

Smart Casts™ Casting Challenge Course and Casting Practice Fence

By David Lambert

A few years ago I went searching for a casting practice-course for clinics and my local club, First Coast Fly Fishers in Jacksonville, FL. After finding little of interest, I put together a few ideas and designed my own, the nucleus of the Smart Casts™ Fly Casting Challenge Course.

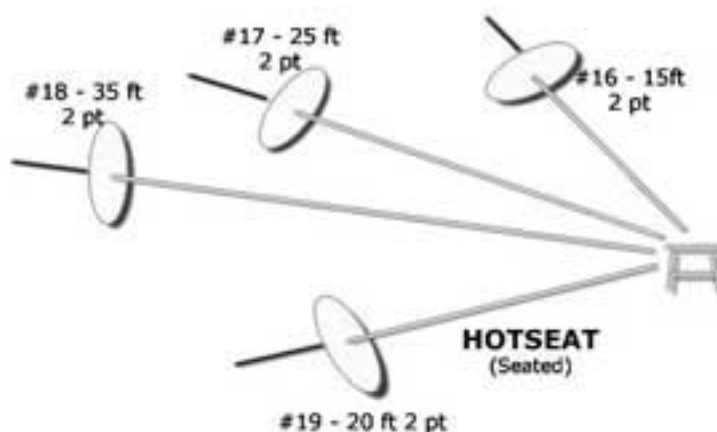
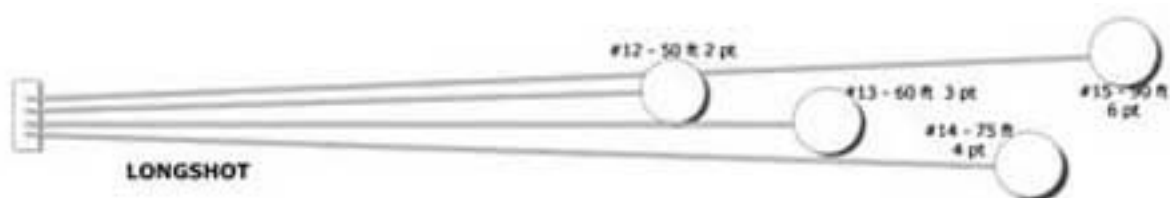
My criteria for a casting challenge course were specific: I wanted something low-cost, portable, easy to set up, and fun. And I wanted a course that presented real life casting challenges, so the practice would be useful in the fishing world. Later came the idea of using golf-like score cards so casters could score themselves—or they could be scored by judges.

The course is designed so that every casting module or station casts away from the others. It's easily customizable and each of the practice modules may be broken out for use in smaller spaces.

Clubs and casting groups seem to especially like the Casting Practice Fence. It's so cheap and easy to build that virtually every caster can have one. All parts are two-feet, except for two 18-inch pieces. I showed it to Bob Clouser after the Renzetti Fly Fair in December; as a traveling instructor, he immediately saw its value and wanted plans. I email groups or clubs a build-copy of the Casting Practice Fence. It's there when I come in for a casting clinic. The club builds it, owns it, and keeps it. And I don't have to carry it with me or ship it in advance.

