod. But neither is 12 or 14 or 16. Better would be to state that they are all correct.*

Depending on the caster, yes ?

*Partly but mainly depending on the situation. Sometimes you may only want to cast 8 yds, others 20, others 30. The more line you aerialise the greater the flex in the rod and the longer the loop can remain in the air before unfurling.*

Spot on, easy to understand that.

### **Thumb on top of the rod**

So let me get this straight, you have your palm underneath the rod ? Looking at a rod section right now that must mean your 4 fingers are on top of the rod and your thumb on the side. I am trying it now, and boy, is it uncomfortable or what ! Yes, lets look at the grip in more detail.

*At about 45 degrees and that is my starting position. It is not correct, but it is not wrong either. Instead of a wrist snap, I rotate from the elbow. These are the variations the Apgai Prospectus ;- ) talks about*

### **Finger pointing**

Coming to your eye would indeed put the hand inside the elbow. However in fact I have worded this badly. I would use the eye as a \*guide\*, i.e. bringing the rod up "level" with the eye, not in "front" of it. Still don't like the finger up, sorry.

*The stop is when the finger is just outside peripheral vision.*

Right ?

*Or left for a leftie :)*

Of course.

*I don't use the finger pointing grip either... but if you have a guy taking the rod too far back this \*instantly\* fixes it. He can always revert to thumb on top next cast.*

Will try it on Wednesday, my next guest.

*Interested to know what happens*

Will let you know. Now let's ask this. Are we going to base our thoughts upon intermediate and advanced casters ?

*We have to cover it all.*

Good point. Boy this stuff takes some thought. Just hope I don't confuse myself too much. We need to make sure we sort the wheat from the chaff, you know what I mean ? So how well would I have done ?

*Not as well as you will do now. The fact that you can throw a fine loop \*always\* counts for a lot. Some of the stuff you have written is not true, but there again so is Peter MP's book. Massively inaccurate. And I will be making this point in this section. I am not saying every member of the appai has a complete knowledge of flycasting, but if the more you know the better you cast. What I would say is that every flycasting instructor should at the very least understand how flycasting works. This is not a reflection on you since 95% of instructors in the UK would have written something similar. I will make that point in these pages and that is why you have nothing to worry about in relation to this stuff going on the net. You may have passed the APGAI with this stuff 3 yrs ago. I don't know if it's good enough now. Which apart from the fact that I think that you should understand how it works :- ) is a good reason to learn it.*

## ***Pennies dropping!***

### **Overhead cast the physics.**

*Line is lying on the water, the lift is made, this lifts the line and frees it from the water surface, the rod tip is accelerated. This pulls the flyline with it. As it does so the rod flexes. The stop is made. The rod tip straightens adding more velocity to the line. The line continues and passes the rod tip. As it passes it forms a loop. The rod is now unloaded and the loop continues to unfurl until it straightens.*

Top Man. Brilliant. Now it maybe me, but this is my language. Clear and concise, just how teaching should be. You know, you really should write another book.

*Now is the time to drift - but we won't include that here :-)*

All clear, cool. This is in fact exactly how I thought it should be, just think we have been around the houses to get here. That said it has been fun and informative and that is what this is all about!

*Once the line has straightened the rod tip is moved forwards. This moves the line forwards and bends the rod. Rod tip stops line passes tip creating loop. Loop travels out. Angler lowers rod tip.*

Nice.

*I was hoping you'd tell me this :-)*

Sorry. I think I maybe writing too much, often testing my brain hard late at night. Will try and reply earlier and shorter. Fly casting is technical, no doubt about it, but I guess the whole point of this is to raise my ( and the readers ) awareness of these technicalities. Of course at the same time I am digesting them with a view to understanding the mechanics right down to the finest detail in order to be able to teach more advanced casters! Agreed ?

Ah, BTW. Yesterday I taught this guy who I got casting to a pretty reasonable level in October 2001, during some shite weather I hasten to add. Anyway he is a busy hotelier and so our session was the second time only he had cast, he has not practised or touched a rod since October. I found it very interesting that within minutes of picking up the rod he was casting and within an hour, doing so to a very high standard for a novice.

1) This made me very confident that the stuff I am teaching people is going in O.K.

2) It also shows how these mind / muscle co-ordination's required for casting a fly rod are very like those used for driving a car or riding a bike.

Plus, I tried the finger up the rod! Brilliant! Very uncomfortable I found and so did my guest but it without doubt smartens up the back cast, so there we are I have learnt a very useful teaching trick. Thank you Sexyloops!

Finally, (thought I was going to write less!), Trick Question. IYHO what do you think of this statement regarding the double haul ....

How it Works.

