

THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors
Winter 2006*

A TEACHING TECHNIQUE: HANDS ON

By Floyd Franke

Hands on is the practice of using your hands, as the instructor, to guide the student's rod hand through the casting stroke. I was first introduced to the technique at the Wulff School where the stroke is divided into two elements: a Loading Move and a Power Snap in addition to Follow-Through which lies outside the casting stroke. Ideally the use of *hands on* allows the student to feel the cast and with the aid of the instructor, be able to identify the following:

1. The Path
2. The Speed
3. When to use tension and when to relax
4. The separation of the Loading Move and the Power Snap.

My use of *hands on*, as my primary teaching technique has clearly demonstrated its value. It is without exception the most efficient way to teach the three-dimensional movements of the casting stroke,

reducing the amount of time usually spent trying to talk your student through a cast.

In its most misdirected form, *hands on* would see an instructor standing behind a student on his or her casting side and reaching over the student's shoulder to grip the rod or the student's casting hand. Unfortunately this over the shoulder approach usually ends up with the instructor pulling the student's hand out of alignment with the target.

Maximum benefit from *hands on* can only be achieved when careful attention is given to the positioning of the hands and where you, as the instructor, stand.

Proper Positioning

Place your right hand (for a right handed student) lightly over top of the student's rod hand. Place your thumb on top of the student's thumb as he or she grips the rod (*See Figure 1, page 2*).

Floyd Franke is a member of the FFF Casting Board of Governors (CBOG) and served as CBOG Chairman for 5 years. Floyd is the lead instructor at the Wulff School of Fly Casting.

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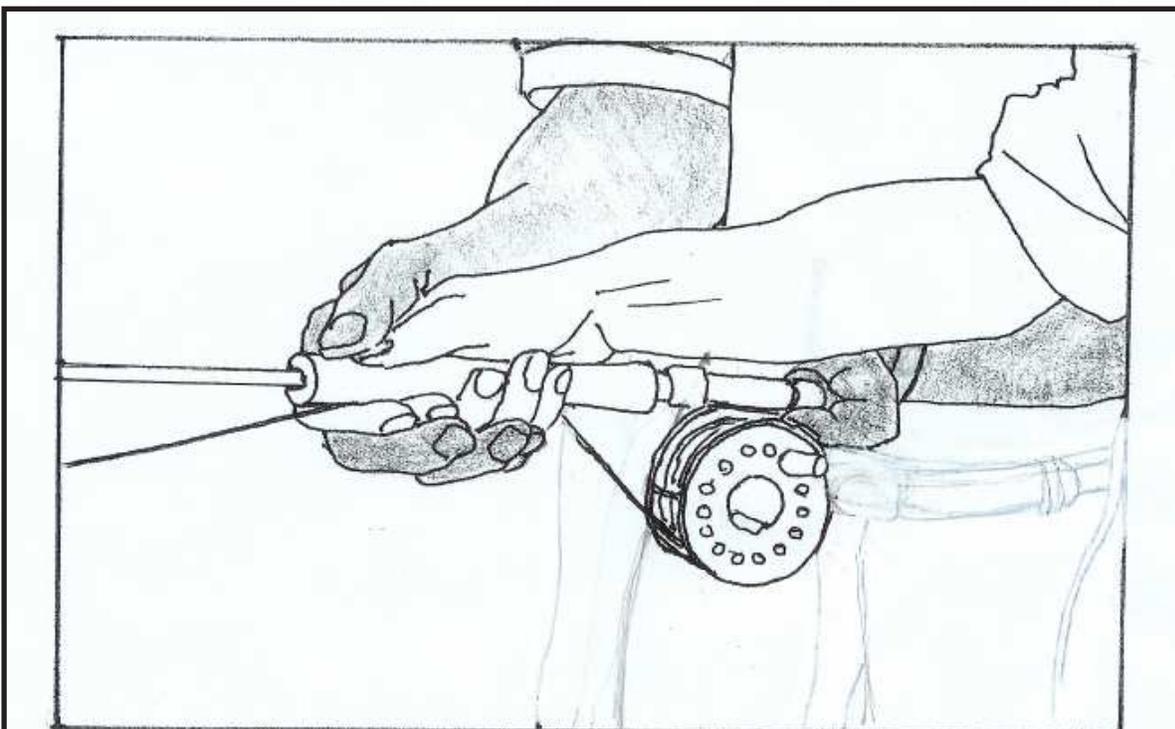


Figure 1: Place your right hand (for a right handed student) lightly over top of the student's rod hand. Place your thumb on top of the student's thumb as he or she grips the rod. Your left hand grips the end cap on the rod butt lightly between the thumb and index finger to control the degree of wrist rotation.