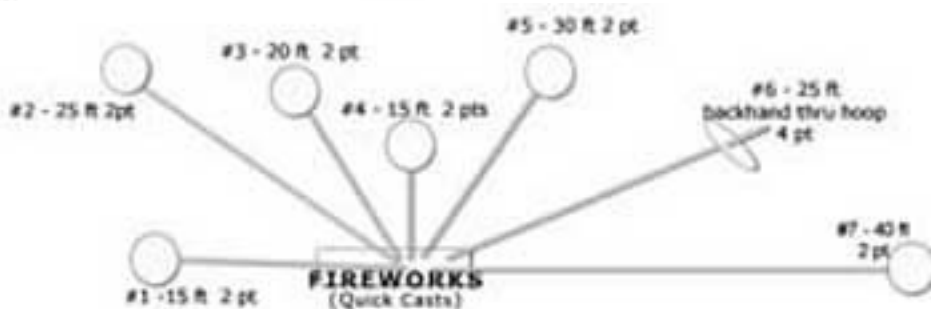
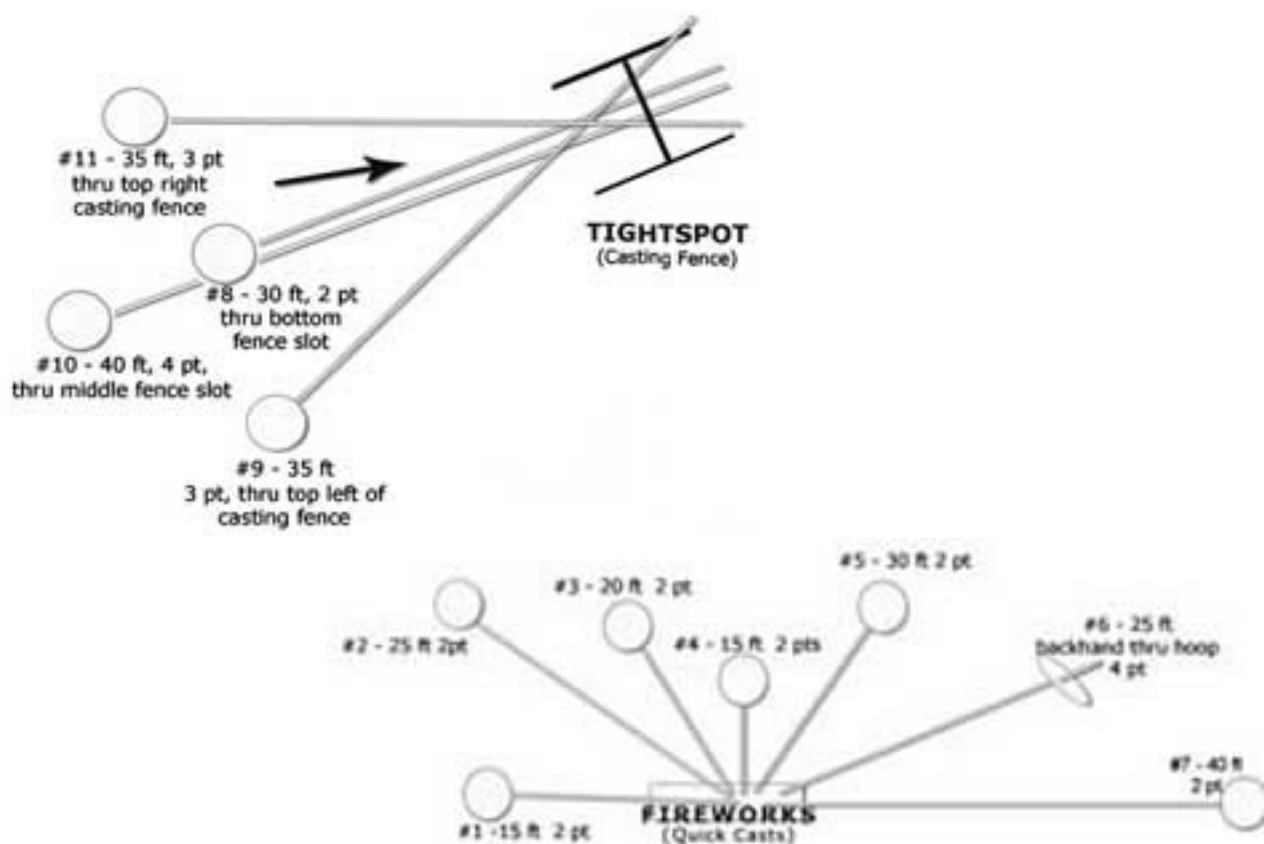
A bit about the Casting Challenge Course:

