

The Loop

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors
Spring 2003*

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Analyzing the Cast by Steve Rajeff

When we practice flycasting accuracy or distance, many of us forget to evaluate important basic techniques. Distance casters often resort to the 'hit it harder' method, while accuracy casters execute countless, mindless, and imperfect false casts. While power and plenty of practice are important, effort spent on pure technique may yield even better improvements. Flycasting may be analyzed from four main categories: loop, stroke, tempo and trajectory.

The Loop

Face it; without a really good, narrow loop not much is going to happen. A controlled, tight loop, both on front and backcasts, should be priority number one. The size of the loop is controlled by the path the tip top takes as it travels back or forth. The closer to a straight path, the narrower the loop. For most casters, the backcast loop needs more attention than the front loop. The key to improved backcast loops is the ability of the caster to stop the rod abruptly. This will transfer the stored energy in the rod bend to the line and help form a narrow loop. Depending on the length of line, the exact stop position shifts between 12 and 2 o'clock. The longer the line, the more bend the rod experiences and the further back the rod will need to travel to help maintain the straight line path. Also, a slight drift back on a short cast or a longer drift for longer casts may be needed, depending on rod length and stiffness. Longer and stiffer rods allow the caster to power harder during the stroke, resulting in higher line speed, and make it possible to significantly shorten the stroke. Softer rods require a longer stroke and more drift.

The sudden stop of the backcast helps the tip track

a straight line path. The typical novice caster relaxes the hand and wrist as the rod reaches the backcast position. This relaxing promotes a wide arc or curved path of the tip resulting in a wider backcast loop.

The final forward cast loop of a distance cast can be improved by a slight forward drift via wrist turnover, following the stop. Very good casters achieve a 'V' shape to the front edge of their loop because of this subtle follow through drift. This slight drift, while simultaneously reducing grip pressure, absorbs the tip deflection bounce down, minimizes shock waves and tightens the loop.

While wide loops are bad, tailing loops are worse. Every caster has seen the fly catch the line or fold back on the leader creating big problems. This is the infamous tailing loop. It is the result of the tip of the rod curving under a straight line path. It is the opposite of too wide a loop. Overpowering the rod in too short of a stroke causes the rod to 'overload' and as a result the tip top will dip under a straight line path causing a tailing loop. Spreading the power over a wide portion of the stroke and also lengthening the stroke will reduce or eliminate tailing loops.

Stroke

The stroke is the second most critical aspect of improving flycasting. Length of stroke and arm positions during the stroke should be analyzed and the assistance of another caster or coach really helps here.

In accuracy casting to a short target, the hand should be forward of the body, in front of the shoulder or even slightly toward the center of the body. Think of tossing

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A Tribute to Allan Rohrer, 1928-2002

Thanks to Joe Libeu and John Van Derhoof for their original article which ran in the Winter 2003 Flyfisher.

The Casting Board of Governors lost one of its valued members when Allan Rohrer passed away on November 20, 2002. What follows are some of the highlights of his dedicated involvement with our organization and flycasting.

Allan became involved with the FFF around 1965 and was one of the original life-time members. He was very active in casting and educational programs at the national conclaves and has been the Casting and Educational Chairperson with the Southwest Council of Fly Fishers for many years.

Allan was instrumental in the establishment of the casting games that are held every year at the National Conclave. Together with his wife Barbara and friends, Allan ran this event for years.

He was also involved with the Long Beach Casting Club as the casting chairman and was very involved with the club's casting games and tournament casting. He and Barbara participated in the American Casting Association Nationals many times.

His dedication and involvement with flycasting was honored many times with numerous awards: The Lew Jewett Memorial Award (1980) FFF; Man of the Year (1990) FFF; Man of the Year - Oregon Council; Ed Thomas Memorial Trophy, Bob Bird Sunshine Award - Long Beach Casting Club.

Allan was always prepared to give his time and energy to further the sport of casting. He helped teach at the original Fenwick Flycasting School in West Yellowstone with Frank and Gladys Gray and Jim and Carol Green. He helped Mel Krieger at many schools.

When Mel Krieger proposed the original idea of Casting Instructor Certification at the Calgary Conclave in 1992, Allan & Barbara were selected to the Casting Certification Board of Governors and have been major supporters of this successful program.

We have been blessed with his vast knowledge, dedication and involvement.