Done properly you should be able to feel the amount of tension your student is using to grip the rod and when casting, the changes in tension which occur with the application of power near the end of the cast, during the power snap.

Your left hand grips the end cap on the rod butt lightly between the thumb and index finger to control the degree of wrist rotation. (See Figure 1). Care should be taken not to allow the rest of the hand to

touch the student's forearm as doing so is distracting. Your forearm should be aligned parallel to the student's, although it may be to the inside, outside or below to control elbow/arm movement. (See Fig.2). The exact position of your forearm would be determined by the physical differences between student/teacher.

When a male instructor works with a female student, for example, the instructor's forearm is outside the student's forearm, (See Figure 3). A

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short instructor working man-on-man or woman-on-woman with a tall student would find it more comfortable and effective to position his or her forearm below that of their student's.

Proper positioning of the forearm to meet the requirements imposed by gender or body size may challenge the most double jointed, but proper

positioning is primary to achieving the effectiveness of this technique. Sometimes a change in body position or stance will alleviate the problem.

The suggested stance is to stand on the side with your right foot slightly in front of the student. If you find your position awkward try moving a little left or right or stepping slightly forward or back. When positioning yourself, remember the objective is to be able to lead the student through the cast without pulling his or her arm out of alignment with the target (See Figure 2).



Figure 2: Your forearm should be aligned parallel to the student's, although it may be to the inside, outside, or below to control elbow/arm movement. When positioning yourself ... the objective is to be able to lead the student through the cast without pulling his or her arm out of alignment with the target.

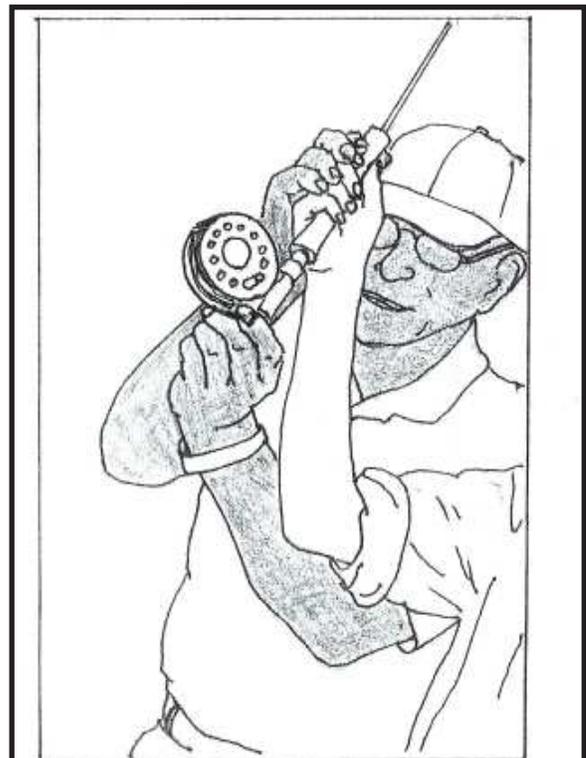


Figure 3: When a male instructor works with a female student the instructor's forearm is outside the student's forearm.

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Once you are in position, and assuming that an explanation and demonstration of the casting task to be performed has been given, *hands on* instruction proceeds in three steps:

1. The instructor performs the stroke; the student relaxes and follows along
2. Instructor and student do it together
3. Student performs the stroke: instructor relaxes and follows along.

In Step 1, be quick to identify and draw attention to the important parts of the cast and any changes you make in speed and tension as you go through the cast.

In Step 2, let your student know whenever he or she is out of sync and make the necessary corrections.

In Step 3, give feedback as warranted. Be quick to praise good execution and offer support and encouragement when change is needed. If further instruction is needed to perfect the task, give your student a break then repeat the three step process.

It is important to note that because of the physical contact when using *hands on*, you should

always obtain permission from the student to use it. Students at the Wulff School are given an explanation and demonstration of the technique early in their introduction to the school. Those who have any objections to its use are asked to inform their instructor of their preference. There have never been any objections; only praise for the results.



