

The Loop

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THE LINE-HAND HAUL

by Mel Krieger

The single and double haul, relatively simple maneuvers involving a line-hand pull in conjunction with a casting stroke, have become an integral part of fly casting and fishing. A.J. McClane called the double haul “the greatest contribution to casting technique in the last century”. This important and easily learned movement has been dissected and analyzed to such an extent that many learners are bewildered by what appear to be conflicting instructions.

Pull long! - Pull short! - Pull fast! - Pull slow! - Pull early! - Pull late! -- are just some of the commands coming down from our casting gurus. Like other aspects of casting, these widely varying styles, in the right hands and often with further explanation, work pretty well.

Tournament casters know that longer and faster line-hand pulls (within a given casting stroke) result in more line speed and longer casts. Some years ago, not long after the double haul was introduced, Jim Green tells the story of casters attempting to use a cleverly rigged short pole as an extension of their line-hand in order to get a longer faster line-hand pull. Recently, Eddie Bosomworth, a New Zealand tournament caster and fisher, invented a pulley arrangement for the line-hand that increases the speed and length of the line-hand pull. (The e-mail address of Eddie Bosomworth is superhaul@paradise.net.nz). Alas, I suspect that both of these techniques are considered illegal in tournament casting and would have limited usage in fishing. On a more practical level, let's examine the line-hand pull as it relates to a complete casting stroke.

All casting strokes begin by pulling the entire line into motion. This is true whether you are lifting line from the water or between back and forward casts. Pulling the line from the water starts with straightening and then planing the fly line to lessen the surface tension. (Lifting all or part of the fly line from the water before or in conjunction with the straightening and planing is an important part of a water pick-up.) Between back and forward casts there are always a few wrinkles in the fly line that must be straightened to pull the whole fly line into motion. Only Steve Rajeff and perhaps God have a perfectly straight fly line between every cast. In both the water pick-up and between back and forward casts, the line-hand

pull at the beginning of the casting stroke helps to establish that straight-line position. This permits the flyrod to begin loading and accelerating the line earlier in the casting stroke, a distinct advantage.

The middle of the casting stroke consists of loading (bending) the fly rod and increasingly accelerating the fly line. The line-hand pull in this middle stage of a casting stroke forces additional bend (load) into the rod and/or reduces the work of the rod hand. At the same time, it accelerates the fly line, obviously an important function of the haul.

The end of the casting stroke takes place at the “stop”--when the rod unloads--when the rod tip and the fly line are moving at their maximum speed, just before the fly line is sent on its way. As the rod unloads, the line-hand pull further accelerates the line at this final stage of the casting stroke; it is likely the most important part of the line-hand haul.

We must conclude that the line-hand haul (pull) is advantageous at every stage of the casting stroke - from start to finish! It follows that the haul would be most effective if it begins and ends at exactly the same time as the casting stroke starts and stops; both hands starting at the same time and ending at the same time. A further advantage of both hands starting and ending at the same time is that it is a very simple and natural movement, and as such, easier to learn and to teach.

Most fly fishers still think of the line-hand haul as solely a method for increasing distance, and may not recognize that it produces additional and equally important advantages. The increased line speed improves line control at all distances -- control that aids in presenting the fly, overcoming wind conditions, threading a backcast through or over obstacles, unrolling long leaders and much more. The line-hand pull reduces the work of the rod hand and offers most casters another important benefit -- added control of the fly line between the line-hand and the first guide of the fly rod. A line-hand trained in the double haul automatically maintains the taut line required for good fly casting.

The equal movement and symmetry of both hands working in opposite directions results in an additional advantage -- superior overall body balance that enhances comfort, efficiency and velocity. A sideways glance at other sports might

make this point clearer. The karate fighter who punches with one hand while pulling the other hand back maintains body balance, at the same time increasing the velocity of his punching hand. It is a truism in almost all sports from a golf swing to a discus throw. Dr. Anthony Stellar, president of a biomechanical company that specialized in sports, once explained that the equal and opposite movement of a line-hand pull could increase the speed of the rod hand and the line -- even if the line-hand did not hold the line!

Our clinics have a high rate of success using pantomime exercises (hand and arm motions without the rod and line) to teach the double haul. After 15 minutes or so of the pantomime training, students cast a shortened shooting taper (about 25 feet) with monofilament running line. We use a brightly colored floating shooting head as it is easier to see and the timing is a bit slower than sinking lines. Students love it!

Mel Krieger founded the FFF's Casting Instructor Certification Program in 1992.



PRACTICE?

By Dennis Grant

Practice, practice, practice: flyfishing books, videos and clinics give students the same message. The only way to become a good flycaster is to practice. But, to most of our students, PRACTICE is a foreign word. People don't come to class to get homework; they come to class expecting that they will have enough ability at the end of the day to go out and catch a fish. *Fishing* is the practice they intend to do.

My wife and I have instructed thousands of students to flycast. We continually tell them that practice is the way to learn flycasting. How many of them do we expect to practice? Not many. First of all, be they beginners or experienced casters, most have never cast without a real fly. When they do pick up the fly rod, it's for the purpose of fishing. Many of them may lack adequate space in the back yard, or even a back yard. Those who have a casting space may not wish to face the ribbing when a neighbor sticks his head out the window and asks, "Are you catching any?"

My wife and I have concluded that practice is not something the vast majority of casters are going to do. So if practice is not an option, what can we instructors do to fill the gap? First of all, we can introduce casters to the yarn-rod, and encourage them to cast indoors. Will they do it? Some will. They'll sit with rod tip in hand, watch their favorite TV show, and drive the cat crazy while casting yarn, thereby grasping some basic concepts.