"When the line hand pulls the line down say, two feet, in harmony with the power movement of the rod, the line in the air becomes heavier by an equal and opposite reaction to energy applied by the downward haul. Because the rod is in-between the angler and the line, it reacts against the momentarily heavier line and bends yet more. So there you have it, more rod-bend for the same arm movement in both directions or, if you like, the effect of a rod-arm twice as long without major surgery! All by simply pulling the line down at the right time to further flex and load the rod."

And with that I will say cheers for now and then it is on to the roll cast. We need to get cracking as I am off to Africa early Saturday morning.

*Interesting and partly true for short casts, but it misses the mark: you can attain maximum bend in the rod without hauling – try bending the rod against the ground and see just how little force is required to bend the rod to it max flex. Hauling applies line speed directly to the line. It is direct velocity and this is why it is so effective. Where does that quote come from BTW?*

**Putting it together**

*Going to try and make these clearer so that we can find out where we are :-) How is the practising?*

Finding time is hard because at the moment I am flat out, (which is great because it means business is good!). However I played with the finger up thing yesterday and while teaching started to show my guy to forget the clock thing. Now here is the amazing bit and this is sincere and NOT poetic licence.

It really bloody works. In fact, (see last e mail) this guy really taped it for a novice. Shooting up lovely high back-casts, creating nice loops and .... less questions. He understood casting better without the clock, awesome. You see I think he was visualising shooting the line high, NOT where exactly he was stopping the rod. IT REALLY WORKS! I am going to have so much fun playing with this concept in Africa.

### **Rods and loops**

Sorry I just don't follow. Soft rod, tip goes forwards, opens loop. Even if there is a bounce back the loop has already been opened. Answer me this then, apart from cosmetics, weight etc., why have we changed almost exclusively over to fast actioned carbon rods if we could get the same effect with cane or glass?

*Lightness, cost and speed of recovery.*

Yep, agreed. Understood.

### **Stiffness and overhang**

But I think stiffness is relevant. Turn a KTL back to front and try and cast it. Not possible. Surely this is similar to the WF extending from the rod tip. Great example of this is watching someone false cast many, many times until they have more running line out of the rod tip than they can handle. It collapses in a heap."

### **Rod action and arc**

*If you were to use a softer rod you would have to open up the arc more... right?*

By drifting? Or when stopping. This is a little confusing.

The casting arc... you would cast using a greater arc to accommodate for the increased bend. Have you read any of Mel Kriegers work? Jason Berger?

No. Going to get on line next and order both works, if that is possible as I am not sure if JB's book is out yet.

### **Rod flex**

*Check out the first page of the casting tips on site for diagrams. The penny dropped just there - it's the same thing. The greater the bend in the rod the greater the casting arc required for a straight path of the tip.*

Not checked the diagrams yet, but can visualise this now and quite easily. Really looking forward to our meeting on 15th April. Doing anything on the 14th? We could do a day then

too and jam in some fishing if you fancy it. BTW you really must get yourself up here later in 2002 so I can get you into Saltwater Fly, (plus a few veggie curries and the odd beer). I mean you could use the help, right?!

Where I am slightly confused is on the rod stopping section of your thoughts.

*You stop the rod, the line passes the rod, the loop is formed. The more abrupt the stop the more efficient the energy transfer.*

Easy. We (YOU!) are getting this thing organised now. The barriers are coming down and I am starting to THINK!

When you make your initial backcast, where are you expecting the rod to stop? And then for the forward. What about for a fast rod, and a slow?

*There is no fixed point. I shall explain this when we meet. The penny will drop here too. All that matters is the path of the rod tip. EVER.*

It has dropped, already. What's EVER?

Give me some ideas about slowing down. Would I be right in thinking that casters who push are working on more leverage rather than flex?

Yes.

Ah ha, more pennies!

### **Engineering and rod flex**

*I covered something similar to this in University - so ok I wasn't always a trout bum - and when the weather stops raining I hope do some video analysis.*

Cool. You went to Uni! So do you have a degree then?

*Nope; decided to do something else.*

What did you do?

*This.*

### **High backcasts and late stops**

Umm, trying to think this one out. Think you are going to need to show me. You see the way I think about it is that you stop the rod early to get a high back cast, after this you can do what you like to create more time. Drifting for example to tighten loop and give rod more time to load. How do you get a high back cast if you stop at 2??

*So long as the rod tip travels upwards during the stroke it doesn't matter where you stop.*

Right, piece of cake! I FEEL the APGAI power!

### **Drifting and what it achieves**

*Drifting doesn't do either of those things you mention. Check out drifting in advice section.*

Precisely. Drifting provides the caster with more time and a greater arc to flex the rod, right. The key is that the initial stroke **MUST** be up. Correct ?

*The real key to drifting is that it takes out excess energy*

## **Rod Loading**

*When we make a backcast we load the rod and when we make the forward cast we load the rod again. In the overhead cast we load the rod twice, right? What I meant was some people think that the back cast loads the rod like a spring and the forward cast unleashes it - which is wrong.*

Of course it is! This is really making sense. I am always telling novices about the rod loading on the back cast and not paying enough attention to the physics. Think about loading the rod both ways and your on the way to being a better caster, right?