PRESENTING YOUR BACK CAST

By Capt Bruce Chard

The backcast presentation is one of the most overlooked and underrated casts; however backcast presentation is one of the most effective casts in the saltwater casting arsenal. Using your backcast as a presentation cast can dramatically improve your odds of catching fish rise. Strength and practice to build muscle memory are required to present your backcast with the same authority and accuracy as your forward cast.

Using the backcast as a presentation cast can quickly present the fly to fish behind you at close range. Typically you will make fairly close casts with your backcast -----30 to 40 feet. Many times if the fish is far away when sighted, the captain will have enough time to turn the boat or you will have time while wading to turn around for an accurate forward presentation. In some cases you just don't have time to set up for a forward presentation. Take advantage of presenting the backcast quickly to get your cast to the fish.

Picture yourself on the bow of a flats boat on the saltwater flats. In this type of fishing a clock system provides an easy method of communication between angler and guide. Straight ahead of the boat is always 12 o'clock no matter which way you are looking or which way the boat's bow is facing. Often the captain will try to turn the boat so the right handed angler can present his or her cast in the 8 o'clock to 11 o'clock position. The angler will have an obstruction free backcast over the water behind him.

The 11 o'clock to 6 o'clock cast can be very tough for a right handed caster. Making a cast over the middle of the boat where the captain has his push pole and where another angler might be sitting, is a safety issue. If the fish is close near the right handed angler's right side, he or she must quickly present a short backcast to get the fly there in time.

The right handed angler will find it easier to present a backcast when the wind is blowing in to the casting side. Turning around and presenting the backcast, with your back to the target, will turn your casting side to the downwind side and may prevent getting hit with the fly and missing the cast all together.

Suppose you have a strong wind blowing in from the 2 o'clock position and you are a right hand caster. You see a fish coming at you at 1 o'clock. How are you going to make the cast with your right hand, without worrying about the wind, and the fly hitting you or the guide on the poling platform? You can simply turn around and cast to the 7 o'clock position, 180 degrees from target, and then drop your backcast at 1 o'clock. The cast will then be on the downwind side of you and the guide, making it much easier to focus on the fish and where to present the fly.

Bruce Chard is a FFF Master Instructor and flyfishing guide in The Florida Keys.

What Makes a Good Casting Demonstration?

By Sheila Hassan

The idea for this article occurred several years ago thanks to Tim Rajeff, who first discussed this topic with me. I had my first opportunity to perform a casting demonstration at our local fly fishing show. I was comfortable with informal demonstrations but the more structured nature of this casting demonstration required a more formal, planned approach. This made me stop and think: "What makes a good demonstration?"

A successful casting demonstration occurs when the audience leaves motivated to try a new way to handle an old casting problem, learns something that enhances their enjoyment of the sport or are inspired to try a new type of fly fishing.

How can you build a successful demonstration? Like most skills in casting and teaching, demonstrating is a skill that can be learned. Over the years, I developed a system of demonstration development that works for me, but to broaden my knowledge and help other instructors develop their skills, I interviewed Tim Rajeff, Cathy Beck, Jason Borger and Lefty Kreh. I asked them their ideas about constructing and executing a good casting demonstration. Although they have different styles of presenting, they also have some common ideas about casting demonstrations and offered suggestions on how to prepare for a successful demonstration.

This article will provide you with a format to develop and execute a successful demonstration which can be used for both informal and formal situations. There are three areas covered: demonstration development, demonstration execution and delivery and developing demonstration skills.

Demonstration Development:

The first stage in developing your demonstration is to consider the structure. Structural factors include: deciding on the topic to be covered, the amount of material to be covered, the level of knowledge to focus your information, the time frame, a format for your

delivery, and the goals for your demonstration. These factors are interrelated but you can start with any factor and build your demonstration.

The topic may be focused and specific to a type of fishing or common casting problems or it may be a more general overview of flycasting. Once you select your topic, you can decide exactly what and how much information to present.

How much information you cover will be influenced by the amount of time you are given. The event sponsor may give you an hour but you might not want to talk the entire time. Think about how long you would stand and listen to someone talk. If you are one of the casting legends people may be willing to stand for almost an hour. But if you're not, the average person will get restless after 20-30 minutes. A demonstration of approximately 30 minutes is usually adequate to provide information and be enjoyable. You can use any remaining time for audience questions or offer to help with their casting.

Now that you have your topic and time frame, you need to decide how much information you will present and the level of this information. Among those interviewed there was a variety of opinions about how much information to present. Some people like to cover several topics. Others feel you should cover only a few major points, believing that people will remember only a few points. The audience should leave your demonstration with something useful they will remember. The key concept is to balance the amount of information given with the amount of time. More is not necessarily better. Don't share everything you know but be selective and avoid overwhelming the audience.