Barbara and Allan Rohrer

“Whenever I think of Allan I see a man so dedicated to casting and the casting certification program that even his inability to stand for any length of time did not stop him from participating in the certifications. He simply would arrange for a chair to be taken to the field. Rain or shine Allan was there. Neither his interest nor his high standards ever waned. I will miss him.” **Floyd Franke, Chair CBOG**

“The kindness and dedication of Allan and Barbara made a real difference to me as I grew up in the world of fly fishing. One of the most anticipated aspects of my youthful summer travel was attending the FFF Conclave and testing my skills in the casting games. It wasn't just the games that I loved, it was the fact that Allan and Barbara were there. They would welcome me happily and when it came time to cast, they would give me direction and encouragement. The final time that I competed in the casting games, I did so only at the prodding of Allan and Barbara. I couldn't resist their enthusiasm. After all of my casts had been made and my scores had been tallied, I was holding the Colliander Cup. Without the ‘casting games couple’ I never would have enjoyed that special moment. Thank you, Allan, you will indeed be missed.” **Jason Borger, CBOG**

Wrist Taping

By Jim Rogers

The most common fault seen in our casting students, especially the beginners, is excessive wrist breaking on the backcast. This problem can persist through the years, even as our students improve their casting skills.

On many occasions the student will be able to make a good backcast but with each successive cast, the rod tip goes farther and farther back. Finally the casting plane has turned into the theme song for *The Wizard of Oz*, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." The student is no longer excited about his or her success; instead, the student is disappointed, with a complete loss of self-confidence.

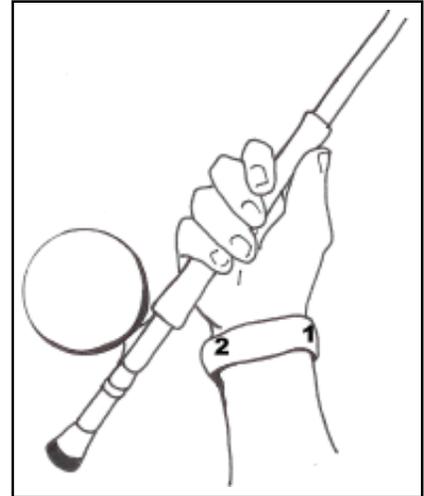
The cast deteriorates because the student enjoys casting and he or she is unable to stop and make **one cast at a time**. All of us have seen this as our students progresses through the learning curve. If we are able to stand by each student and physically grab their arm after each cast, we can force them to make one cast at a time. This of course enables our students to engage their brain before engaging their muscles. However, in many instances, the minute we leave the student the 'rainbow' returns.

To break this cycle our instructors put a piece of masking tape-----many other items will work as well----around the student's casting wrist. This tape is put exactly where the wrist joins the forearm. We write the number '1' on the tape at the top of the wrist, in line with the thumb, and the number '2' on the inside of the wrist near the bottom (See Figure 1).

We tell the students to stop and look at the number '1' and say "one" before they begin their backcast. We also tell the students to lift the number first and not the rod tip.

At the end of the Power Snap or power application we ask the student to look at the wrist band and say "two." If we have written the number '2' in the correct position on the tape, the student must lift their forearm to see it. The student is reminded of their wrist angle and the height of their forearm.

Figure 1:
The proper labeling of the wrist tape.



We also use tape to customize instruction for each student. We may put a '1D' on the tape, which reminds the student to begin their backcast with the rod tip down. Or we may put an 'F,' for forward, if the student has the tendency to apply power downward instead of forward during the forward cast. There are many possibilities.

Students tell us the wrist taping technique is helpful. When everything else fails, we put the tape on and get back to basics.

Jim Rogers is a Master Instructor from Lebanon, Missouri.



Analyzing the Cast, by Steve Rajeff (continued from page 1)

darts at a dart board. A good tossing position is holding the hand with the dart just forward of the eye or slightly off center toward the shoulder. The accuracy casting position is similar.

When we start lengthening line, the hand should shift gradually outward to the side to make the longer stroke easier. Think of your changing motion as you throw a baseball 25 feet, then 75 feet, then 125 feet, and finally from deep center to home plate. As we cast with longer length line, we should similarly extend the stroke and reach back. In order to locate a caster's most comfortable and powerful stroke posture the assistance of a second person is very helpful. With the caster stopped at the backcast position, the assistant should stand behind the caster and grasp the rod just above the handle. Providing resistance to the forward stroke, the assistant holds the rod back while the caster tries moving the hand and arm up, down, closer or further from the shoulder, then drives forward through the stroke. Casters should seek their most comfortable range of movement in this exercise. This will result in better casts because the most natural throwing motion is employed, translating into greater speed.

In addition to the stroke, the perpendicular to horizontal tilt or overhead to sidearm position of the rod during the cast affects the stroke. Direction control is most enhanced with the rod more perpendicular, while extra power can be gained with a sidearm slant during the cast. Wind conditions, rod stiffness, and even leader design and how fast it turns over the fly, have an effect on how perpendicular or sidearm you should cast to optimize control.

Tempo

After looking at loops and stroke, the tempo or cycle time of the cast should be evaluated. Many casters have a tendency to cast a little too slowly front to back. Probably each of us has been reminded of rushing the backcast and not allowing the line and leader to straighten out, so we slow down. Instead of slowing down, it would be even better to quicken the actual stroke, and wait the same time for the line to straighten on the backcast. The faster the line moves, the more we can feel the rod working and the less effect a wind will have. The next time you practice accuracy, test your tempo: try a faster cycle time cast. Sometimes you may find it necessary to lengthen the leader tippet to stop from ticking. The

added line speed will cause the leader to kick over the fly much harder, so the tippet adjustment is your way to compensate for the added power and speed.