This reminds me of something. I always back shoot on a DH now. Never used to, until you showed me the benefits of it. Before I was only giving the rod line on the forward section. Do you see my point here. Unwittingly I have been teaching my people the importance of loading the rod on the back cast, while actually realising the benefits of loading the rod twice during my own casting. Who's idea was this APGAI teaching on the web stuff? Damned good idea! Chinese Style

How do you tell which rod is which? (reference to previous question on whether the spine of a rod makes a difference to the cast - P.)

*Cast it straight. Cast it 90 degrees. If you perceive a difference then cast it straight.*

Will try this. And understand it already (I'm having a good day!). Moving onwards

*If you are happy with the above then let's move on to roll cast.... are you happy with the above?*

Very. It has taken a while to sort the WFTC but it has been worth it and I feel I am thinking on a higher level. That was the aim, right? Cheers, I am going to open a window, grab some breaky, confirm some bookings and then it's roll cast time. Cheers Matey, really, really, enjoying this now.

## **Will Nick pass? :-)**

Since the last upload Nick and I have discussed roll casts and he has been over for a lesson and a curry.

So the big question on everyone's lips is "will he pass?"

Well it would be very unfair of me to comment on this and so I won't and besides I am not one of the examiners and so I have no idea. Of course I sincerely hope that he does pass! I

believe that it will take him into a flycasting world where everyone shares ideas and has the genuine desire to learn, no matter what age; and that just has to be good.

Nick would be the first to admit that he was a bit rocky on the mechanics of the cast when he first came into this. We have fixed this of course :-)

I had a close look at his casting style and spent most of the day trying to smarten up his back stroke. The last time I met Nick was around about a year ago and his style has changed slightly to include a hook into the backcast (by this I mean that the rod tip is travelling in a path out to his side as opposed to straight up and down in a vertical line; the loop follows this path and travels off to the side of the rod). For the Apgai they will want to see the line travel directly over the rod tip for both forward and backcasts (since this makes for both a more efficient loop and better transfer of energy from the rod to the line).

Although Nick has a little work to do, he now knows the areas to work upon and will be spending the last 72 hrs leading up to his exam standing in a field weilding a rod around his head...



### ***The Roll Cast***

**Paul writes:** So Nick, describe for me a roll cast please as you would for the apgai, explaining how it works etc :-)

**Nick answers:** THE ROLL CAST.

Uses: Straightening line (starting off), fishing fly to the bank and casting in enclosed places.

What to do: Position tip of rod at around chin height, make a slow "sweeping movement" first of all horizontal and then steadily elevating the rod.

Aim to position the rod tip reasonably high, just behind the shoulder. If performed correctly the line should "slide" across the water and form a hanging D shape (belly) from the tip of the rod to the water.

It is most important to ensure that a small amount of line remains in the water. This will create an anchor point which I will discuss later.

To make the cast the movement should be rather like "swatting a fly". Firstly begin building the speed in the rod before finishing off with a strong wrist snap, this should be performed in a fluid manner. The rod should finish reasonably high to ensure the line passes over the water and not into it.

Basically this cast works by using the anchor point to flex the rod, using the weight held within the D, it is therefore most important that this shape is formed prior to the cast. The power application is also critical.

**Paul:** When else can you use a roll cast?

**Nick:** Thought I covered that. Pull your line up from deep when fishing a fast sinker? I have already said, enclosed conditions, straightening line and fishing the fly to your feet.

**Paul:** I can think of one other roll cast circumstance; when a tailing wind is too strong to make a backcast.

What is the correlation between the amount of line in the D-loop and the amount of force you require in the cast?

**Nick:** Small D Loop - More Force, Large D Loop - Less Force

**Paul:** Correct. What path should the rod tip follow?

**Nick:** Horizontal.

**Paul:** A straight-line path is a better answer. How do you cast (a) an open loop (b) a tight loop?

**Nick:** (a) Widen Casting Arc (b) Tighten Casting Arc

**Paul:** As well as the tip on the line being on the water it should be stationary. Describe minimum drag techniques and hauling please!

**Nick:** Minimum Drag, ensure the tip remains at a constant horizontal level b4 lifting. Do not dip down so the line falls in the water. Use a nice long sweep to lift a lot of line off the water, ensure the rod tip remains high and when making the forward stroke do not dip the tip downwards at the back prior to the forward stroke. The smaller the drag the less power and force is needed to complete the cast. With too much drag the cast will collapse at the end or worse still; go no-where.

Hauling will create a higher line speed and help with distance. It also helps to increase accuracy, the faster the line moves the more likely it is to reach the target. The haul should be put in during the wrist snap power application.