Deciding the knowledge level of your presentation can be difficult. Unlike a club or small group demonstration, in a formal environment you won't know the knowledge level of the audience. At fly fishing shows you're will get a mixture of beginners and

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Casting Demonstration *(Continued from page 6)*

experienced fisherman. Those interviewed agreed that you should limit the level and detail of information. In this situation it is better to present a combination of basics with some advanced level information. This will appeal to both beginners and intermediate flyfishers.

The final structural factor to consider is the format of your demonstration. Everyone had a similar format for their demonstrations and agreed that the information should build from the basics to more advanced concepts. Even when presenting advanced casting concepts, start with a review of the fundamentals then show how to improve them for advanced situations. Be sure to develop your transitions between concepts so the information builds in a logical manner. Also apply the information to a fishing situation. This will help the audience convert theoretical knowledge to practical application.

An additional consideration for your demonstration is the goal. All of those interviewed agreed that successful demonstration shares knowledge with the emphasis on teaching. The demonstrator should share their knowledge with the focus on how the person in the audience can use the information to help their own casting or fishing. As you develop your content, ask yourself what you want your audience to take away and remember.

Demonstration Execution and Delivery

A successful demonstration rarely happens by luck but is the result of good planning and preparation. The goal of this stage is to build for success by planning the execution and delivery. This minimizes unforeseen problems and lowers your anxiety so you can put on a good performance.

There are three main areas to prepare: the physical environment, the equipment used, and personal factors.

All of those interviewed agreed that advance planning for the physical environment is important. On the day of the demonstration be sure to arrive early and conduct an on-site inspection. At the demonstration area look

for physical conditions or obstacles such as ceiling rafters, or loud speakers that may interfere with your demonstration. What happens to your rollcast demonstration when there is no water available? You may be outside where strong wind may affect your cast. The key is to physically inspect the area, determine what effect current conditions may have on your demonstration and develop a plan to deal with the actual conditions.

Those interviewed agreed it is best to deal with the less than perfect conditions by making the best of it. Don't dwell on the conditions or use them as an excuse for a poorly executed demonstration. If you like, you can acknowledge the environmental limitations but then just carry on with confidence and execute the demonstration as well as you can.

Demonstration equipment is another area to consider. There was a range of opinions about this. Some people use whatever equipment is available at the show. Others bring their own equipment and include a back-up outfit. These people bring their rod and reel with a line that has been freshly dressed and a new leader and yarn fly. Using your equipment allow you to have more control and be sure it is in top shape to meet your needs. This is the best option for most instructors. Be sure you feel comfortable and confident with the equipment you are using.

Some people use a special colored rod; others will use standard rods. All use an outfit of sufficient weight that is easy for the audience to see the rod and line and to follow your demonstration. Since you want the fly line to be easily seen you should also consider its color. The ability to see the fly line will vary with the lighting conditions. You may want an orange or green line in one situation and use a white or dark line in another. Select the color of line which is most visible for the conditions.

No matter what you decide for equipment, be sure to check your equipment before it is time for the demonstration, stretch your line and check the leader. If you use yarn for flies, carry extra material with you

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Casting Demonstration (Continued from page 7)

so if you lose your yarn on a practice cast just before the demonstration, you can simply tie on new yarn with little fuss. Also consider having a back up outfit nearby in case a rod breaks or if you encounter any other equipment problems. Prepare and check any audio or video equipment you plan to use. If you find a problem, you need time to fix it before you start.

In addition to location and equipment factors, personal factors must be considered. You need to prepare yourself for the demonstration. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes that won't tangle your fly line. Have some water nearby in case you get dry while talking. Don't have too much caffeine. Don't eat too much but don't faint from lack of food. Get a good night's sleep and arrive early. All of these will keep your anxiety low and allow you to perform better.

When conducting the demonstration, you should exude confidence. Part of this confidence depends on prior preparation and part depends on your delivery skills. Develop a strong voice that carries well and will get attention. Don't yell but speak with confidence. Remember you are there to share knowledge, not show off. During your delivery, move from topic to topic in a clear, confident manner that allows your audience to follow. One person interviewed commented that the demonstration should be a journey that brings your audience along to a new place. Your responsibility is to be sure the audience travels with you.

