

T H E

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The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Casting Instructors
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DOUBLE HAULING

by BRUCE RICHARDS

IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE that most casters trying to learn or perfect the double haul have some misconceptions that prevent them from progressing as fast as they could.

First of all, most casters I have worked with consider an increase in line speed (in-and-of-itself) to be the only purpose of the double haul. While double hauling DOES increase line speed, a student viewing that as the sole goal of the technique will probably experience some initial disappointment.

If the student does not have the ability to carry a reasonable length of line (say 40 feet) and form good loops (front and back), the double haul becomes very difficult to teach. A certain minimum skill level is required. A short line and/or a bad loop does not have the power to "pull" slack line created by a haul out through the guides of the rod. As an initial step to counteract basic skill deficiencies, the double haul can be taught with shooting heads or short-headed weight-forward lines. The problem with such equipment is that the skills developed on it don't always carry over to longer-headed weight-forward lines (the caster may not be able to hold enough line in the air to reach the rear taper/running line).

Most of the students that I have worked with who have the skills necessary to start learning the double haul immediately have one common fault: They simply throw the line too hard. They all want to get extra distance and they think the only way to do that is to throw the line hard and fast. As soon as they begin double hauling, their casting strokes change dramatically, with the usual result being open and/or tailing loops (neither of which are much good for distance).

I've found that if I encourage my students not to change what they do with their rod hand, the end results are much better. Maintaining loop shape is critical and most casters at this stage can't do it when they overpower the rod.

As a caster progresses and becomes better at double hauling, I continue to encourage him/her to become

more efficient in his/her casting strokes—less wasted motion (in arm and rod) and cleaner, more abrupt stops. This results in tighter loops that travel a greater distance with less energy input (which makes a long day of long casting much less tiring).

The length of a haul is an oft-discussed topic, and there are definitely different schools of thought on what works best. My casting "style" revolves around a very long, smooth stroke to apply power to the line as gently as possible. Bending (or flexing) a rod less means it has to "un-bend" less, which results in better loops (and lessens the risk of tailing loops). Watch any good caster attempting maximum distance and you'll see the rod tip traveling a very long pathway. When a short, sharp haul is made in the middle of this long stroke, tailing loops are the result. It only makes sense that a poorly-timed, sharp haul will cause the rod tip to collapse into a concave pathway, thus making the line "tail." I prefer to teach a long, smoothly accelerating haul that mirrors the acceleration of the rod tip. The longer the cast, the longer the casting stroke, and thus the longer the haul. This approach works very well because it's easy to teach (the timing is not as critical as with short casting strokes), and the student gets the idea that the double haul doesn't have to be done in an ultra-fast manner.

I often use golf analogies in my teaching because many of my students golf (and so do I, sort of). The best golfers use a long, smooth stroke to strike the ball. They don't appear to be working very hard for the results they get—just like a good caster. A long, smooth casting stroke and haul get the best results. As a caster's skill and experience with double hauling advance, he or she can start adding more speed to the casting stroke and haul to increase ultimate distance.

For more on Double Hauling see Bob Pelzl's article "A Note on Timing the Haul" in the Winter 1997 issue of the TL—Ed.

TEN MINUTES A DAY

by JOHN N. LONG

ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, I was very fortunate to have taken a private casting lesson from Marion Garber, a past champion tournament caster. At the outset of the lesson, Marion asked me to start casting and then walked in a circle around me. He finally announced, "I see five things wrong." That sort of stunned me because I didn't think I was doing THAT many things incorrectly. By example and coaching we worked on each problem and after about an hour I had an idea of the solutions. However, I still had to "un-learn" the "muscle-memory" that had been established by so much previous casting.

Marion urged me to practice ten minutes a day for one week, and each day to work and concentrate on only one problem. He said that each day I should build on the previous day's lesson and that within a week I would be casting a beautiful line. How right he was! Seven days later, my casting was completely turned around and I actually began to feel like I knew what I was doing. Marion also admonished me not practice without a proper leader and a fly substitute (such as yarn). If you're practicing to fish, practice with fishing equipment (and even in wind and rain if necessary). I've never forgotten that advice and have always emphasized the "ten minutes a day" dictum to my students.