**Paul:** I think minimum drag referred to is the "jump roll".

**Nick:** Yep. Or what I refer to as the "Switch"

**Paul:** Describe this please.

**Nick:** The jump roll or switch is a cast which can be used in enclosed spaces providing greater distance than the simple roll.

It is created by moving the rod in a horizontal path and then lifting swiftly into a vertical. This is managed through a sweep of the arm and a flick / roll of the wrist. A simple way of visualising the tip path is to imagine an L shape which has toppled over.

If performed correctly you will end up with a large D loop moving behind the shoulder at speed and a small "anchor" or "stick" point of line in the water. In a nutshell the bigger the loop and the smaller the stick, the better the cast. It is worth noting that the anchor point is critical, without it the cast will fail and that enough time **MUST** be left for the loop to form. Varying loop sizes can be created for given circumstances ( i.e. amount of obstructions ). The smaller the loop, the more power is required to make the cast. Also small loops need very small anchor points otherwise the cast will fail. This cast is the basis of a series of casts known as the Speys.

**Paul:** and... roll casting into the wind?

**Nick:** Roll casting into the wind can be tricky due to the fact that a D Loop is required and this can be quite literally, blown out. So, to counter this it is often wise to tilt the rod at an angle and almost cast under the wind. This helps to reduce air resistance.

Other skills which will help make a successful cast are Hauling to give the line more speed/velocity and when making the tap forwards it is wise to push the tip down towards the surface.

**Paul:** The first part is an interesting answer. What I was looking for is that the casting arc should be rotated forwards so the once the loop has straightened it is on the water surface as in the overhead cast written about earlier. However the point about making the roll cast off the side is a good one and achieves the same result. And how would you deal with cross winds?

**Nick:** Cross Winds are easy to cope with. For a right handed caster form the roll exactly as you would when casting off the right shoulder, except take the rod so as your hand finishes in the peripheral vision of your left eye. It is worth mentioning a common mistake made with this cast. When casting off the right shoulder with a wind from left to right, one should always perform the cast on the rod side of the line. If this is not the case the line will cross/tangle. So when you are a right hander with the wind from right to left cast off the left shoulder but ensure that the stroke is made to the right of the line. For lefties just swap the principles discussed.

**Paul:** A couple of points here, when forming a D-loop off the opposite shoulder it can help to twist at the waist and when executing the stroke keep the back of the hand behind the rod. You are correct and one should ensure that the rod never crosses the flyline laying on the water surface (which is of course why we have Spey casts). And please describe the change of direction.

**Nick:** With the simple roll it is not possible to make big changes of direction. The only way this can be done is to make several rolls, which in a fishing situation is not acceptable due to the disturbance caused by the line on the water.

This is where Spey Casting and the Snake Roll can be used. Basically these casts ensure that the D Loop is placed 180 degrees opposite the eventual target. Absolutely critical for good roll casts and the variations such as the double, single speys and jump roll, snake roll.

To sum up good roll casts and the variations: big D loop, small anchor point and 180 degrees.

**Paul:** It is also worth stressing that the tip of the line should be stationary and the D-loop should be placed downwind and approx half a rod length to the side.

Nick has now gone to visit Michael Evans before taking his exam on Friday

**Good Luck Nick!!**

***Nick says thanks!***

Hi Paul,

Firstly many, many thanks for all your time and effort on Monday. Very, very helpful. Like the look of the stuff on site, apart from your reference to my shoes. Nike Air I will have you know and very conducive to sexyloops! ( Well late in the day anyway )

So what did I get out of my day with you. Unbelievably I have started thinking in slightly more simple, get to the point style, which is strange as I often read your site, talk with you etc., and we disappear off on a technical tangent.

From this day I also realised that this hook problem, is not really a problem. It is there because I am looking for it, sweeping my shoulders and causing it. I also realise that a lot of anglers ( including instructors ) are doing this. What I need to ensure is that I can explain what's happening and cast straight when required etc.

Before I go into our experience on Monday let me talk about yesterday because it was a revelation. Firstly what a seriously nice guy Michael Evans is. He was straight up front with the fact that he is "old school" and that perhaps younger guys like you and I are the future of the sport. Not only did I respect him highly for admitting this fact but also I felt relaxed in his presence immediately. BTW he seriously respects you as a caster.

Then came a few differing points in the tuition he worked through with me and his approach. He wants me using the clock, not necessarily because it is his approach but because he tells me this "is" what APGAI "will" want. Also he likes the use of weight's, springs and catapults and this is along the lines of how I already teach. Moving on from here he highlighted the fact

that while fly casting can become incredibly technical I must concentrate on the "casts to fish" when preparing for this exam and then pursue the more complicated stuff such as ultra tight sexyloops etc., in my own time. As he said the technical stuff is the fundamentals of APGAI but it is highly important that the basic mechanics are understood inside out.