All of those interviewed have developed the skill to watch the audience's reaction during the demonstration and adjust their delivery. They look to see if people understand what they are saying. Do they look interested or bored? Are they staying to hear more, or leaving? They adjust their delivery to match the audience's needs. They can slow down or speed up, add humor or ask for audience involvement with questions.

Remember that although the audience is interested in your information, they also want some amount of entertainment. This entertainment factor will vary for each person. You need to find a style that works for you. For some that means telling jokes or stories.

Others may have a "WOW" factor with a "trick" cast that looks great. Whatever your style, you need to find a way of sharing your knowledge that makes it easy for people to hear, and something the audience can relate to. You must make it fun for people and connect with your audience.

It is important to watch the audience as they are a measure of your success. You will see people leaving while new people are joining. People leave because they are tired of standing. However, at the end of the demonstration if there is no one left, you have talked too long or not been entertaining in your delivery. Remember to balance your demonstration with good information, good casting and entertainment. If people just want information, they can read a book. The personal touch is why people will stop to listen and watch the demonstration.

Developing your Demonstration Skills

All demonstrations require that you conduct yourself with confidence and skill. Displaying confidence is not easy if you are not accustomed to speaking in front of large groups, or talking and casting at the same time. As well, opportunities are limited for formal demonstrations, making it more difficult to get the experience required to feel proficient. Here are some suggestions made by those interviewed.

All of those interviewed agreed that practice is an essential component. You must be 100% skilled at what you are doing. Practice your demonstration. Practice giving your demonstration to yourself until you feel comfortable. This increases your confidence in the presentation and how it will unfold. When delivering the demonstration, try to find someone in the audience to focus on and observe this person's reactions, look for nods of recognition and validation. Other suggestions include: Learn by watching other instructors demonstrate; watch how they handle the audience, their tempo, and how they connect with the audience. Ask for feedback from other instructors about your

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Casting Demonstration (Continued from page 8)

demonstration then be sure to listen to that session, so learn from other teachers.

The most consistent theme to developing your skills of demonstration is to prepare and to practice. I have found it helpful to write out the casting demonstration. Then review my writing to check for clarity of concepts and a logical flow of ideas, building to the ultimate goal of the demonstration. After you write and review the demonstration, consider the casting portion. How much casting do you need? Which topics need an example of a bad cast or casting fault and which areas need an example of a good cast or technique? Review your demonstration to ensure coordination of the casts with your verbal delivery. If you have a video camera, record your demonstration practice. Watch the tape looking for flow of ideas and coordination of casts with your words. If you do not have a video camera available you can use a mirror or you can record the audio portion and listen to the playback. No matter how you do it, practice will help.

Not all demonstrations go according to your plans. When practicing, anticipate things which could go wrong, such as breaking a rod or getting stuck in an obstacle, and have a back-up plan. Consider having a friend close by in case you need to problem solve during the demonstration. Don't worry if you miss something in your demonstration, or deviate from your plan. It is likely the audience will not notice. The key to recovery from these mishaps is not to dwell on them. You can acknowledge them if you like, you may use humor, or you may choose to ignore it and just move along and continue unfazed. This will help exude confidence and help the audience focus on the demonstration and not the mishap.

Conclusion

After all this preparation and practice there is one more question to consider. How do you know if your demonstration was a success? This is difficult to gauge and is usually determined by indirect means. Watch

your audience for feedback; did they seem to enjoy the demonstration? At the end of the demonstration you can ask for questions or invite people to cast with you. See if anyone responds to your invitation. Sometimes the feedback is delayed---someone may approach you later and make a comment that you helped them with their casting or fishing. When this happens it's great!

In summary, there are many different styles of casting demonstrations and their length and content will vary. But in order to be successful, they must be well planned and practiced with attention to detail. Detail with the information provided, the casting involved, the equipment used and your method of delivery. The more you practice, the more confident and professional your demonstration will likely be. When you are relaxed and confident, the audience will notice and be able to enjoy your demonstration and gain something helpful from it ---and that is the goal. As with teaching, the more opportunities you have, the easier this will become.

Good luck!

Sheila M Hassan is a Master certified casting instructor from the Boston, MA area. She is a staff instructor at the Wulff School of Fly Fishing and is a member of the R.L. Winston Rod Co. pro staff. www.cast90.com

More On Tennis Elbow ----- Caster's Arm

By Gordy Hill

I'd like to develop one more point on the direct causes of tennis elbow in casters: One of the primary causes that I see is with the pickup. This is one of Tom White's pet peeves ----- the caster who finishes the retrieve, then picks up for the next backcast with the rod tip high above the water.