- * Comes with individual printable scorecards, like golf, so casters can score themselves as a fun event or pit themselves against each other for a judged event. In competition, each station is monitored and a scorer marks the cards. Cards are designed two to a page in MS Word and pdf formats.
- * Course is designed to fit in a relatively small space. The design allows for each of the casting stations to throw back casts away from each other.
- * Easily modified. Clubs or groups can erect any module or station that will fit whatever casting area is available.
- * Start-up cost is negligible. Many instructors will have at least some of the items needed to pull this off. Approx. \$20 for hula hoops, \$15 for PVC, or use orange construction flagging tape for targets (\$3.50 at Lowes).
- * Smart Casts™ Casting Practice Fence is simple to build and easily modified. It fits comfortably into the fabric, sling-strap bag that comes with folding chairs.



SmartCasts™ Fly Casting Challenge Course

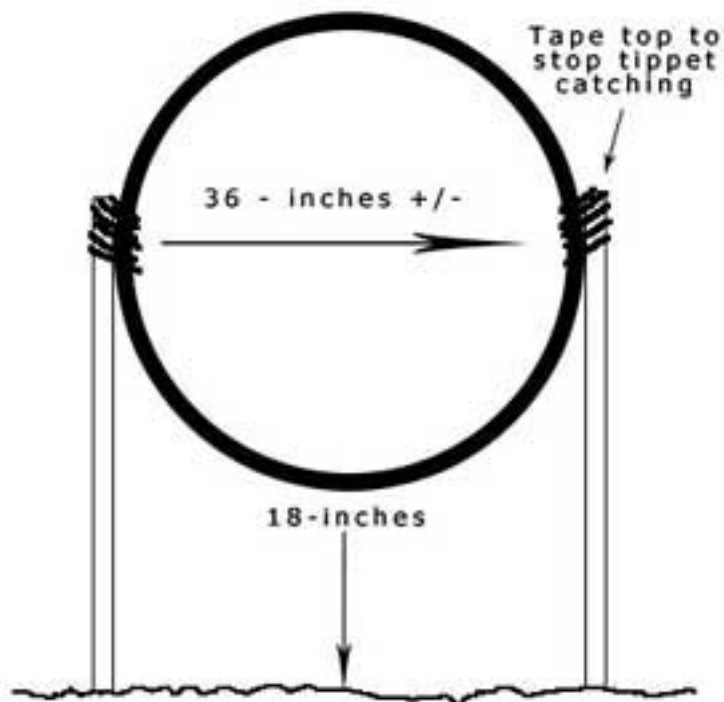
1. Three attempts to put fly in or through target.
2. Three false casts maximum between each attempt.



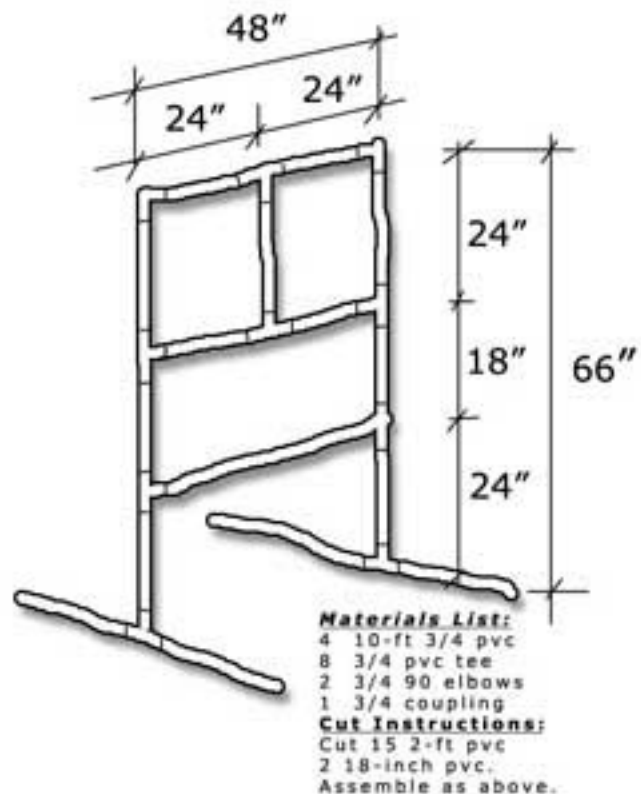
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Cast Through Hoops