We had a brilliant session. He totally backed up the stuff I had been getting from you about arriving straight at the point. Showed me easier ways about visualising the casts, picked out the odd fault in my technical thinking and above all got me really excited about the joys of linking certain movements and thoughts into each cast. I have loads of work to do to get this right and practice will be happening in a big way but I have been spurred on by the fact that Michaels closing comment was that if I demonstrated my casting on Friday as I did in front of him that he would be confident that I would pass my APGAI! Believe me I am going to do my very best. He did not pick out any hook problem and I believe that was because it was not there, so THANK YOU again Paul. Plus I was due to finish with him at noon, we went on to 1 and he did not charge me extra, that was seriously appreciated.

Right now that I have got that out of my system. Starting with you on Monday I was disillusioned at my own casting. My knuckles were white on the cork, I was stiff, not visualising and above all trying to hard with the technical explanations. And so it continued through out the day! Being bluntly honest I was not enjoying the experience and this is in no way a reflection on yourself but simply that casting is a state of mind. Session 4 ( I think that was the number we did ) was ground breaking. It clicked, suddenly you had tuned my mind and muscles back into what I am here to do, cast flies and teach people how to. As you will remember from my excitable state upon leaving I was suddenly enthusiastic again about my own ability and the fact that for this to work you have to have belief in yourself. THANK YOU Paul because you unlocked that belief.

So rather than just the technique which is so important Paul I really got to grips with the fact that you need to be in tune. From here we discussed low back casts, high forwards, straight line tips, the importance of stopping, energy values, creating loops, and so the list goes on. If I am honest the tuition we worked through was not so much what I am going to be demonstrating on Friday. The importance is that it has heightened my technical understanding so that the mechanics are now more firmly than ever ingrained in my brain.

Let us hope it is ingrained enough. Friday will tell.

BTW reading your newsletter I back up my comment that you have changed. You are a different person. You should get your comments on life into print because I think you have some Geirach in there!

Cheers for Now, Nick.

### ***The Build Up***

**Paul writes:** Well how was it then????

**Nick answers:** Here's the story, things couldn't have got off to a worse start!

As you know I am a pretty busy guy these days and in the run up to my APGAI examination I was sorting a million and one things associated with running a full time fly fishing business, anyway this meant that there was much tyre smoke as I squealed off up the hill out of my

home town, late as usual! Mind you as you found out on Monday last Paul a Golf Gti can do some serious shit in the right hands and so it was that in no time I was going over the Severn Bridge heading for the land of rarebit.

Got to the toll booth, handed over my plastic, got it chucked back at me and asked for cash since Wales hasn't got around to credit card technology yet. Problem was I was banking on picking up my cash from an ATM in Wales, should have known better I guess. So there I am at 6pm with a shed load of seriously pissed off drivers behind me. They send out a Land Rover, open the barrier and then escort me back across the M4 ( In front of everyone!) towards Blighty! Now I am bombing back down the M5 to a service station for cash just so I can get into Wales!

You should have seen the power slides going on and at one point my pocket rocket was nudging 115 mph. Yes I was on the APGAI trail and there was no damn way that some Toll Booth operator was going to stop me!

With a nice crisp 20 in my wallet it was back over the bridge and this time they let me in. The rest of the journey was really cool and I must admit that Wales as it is actually a damn pretty place. Around 7.45 pm I rolled up in the hotel car park ready for the evening meal scheduled for 8.30pm.

Having scoffed my face silly it was into the lounge to bite nails, along with everyone else. Even so the guys running the show did their very best to relax us by getting the likes of Ken Smith doing some excellent jokes and Gary Champion taking off our favourite West Country comedian, Jethro to a T. Even so the fidgeting going on was very noticeable and most headed for the sack. Not me of course as I enjoy late nights and of course the odd jar and as Gwilym Hughes had opened a nice LBV Port it seemed a shame to let it go to waste! Plus there was some really good cheese to go with it.

Finally I hit the hay and suprisingly went out like a light, until around 3.30am, when I woke up going through pile casts, snake rolls and visualising vertical loops. This really helped actually, but more on that later. Up at 7am, down for Brekky and then .... well nothing. You see the exams started at 9.00 am, with Lunch at 12.45pm and then exams continuing until 6pm. I was due on at 4.45pm! So now there I was with 7hrs to kill!!! There was only one thing for it, practice! So as a rather nervous looking lot headed off for their "torture" I pulled on my boots, strung up the 9ft T&T Vector ( seriously getting to like this rod now BTW ) for a 5 line and headed towards the River Irfon.

With me was a very nice guy called Jackie Coyne who had come over from Ireland. 1/2 an hour we spent enjoying the Welsh scenery, flicking the rods, thinking through the questions we were going to be asked and generally enjoying life. Then JC got on to the Snake Roll and asked me for a little help as this is one of my favourite casts, and so I did.