As this is done, the caster has to use a lot of pickup force in a short interval. The distance between that rod tip and the water creates slack. This has to be taken up before the rod can begin to load and the effective stroke begin. The caster has shortened his available stroke length and therefore uses a lot more force.

When this happens, there is tremendous strain on the extensor muscles of the forearm and hand, most of which is transferred to the lateral epicondyle of the elbow (that bony point of tenderness on the outer side of the affected elbow). Doing this repeatedly is a perfect formula for getting "caster's arm" or tennis elbow in some folks, because it provides repetitive trauma concentrated at one small point of vulnerability.

Once that happens, and it becomes chronic, then anything which puts a strain on these muscle attachments will bring on the pain and perpetuate the problem. The casting solution is obvious to good instructors, but rarely to the afflicted caster.

Tom White emphasizes to all his students and candidates. The pickup is best done with the rod tip close to the water. This allows a longer back

stroke to spread the energy over a wider arc and thus, avoids a spike of power with the arm in its most vulnerable position.

The pickup is beautifully demonstrated in Lefty Kreh's video, Lessons with Lefty, as Sarah Gardner plays the part of his unknowing student while he corrects her errors.

This is still not always enough to cure the casting problem, which can be compounded by making that pickup with too much line resistance.

There are 3 causes for this:

- 1.) Too much line length out there in the water at pickup time.
- 2.) Too much line weight out there (this is where the heavy sinking line comes in to play).
- 3.) Pickup with a heavy weighted fly, like a Clouser, especially if that weighted fly is at the end of a long leader.

There is another casting fault which has yielded this problem, in my experience. This is repetitive casting with the casting arm extended too far. Often we see poor casters casting with the arm way out and up. This makes very inefficient use of arm power. The cast suffers and sometimes so does the elbow.

Gordon Hill is a member of the FFF Casting Board of Governors. He is a retired orthopedic surgeon who lives on Big Pine Key in the Florida Keys.



From The Editors

We should really call this issue the Spring issue but I prefer to think of it as the closing of winter. The time is flying past and all of us should be getting ready for a new season of teaching, casting and fishing.

The shows are finished for this year and those involved in those shows will heave a big sigh of relief. Its nice to go to the shows but the exhibitors put in some long hours to help those who come.

Once again this issue of *The Loop* contains some great articles. Floyd Franke presents a great teaching technique of hands-on. You just can't keep Floyd down. He sent us this article while recuperating from a recent illness. Rumor has it he was even teaching casting while in the hospital.

Sheila Hassan, one of our hard working Masters has presented an excellent article this issue.

She goes into detail on what makes a good casting demonstration.

Gordy Hill has contributed some more thoughts on what causes tennis elbow and how to prevent it. No sense cutting short our casting and fishing because of injury.

Bruce Chard reminds us the importance of the backcast presentation.

As always, we welcome your articles for inclusion in the Loop. Please keep them coming!

The Conclave will soon be arriving. Its in Bozeman this year and it is happening in July, so note the time change and sign up for some of the excellent workshops and classes.

Cheers from your Editors,
Denise Maxwell and Liz Watson

CONCLAVE 2006

What: FFF 41st International Show & Conclave

When: July 25-29, 2006

Where: Bozeman, Montana

Date to remember:

Tuesday, July 25
Casting Board of Governor's Meeting
Masters and CIs are invited to attend

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

The Loop reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission. All submissions should be sent to the National Office:

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e-mail contact ffoffice@fedflyfishers.org

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL NEW INSTRUCTORS

Master Instructors

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

Two Hand Instructors

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

**COMING EVENTS for 2006
Pre-registration is REQUIRED
Schedule subject to change**

Contact the Program Coordinator at 406-585-7592 for pre-registration

June 3-4, 2006 -- THCI Prepratory Workshop, Carnation, WA.

Instructors are Al Buhr, Denise Maxwell, and Dan McCrimmon.
For more information contact Dan McCrimmon at 604-602-0344.
The class is limited to 8 students.

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2006 Danish Casting Games Bozeman, Montana

Back by popular demand! The Danish Casting Games will be a part of the FFF Conclave Casting Games 2006 in Bozeman, Montana. The 2005 games were a huge success.

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

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

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

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

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

Don Simonson or Marilyn Vitale:

Marilyn Vitale
marilynvitale@verizon.net
425-868-7593

Don Simonson
donjoans@earthlink.net
209-932-4925

FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS

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