SmartCasts™ Fly Casting Challenge Fence



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- * Casting Practice Fence designed to simulate real-life, actual casting applications, e.g., casting to tight targets, through small spaces which require tight loops, and under shrubs, and vegetation
- * Course offers distance, sitting, accuracy, and fast-cast stations

Field notes

1. Target size = standard hula hoops or 3-foot diameter, bright colors for visibility, international orange is best (but hoop colors fade with UV exposure). I've made the longer distance targets 4-foot square, using orange construction flagging tape, mostly for visibility. At one event, we constructed all except cast-through squares using orange construction tape. Very inexpensive.
2. Target sizes can be enlarged relative to caster's skill level, if needed.
3. To create cast-through targets, stand hoops on edge, cut pvc to a sharp point, then jam into ground and electrical tape hoops to pvc standups. Add'l note: Use tape to close gaps between hoops and pvc ends to avoid tippets getting stuck in the crevices (see Hoops Drawing).

3-a. On concrete, use two inverted t-shaped supports to hold the hoops. Anchor with socks filled with sand or rocks.
4. Use a big boat cooler or similar bench cooler as the casting seat—easy to rotate on and cast from. Lawn chairs do not work because arms restrict rotation.
5. Lowe's has 3/4-inch x 150 feet black poly pipe for under \$30. Insert dowels or old broom handles into one end, then form a hoop and attach to other end. Or end-of-season hula-hoops at Wal-Mart are \$2 - \$2.50
6. Place a judge at each station for competition.
7. Casting fence parts fit into fold-up lawn chair bag, with shoulder strap. Can anchor to concrete with socks filled with sand. On grass or sand, use wire tent stakes or bent wire hangers.

I designed this Smart Casts™ Casting Challenge Course and Casting Practice Fence so casters could challenge themselves, but I also wanted them to have fun. Maybe they will improve their casting skills along the way.

If you'd like to see the course in action, come to the Florida Conclave this year. If you have questions, suggestions for improvement, whatever, please me at smartcasts@gmail.com.

David Lambert is an MCCI, a lifelong outdoor editor and writer, and Temple For Outfitters advisory staffer. He is also a Florida director for FFF Florida Council and author of SmartCasts, A New Approach to Fly Casting and Practice.

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Scorecard SmartCasts Fly Casting Challenge Course™				
Caster's Name:				
#	Points	Distance In feet	Description	Score
Fireworks				
1	2	15	Forehand cast into target	
2	2	25	Forehand cast into target	
3	2	20	Forehand cast into target	
4	3	15	Forehand cast into target	
5	2	30	Forehand cast into target	
6	4	25	<i>Backhand cast through loop</i>	
7	2	40	Forehand cast into target	
Tightspot				
8	3	30	Forehand through bottom rectangle	
9	3	35	Forehand through top left square	
10	4	40	Forehand through bottom rectangle	
11	3	35	Forehand through top right	
Longshot				
12	2	50	Forehand to larger target	
13	3	60	Forehand to larger target	
14	4	75	Forehand to larger target	
15	6	90	Forehand to larger target	
Hotseat				
16	2	15	Seated, cast through target	
17	2	25	Seated, cast through target	
18	2	35	Seated, cast through target	
19	2	20	Seated, cast through target	

Max Points 53 Points

Notes: 1. Casters use one rod and line per course.
 2. Three attempts to complete each target.
 3. Three false casts each max per attempt.
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