Except for one small problem, my rather overpriced and totally impractical Hunter Wellies decided that they were NOT going to remain stuck to the Welsh terra firma and promptly gave me a better view of the Irfon than I would have liked!

My boots were filled, my trousers completely soaked, as was my neatly pressed shirt etc., which I had carefully prepared and transported up to Builth Wells on a hanger! This was not good and so sheepishly I left Jackie to practice, feeling very sorry for myself as I was just starting to get into the practice session going.

Arriving back at the hotel I did my best to look dry and crept past the receptionist in my water filled Hunters ( taking them off would have been a dead give away ) and up to my room where I changed into dry kit.

My pride repaired I decided I needed to get back to the practice and this time swapped my poncy Hunters for a rather better set of Simms breathables and felt sole boots. Mind you while I was doing this the first sombre faces were arriving back with all sorts of comments regarding their performances and examiners! But, I put it to the back of my mind and made a 2nd sortie to the River.

The next couple of hours were cool and I really got the wrist lined up, the rolls coming off both sides and with the river as an aid got right back into my Speys, these are seriously helpful casts and I intend to spend a lot more time practising them. The most important thing was that I was loosening and things were starting to flow, and my loop was going out vertical. I was feeling good, which was supprising since there was now about 4hrs to go.

And so it went on. Lunch was fine except many people were feeling down about their performance and explaining that hey had frozen during the exam. Better get looser I thought, so down to the river again. I carried on playing with all the casts, snakes, single and double Speys, overheads, double haul, switch, curve, pile, wiggle, aerial mends, reach and my leader length.

I didn't want too much leader as let's face it we want superb turn over all the time, but especially for an exam, and wool which was my substitute fly is quite air resistant. Having experimented I arrived at a 6ft Knotless Tapered Leader as ideal, with peach wool tied on the end with a blood knot. This I then greased heavily with Gink along with the wool so that it would not absorb too much water and pull under. For the exam I put together a brand new leader set up.

And then it was 4pm, just 45 minutes to go and I was on! I could not believe how quickly the time had gone and now here I was. Final preparation was checking all my joining knots to ensure they were ultra small, well ginked leader and wool and a good dose of line cleaner and slick. My Rio Indicator Line and T&T was now ready for business and so was I. Platform A, here I come.

I was feeling quite relaxed until I walked through the gate, and spotted Platform A. Suddenly my throat was dry and I realise that I was about to find out first hand what APGAI is all about ....

To be continued... !!! :D :D :D Nick

### ***The APGAI Exam***

**Paul writes:** So how \*was\* the exam then??? P.

**Nick answers:** Hi P,

Thought I would keep you in suspense, ha! Had the Spanish Guide I work with over for the last few days so getting to the keyboard has been a little difficult too, since we seem to spend a reasonable amount of time either fishing or in the pub!

The exam was great. Ron Holloway was first to introduce himself and explain that he was a newcomer to fly fishing and then Robin Gow followed with the same spiel. So, I thought "right that's the way to play it, act like these guys are just regular clients and make damned sure you do a good job!" They help a little though by providing some leads which I felt was much better than STANIC which I must admit always felt a little artificial.

So first off it was the safety stuff like diseases from water, buoyancy aids, the obligatory shades, hat etc., No problem there of course I must have explained these things a thousand times. Now on the platform I was asked to demonstrate "how I would get a beginner going". The Roll Cast is my choice, I think it is a nice little cast to give people the feel of the rod, get a bit of line out and of course it is a great way of ensuring a reasonably straight line, so important for effective and safe overhead casts. Then there was into the wind, and minimal drag which I particularly enjoyed as I love the switch/jump roll. Note I say "enjoyed", yes, I really was starting to enjoy the experience!

Next we were on to the overhead, normal, open stance, closed, into the wind and wind from behind. Then came casting off the opposite shoulder for awkward rod side winds, so I was given chance to practice and demonstrate a new trick that I have learned through ME where by instead of bringing the rod to the left eye, which I always find/found uncomfortable, you actually tilt the thumb on it's side and kick the butt of the rod outside the wrist. Then by making a regular cast to the right eye ( for right handers like me ) the tip tracks across the left shoulder as does the loop. I had practised this loads having been shown and believe me it seriously works. I also showed the alternative left eye thing, just to show I could do it.

Every now and again I was asked to stop and answer some questions. Stuff about Entomology, Sea Trout flies, Safety Precautions on Boats and such like. No real struggles there, and there shouldn't be as I do this stuff every day now and so of course I \*should\* know it.