Several years ago, I was teaching a class with another instructor and one of our students was a recently-retired gentleman new to fly fishing. The other instructor and I devoted a lot of time to this man, but neither of us could seem to get anywhere with him. We eventually came to the conclusion that he was "unteachable."

At the end of the class, I gave my spiel about practicing ten minutes a day for one week, outlining a day-to-day workout schedule. Day one was for settling into a proper, relaxed grip ("Why are your knuckles white? I didn't ask for money yet...") Day two was earmarked for working on stopping the back cast. Day three was a forward-cast session, and so on.

The following week, the "unteachable" gentleman returned and asked to take the class again. The other instructor and I secretly shared an "Oh, no" glance, but agreed. When we got to the casting pond and the class began, the "unteachable" student proceeded to lay out about 50 feet of line with a beautiful loop. I quickly told the man that he was casting a very nice line and that he must have been practicing. His reply was, "Yes, ten minutes a day." That certainly said it all for me!

Learning fly casting is like learning any other sport—it requires practice. And while ten minutes a day may seem hardly enough, my experiences with such a regimen have been very positive—it has even taught the "unteachable."

TARGET PRACTICE

by BOB MELROSE

READING JOAN WULFF'S BOOK EXCERPT, "Picking Leaves" (TL, Fall 1997), brought to mind a teaching aid I've used for the last five years—fluorescent red traffic (or soccer) cones. I have 10 cones, each labeled with a black permanent marker and given a separate identity. In order, they're labeled: "Start (or '0'—Ed.)," "30," "40," "50," "60," "60," "60," "70," "80," and "90."

To create a practice outlay, I arrange the cones in a cross shape. To make the "vertical" member of the cross, I place the "Start," "30," "40," "50," "60," "70," "80," and "90" cones in a straight line with the numbers written on each corresponding to the distance they're placed from the "Start" cone (e.g. "30" equals 30 feet from "Start"). Next, I use the two "extra" cones marked "60" to create the "horizontal" beam of the cross. I place one of these cones on either side of the "vertical" member of the cross and about 20 feet from it, so that the three cones marked "60" form the straight line of the "horizontal" beam.

Once the cones are set-up, I arrange my students in a broad oval around the cross, providing each student with an assortment of targets at various distances (only one student will be at the base of the cross at the "Start" cone). As the lesson goes on, I rotate the students so that each one, in turn, has a chance to cast from the "Start" cone. In addition, I may make the oval larger or smaller as the lesson goes on. This gives the students a variety of short- to long-distance targets, and allows the students to pick the targets they're comfortable with. The sense of accomplishment as the students improve their accuracy encourages them to automatically start picking the next-longest target.

In intermediate-level classes, I will lay out a walk-along course, mixing up short and long targets, targets under trees, targets requiring cross-body casts, targets that can be reached only by curve casting, etc.

I've found that this teaching technique really helps my students improve their casting accuracy, and because it's a fun exercise, it works well with all ages and skill levels.



MR. PERRIWINKLE AND THE LEGENDARY CASTING COUCH.

GENE TRI

PRACTICING ON PLASTIC

by RAY JOHNSON

FOR SOME 25 YEARS I had the opportunity to teach fly casting classes at Rancho Santiago College, Cal State Fullerton and Golden West College. Since the classes were scheduled from 7-10 PM, I had to deal with a dearth of water and sunlight. The solution was to cast on lighted patios and parking lots surrounding the schools. To prevent the fly lines from getting "chewed-up" by the concrete and asphalt, I covered the designated practice areas with large, plastic drop-sheets.

While the plastic didn't offer the same surface-tension as water, it was certainly an adequate substitute when it came to teaching the basics (especially smooth pick-ups). When class enrollment was large, several plastic sheets (spaced well apart) provided adequate room for everyone to practice.