Trajectory

Finally, study the trajectory. In accuracy we should cast high enough not to tick, but as low as possible to help see the fly just above the target, enhancing depth and distance perception. When distance casting, adjustments to trajectory and overhang is ongoing. Aim higher on windy days and use longer overhang. On calmer days, try lowering the cast using a shorter overhang.

Adjusting the overhang controls how fast the shooting head turns over during the flight of the cast. Too short an overhang and the head will straighten out too soon during the shoot. The back end of the head is heavier than the tip end so it will catch up to the tip and eventually the whole head will land in a big spaghetti pile. Too long of an overhang and the loop will not have straightened out when the cast lands. The overhang adjustment control is the most critical in the Angler's Fly event because the head is relatively short and turns over very fast. In single hand and two hand fly distance events, where fly line heads are rather long, changes in overhang are still important but do not require as much change in length. Loop, stroke, tempo and trajectory are key elements to good flycasting and worth evaluating every time you cast.

Steve Rajeff holds 28 National All Round titles and 13 International All Round Casting championships in competitive casting. He serves on the FFF Board of Governors for Casting Instructor Certification. This article was originally written for the Golden Gate Angling & Casting Club Bulletin to help tournament casters in 1988 and will have some merit for flycasting instructors today. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.



From the Editors: Denise and Liz

We are pleased to present our first edition of *The Loop*. We hope you enjoy reading the journal and you gain some great educational tools for teaching. We welcome your suggestions.

A job well done deserves appreciation, so we want to say thanks to *The Loop*'s past editor, Macauley Lord, for the great job he has done over the years. Producing four issues a year is a time-consuming job and he has done this with enthusiasm and commitment. We're sure you will join us in saying a big thank you to Mac.

The Loop staff is a prime example of the national membership of the FFF. The FFF headquarters is in Montana where our Casting Program Coordinator, Julie Nelson, resides; past editor, Macauley Lord, is from Maine; and the new editors are from British Columbia (Denise) and Florida (Liz). Thank goodness for e-mail!

To produce a quality journal, we need you to keep the articles, tips and suggestions coming. With your input, *The Loop* can reflect the vast talent and experience that we have in the Casting Certification program.

Cheers,
Denise and Liz

New Graphics Contest!!

When we took over as editors of *The Loop*, we decided we wanted a new look. Leave it to two women to start changing things! We are proposing a contest to look for new graphics.

Here is what we want---a new Loop logo and some new casting graphics.

To encourage you we have some prizes: Jason Borger donated a copy of his new book, *Nature of Fly Casting* and Mike & Denise Maxwell donated a copy of their new book, *Advanced Speyfishing*.

Get those creative juices flowing and send your entries to Julie Nelson at FFF, P. O. Box 1595, Bozeman, MT 59771. Submissions may also be sent by e-mail or disk.

The winners will be credited in *The Loop*.

Contest closes June 30, 2003.

The editors will choose the winners.

The Future is Coming---an E-Loop

One of the changes we foresee for *The Loop* is e-mail delivery. Many of you may welcome the change when yet another piece of paper crosses your desk. All of us receive far too much paper to deal with.

With e-mail delivery *The Loop* would be sent as an attachment in printable document format (.pdf). Recipients need Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free download, to open the file. *The Loop* could be viewed on the computer or printed out for reading.

Since some of you may not have access to e-mail or the web, *The Loop* would continue to be delivered by mail to you. You can choose---*The Loop* comes to the door or by e-mail!

Please don't contact Julie yet!

Tell the *editors* what you think. We are in the process of setting this up and would like some input from our readers. We will ask you to choose when we are ready.

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

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 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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COMING EVENTS

Pre-registration is REQUIRED

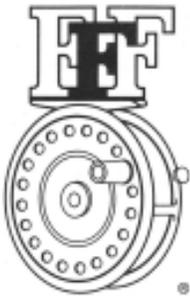
Contact Julie Nelson at 406-585-7592

Schedule subject to change

- **Gulf Shores, Alabama** - May 16: Southeast Conclave. Pre-register by May 7.
- **Freeport, Maine** - LLBean 2-day workshop & certification with Macauley Lord.
Contact Craig Uecker to preregister at 800-341-4341, ext 22666.
Dates for 2003: April 5-6, April 12-13, August 2-3, and August 23-24
- **Idaho Falls, Idaho** - August 4-9: 2003 FFF Fly Fishing Show and Conclave

Congratulations to our new Master Instructors

John Reid, Snohomish, WA
Frank LoPresti Alexandria, VA
Dan McCrimmon Vancouver, BC Canada
Jimmy LeMert Seattle, WA
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FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS

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