Here comes the \*Advanced Stuff\*, as the Spey's started in earnest. The Gink on the wool trick was working well as it was remaining nicely visible meaning I could pick up nicely and watch for good turn over. Spey's are always hard to visualise on a lake, but fortunately as a confidence booster my platform was seen to be on the right bank with a down stream wind, thus the Right Hand Double Spey was called for. Cool, I like this cast and talked through the fact that in essence this very useful set of casts are no more than Change of Direction Rolls and have a great many uses within all manner of fishing styles ( in fact last night I was using the Single Spey on a small brook ) and with that I began to demonstrate and teach.

No problems there, although half way through it suddenly struck me that this meant I may get asked to do the Single Spey off this bank, which meant using the \*left\* hand, not so nice! And it happened, except that they bunged a trick in there and asked for a single off the right bank with a downstream wind, this I could not visualise and did not attempt. My brain was telling me something, and it seemed as if I was there for ages pondering, when I turned to them both and saw them smiling.

Of course I knew that this was impossible, well bloody dangerous really, and so then they told me that really we had an upstream wind and away I went. The left hand worked well and I was quietly praising myself for working hard on this hand in my practice.

It was also good Paul that you had drummed in the fly being down wind of you during our Mon 15th sesh, which I have always known, but this "revision" helped me immensely when the "trick question" was thrown in!

Ah, the Snake Roll. My favourite cast! Easy off the right hand as I am always doing it and another nice boost to the confidence. Showed some nice big D Loops, got it all timed and watched as the wool hurtled out to a perfect turnover. The essential practice in the preceding days was starting to show it's benefits, except that I knew that I was about to be asked to perform the same cast off my left side, and I guessed this would be my weakest demo. Even so, got a few out on the water and although they were far from perfect it was suggested that I speed up slightly and then it was put to me "what's wrong with that cast!".

Instantly I answered that I do not always land perfectly my D Loop so that it points at the target. I realised that I was not being put down but merely tested on my knowledge, but this incident banged home that this was a cast to work on.

A slight twinge in my mind that this may have bugged my chances a little I told myself that all the other casting had been strong and that I knew that I had turned my overhead loop into something very vertical ( thanks Paul, you should see it now Paul!) ) in just a matter of days and therefore this can be fixed too. Plus of course we all have a natural hand and mine is the right, and the Snake is no problem for me off this side. So forget it and do the ...

Slack Line Casts. All O.K. here, with Curve Casts, Parachute and whoops why did my Wiggle keep disappearing!!! I felt this was my only really sticky moment as several times I showed the cast, wiggled and watched as the line landed nice and straight!

Then it was put to me that maybe "shooting all that line wasn't helping matters", which again I knew was the problem but I think that this last 10 minutes had just a few signs of "stage nerves" It had been a long slow crawl towards this day and I was just feeling it a little. But no matter because before I knew it the call for "Double Haul" was upon me and I told myself to relax.

Having explained how this cast works I was then asked to demonstrate how I would teach someone "Tarpon Fishing with a 10 weight and a big fly", nice smooth hauls, widened arc and out it went.

"O.K. Nick, let's imagine that this fish is a little further than 15 yds away, which had been my average cast distance through the exam. "How about showing us what this 5 weight can really do, how about shooting on the back cast with a drift they said!?" ... as the backing thumped up against the butt ring and my indicator line strobed to a standstill I knew that this would be my final stroke for the day.

We left the platform with Robin Gows closing question being "what does APGAI stand for?" and Ron Holloways suggestion that "he thought he may quite like to take up fly fishing!"

I thought this was a favourable remark but had my slightly rusty Left Hand Snake and the flustered Wiggle spoilt the whole thing? Quietly I walked back to the car trying to ponder on the good stuff and telling myself that at least it was over now, and when I looked at my watch I realised I had been there a long time, having started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.45pm!!! It had been a lot of work, but you know I had really enjoyed being tested and I actually think it lifted my casting.

Right now I feel tremendously confident and have been fishing some real nasty twiggy bits of river recently, is there some magic in the cap I came home with that says APGAI ?! I cannot explain the feeling when Michael Evans welcomed me as a member, well I can, IT WAS AWESOME!

The guys within APGAI are great. As I relaxed (the first time I had properly in 24 hours!) during our evening meal with my goal accomplished and listening / taking part in the fishing / casting banter I realised that I was now part of a group that can only further my casting because there is just so much to learn! The whole thing was a nerve racking but seriously worthwhile experience and I drove home with a real Cheshire Cat grin, stepping out to teach my first client as an APGAI just 7 hrs after arriving home!

Thank you Paul, you have been a serious inspiration as without you I don't know if I would have ever got around to pushing myself to do this. I am so glad I have now and it has been in no small part thanks to your time and patience. When me next meet, Beers ( and lot's of them!) plus Curry are on me. So, when are we going to meet up and celebrate?!!!