With my current involvement in the Trout in the Classroom program, I've had plenty of recent opportunities to teach fly casting using a "plastic river." In addition to extending the life of the fly lines, it also helps me teach young people a sense of responsibility as it applies to properly caring for equipment.

Combine this idea with Bob Melrose's target practice layout for a "go-anywhere" teaching set-up—Ed.

A NEW LOOP...

by THE EDITOR

IT WAS DECIDED THAT A CHANGE for this publication was in order, so I fired up my Power Macintosh and went to work. The results are before you now—a new (shortened) name, new paper, new ink, and a new, full-bleed layout. As this issue was put together between the editing of five videos and the writing of a book, don't consider it's design and layout to be final by any means. I will continue to hone and advance this publication with each future issue—stay tuned!

...AND A NEW WEBSITE

THE CASTING INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM now has an official presence on the World Wide Web! The Program's page (part of the FFF's larger website) currently lists an overview of the Program, the individuals on the Board of Governors, Master Certified instructors, and the processes that an instructor needs to go through in order to achieve both Basic and Master Certification. The direct address is:

<http://www.fedflyfishers.org/castingcert.html>

COMING EVENTS

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!

CERTIFICATION WILL BE OFFERED at the shows listed below. Contact Evelyn Taylor to pre-register (406) 585-7592.

NOTE: The dates shown are the complete show dates. The dates for Certification are in **BOLD**.

Seattle, WA - February 4, **5, 6, 7 & 8**; International Sportsmen's Expo; Basic & Masters.

Denver, CO - February **19, 20, 21 & 22**; International Sportsmen's Expo; Basic & Masters.

Bellevue, WA - February 28-March 1; Fly Fishing Jamboree; Basic & Masters Certification is on the **28th**.

Long Beach, CA - March 4-8; Southwest Council Conclave/Fred Hall Show; Basic is on the **7th**; contact Allan or Barbara Rohrer (714) 756-9286.

Edison, NJ - March **27, 28 & 29**; North East Fly Fishing & Wingshooting Show at the Raritan Center; Basic & Masters.

Gatlinburg, TN - June 4, 5, **6**; Southeastern Council Conclave; Basic Certification with Tom Jindra.

Idaho Falls, ID - August 3, 4, **5, 6, 7 & 8**; International Fly Fishing Show & Conclave; Basic & Masters.

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We welcome your letters, teaching tips, articles, and yes, even cartoons. All materials should be submitted to the National Office: FFF Casting Program, P.O. Box 1595, Bozeman, MT 59771. FAX (406) 585-7596.

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OPTIMUM LINE LENGTH

by GARY A. BORGER

FLY CASTING INSTRUCTORS need a good reference library. This section of the Loop features selected snippets of casting knowledge from books and articles by masters of the art.

This issue's Library column comes from Gary A. Borger's most recent book, "Presentation" (Tomorrow River Press, 1995). While written from a "reader-as-student" standpoint, it's also a good "idea" piece for instructors—Ed.

"EVERY ROD AND EVERY CASTER has an optimum line length that is best for casting. That is, all fly rods are not the same; all people are not the same....

Before continuing your casting practice, determine this optimum line length. Start with a line equal to about twice the length of the rod (don't include the leader when determining line length). Make a couple casts and note how much energy is needed. Extend a couple more feet of line and make two or three casts. If this new line length feels comfortable, add a couple more feet and try

a few more casts. Continue adding line and casting until you begin to feel as if you're having to cast rather hard to get the line out. Then pull in a foot of line and try the cast again. Keep stripping in the line a foot at a time and trying the cast. When the cast feels comfortable again, you've reached your optimum line length. For most rods and most casters, the optimum line length will be somewhere between 2 1/2 and 3 1/2 times the length of the rod....

This is the maximum length to cast with. If you try using longer lengths, you'll begin to work too hard and you'll change your casting stroke to compensate for the increased exertions. If you need to make a longer cast, shoot line. The Double Haul [is] a way to increase the optimum line length."

A special "thanks" to Gary Borger for allowing the Loop to reprint his work—Ed.

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