Finally though I know that I have a lot of work to do yet and that it is now that the real development starts. This experience will really help me to go that extra yard to learn more and try and better myself as I will certainly have to, to keep up with the rest of these guys. In a nutshell if you play tennis against the same standard or lower, you never get better, with APGAI under my belt I am on the way to Centre Court at Wimbledon, \*BUT\* no where near there yet! Oh, and BTW I have decided I am going to sit my Salmon next year!

Cheers for now mate and keep in touch,

All the Best, Nick.

**Paul writes:** Well done Nick!!! Next step [MANIC](#) and beware the [APGAI hat](#) :-) :-)

*The next phase is to corner an APGAI examiner; this \*will\* be fun!*

## Lesson 6 – ‘ The Double Haul’

### **The Double Haul 1 – Basic**

I've been threatening to teach the Double Haul to Steve ever since I began the Beginner's section two years ago. But it was only while teaching in Berlin recently that I realised exactly how I should do it. This is the method [Mel Krieger](#) uses; Mel is possibly the best flycasting instructor I've met. His method involves pantomime, which is a great teaching technique. And just *perfect* for Sexyloops.

You will notice here that I am not using my normal flyrod, but instead a pencil. No doubt you are now sitting in front of a computer screen. I want you too to pick up a pencil (imaginary or otherwise) and mimic my actions in time with me; it will take a little practice. Before you try this, move your cursor to the movie, right click it and make the movie full screen (press esc key to return). Keep playing the movie until you drill the actions into your "muscle memory".



The correct time to practice shooting/releasing line is immediately upon completion of the haul.

This is the *basic* double haul stroke and teaching method - I've matched the haul to the stroke; in the next instalment I'll adapt this slightly. On this site and on the Board we have pulled the double haul to pieces and we're in the process of dismantling the overhead cast. Here is a recent [article on the Double Haul](#). There are many others on Sexyloops, but for now, if you can't double haul, this is page for you. For a movie of the Double Haul in action visit the [paulcast Movie](#).



### **Quick Tips:**

1. When practicing start off very s l o w l y
2. Keep the rod hand stationary when bringing the hands together
3. Try practicing in front of a mirror

4. With this basic haul the haul should mirror the stroke in both length and intensity.

### ***The Double Haul 2 – Distance***

Hopefully! you have now grasped the timing for the basic double haul, I'm going to make it more effective - don't give up on this if you haven't; it takes only a little practice when suddenly it all clicks. To begin with, the first time you try out the double haul for yourself, you know, live, outdoors with a rod in your hand and not a pencil, practice the timing given in the [previous lesson](#). Many people find the timing given in this second lesson to be slightly more difficult initially, but easy to master once the basic co-ordination has been ingrained.

In this video I am applying the haul as I'm turning the wrist over at the end of the stroke. If you want to break it down further, close inspection of the [Sexyloops videos](#) should reveal that I begin hauling in earnest as the rod butt passes the perpendicular.

When teaching this timing I often replace the word "Stop" with the "Down" in the "Down-up". The Stop is a *squeeze stop*, for many people it is also a little flick of the wrist.

There are two common faults when you first learn to double haul. The first is failure to get your hands back together for the beginning of the forward cast. The second is getting the hands together but with slack line forming between the hauling hand and the butt ring. It is important to think "smooth", slow down and work on making the backcast no more than a upward flick of the tip.



Some instructors I know teach turning the wrist out slightly so that the reel and rings are out to the side, this can speed up learning the double haul since line doesn't grasp the rod during the pause, but instead shoots easier, enabling your hauling hand to drift up.

There have been numerous discussions regarding the exact mechanics of double haul here on Sexyloops. The double haul has two effects: a greater load on the rod and a direct increase in line speed. One of the best tips in

double hauling for distance is to haul as fast as you possibly can.

Please give me feedback on these lessons; to my knowledge this has not been attempted before. Check out this page which shows the [Double Haul from another angle](#).

In the final lesson: Stealth Hauls :)

### ***The Double Haul 3 – Stealth***

The first lesson was [basic double haul](#) timing where the hauling hand mirrors the stroke - that's the best way to learn. The second lesson was an [improved double haul](#); the haul

acceleration being applied as the rod is flicked/squeezed near the end of the stroke - that's the best way to do it.

Hauling isn't just something we use for distance however; it's something useful for *every* cast. If having read these pages, you're struggling to master the double haul, then pay some attention to your stroke: remember a good stroke doesn't apply power throughout the stroke, but *concentrated towards the end*.

Although there are other methods of teaching and learning the double haul, many of which are covered [here, in the Casting Manual](#), this pantomime method is particularly good for teaching large groups and (hopefully) here on Sexyloops. In this final video I'm applying little "stealth" hauls, you don't even need to leave you desk to practice these :)

You can use short hauls to enhance other components of the cast; for example, on this page I'm using the haul to help lift the line [into the Switch Cast](#).

If you've found these lessons useful, or have any thoughts I can use to improve them, then please [email me](#)!

Cheers, Paul