In addition, we can create memorable mental images that will guide our students as they cast. It can be a challenge to find the right image or images for your student so here are a few old standards:

*Use the clock face--stop at 1:00 on the backcast and 10:00 on the forward cast.

*Imagine you are standing with your back to a wall and making a backcast.

*Cast the tip of the rod into the clouds.

*Cast at a target above the water on the forward cast.

Use whatever works. You will need various mental images so that one of them will drive home concepts that the student understands easily, AND can take fishing.

Dennis Grant is a member of the Board of Governors and is based in Nova Scotia.



MORE OF YOUR FAVORITE TEACHING TIPS

Most of the following tips were gleaned from the 2000 Casting Instructor Certification Renewal Questionnaire. The Loop thanks all of you for your submissions and for sharing your ideas with the rest of us. That's how we get better.--Ed.

I use a fly swatter with a piece of chenille about 3 feet long tied to the top border of the flexible screen. When the student swats a fly on an imaginary wall in front of him, the stroke loads the screen on the fly swatter (like a rod). The stop at the imaginary wall unloads the screen and forms a loop in the chenille. *Charles Robbins, California*

To convey to students the progressive application of power, followed by a firm stopping of the rod during the roll cast, I pass out a rolled up newspaper to each beginning student. With the paper, we proceed to swat house flies. Students tend to grasp the slow downward movement (sneaking up on the unsuspecting pest), followed by a quick acceleration and abrupt stop (dispatching with the victim). *Jamie Murphy, California*

When a student gets stuck, I usually ask her to do something different. A different movement (task) puts some distance between her and the problem. Later, we return to the problem and approach it in a different way. Sometimes practicing the roll cast, for instance, will imprint the muscle movement for the forward cast. Also, I teach children about "fruit loops", those big fat loops we want to avoid. It gives us something to laugh about, while giving a name to a problem. *Raye Carrington, Texas*

If a student can't seem to get the feel for properly loading the rod, I put on a line that is 2-3 weights heavier and have him cast that for a while. The extra weight seems to develop his feel quicker. *Alex Siemers-Master Instructor, California*

When a student has trouble developing the proper feel of any aspect of casting, I have him close his eyes. It greatly speeds up his feel for the cast. *George Simon-Master Instructor, New York*

Many of my students are kinesthetic learners and are easily distracted by watching the loop. When I have them focus their eyes on the wrist, they pick up the "feel" of the power snap much more quickly. *Bob Dionne, Maine*

If a student persists in bringing the rod too far back on the back cast, I'll stand behind him and catch the rod where it is supposed to stop. After several tries, the caster figures out where to stop the rod on the back cast. *Paul Bowen, Idaho*

I like to cast with only the tip section to show students how little energy the hand, arm, shoulder need to put into the rod. It is amazing to see how much students slow down their casting strokes after watching this. *Tomlinson White, Washington*

Some of us in the west do not particularly favor a floppy elbow. Accordingly, we will stand next to the student's casting arm so they be unable to swing the elbow out to the side. *Wayne Taylor, California*

For long saltwater casts, get the shoulder into it. *Ken Callaway-Master Instructor, Texas*

The shorter the line you are casting, the shorter the stroke should be. *Thomas April, California*

When explaining and/or demonstrating I repeat out loud the steps involved. I then demonstrate, having the student say out loud the steps. Finally, the student demonstrates and repeats the steps out loud. Verbal emphasis really helps. *Don Simonson-Master Instructor, Seattle*

Awareness of how the body moves is critical for casters of all skill levels to improve on accuracy and distance. Of course, video is the best teaching tool for making the student immediately aware of his/her own body movements. While guiding, though, I lose the advantage of video's great teaching effect. If a client is struggling on the river, I often pull my boat into non-productive water and have her turn her head to watch her own casting stroke. I, too, watch closely to make sure her eyes stay focused on her hand and arm without straying to the rod and line. After several casts I ask questions such as, "Is your hand tracking along a straight line path?"; "How would you describe the energy of your casting stroke?"; "Are there abrupt stops in both the back and forward cast?"; "Where is your thumb pointing at the end of your back and forward cast?"; "Is there a pause in motion between your back and forward casts?" Once the caster witnesses and discusses these things, she/he has a greater opportunity to self-correct if the cast deteriorates. *Scott Timothy-Master Instructor, Montana*



FROM THE EDITOR

Send Us Your Best Ideas For Games!

Tim Rajeff recently visited the frozen climes of Maine and opined that we should all try to make casting more fun. (Those of you who have seen Tim give a casting or teaching demonstration know that Tim wraps his dazzling technical mastery and his no-bull approach to casting in loads of humor. His students have FUN.) Well, Tim went on to

offer a terrific idea: let's ask the readers of The Loop to submit their best ideas for casting games. Are you up for this? We are!

Please submit your best ideas for a casting game(s) to The Loop. If at all possible, send them in the form of an e-mail to Evelyn Taylor at the National Office. Short of that, send a fax or snail-mail. In the next issue, The Loop will publish our favorites. In your submission, please be sure to include your name, where you live, and your level of certification.

Send Us Your Comments on What You Read in *THE LOOP*

Just as you may hear something in a colleague's casting instruction with which you may disagree, you may read things in these pages that spark the same response. Whether it is from one of The Great Ones or someone who has a lower profile, never shrink from questioning the accuracy of what you read. Just because He or She Who Is Respected says it does not always make it so. Think of it this way: wouldn't you want someone to tell you if you were misinforming your students about a particular aspect of casting? The Loop invites you to send us your comments about anything you read herein. We will publish selected comments and invite a response from the author of the original article.



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YOU CAN HAVE A LINK from your FFF Website listing to your own E-mail address. Contact Evelyn (see above).

We welcome your submissions via E-mail, fax, or disk. Please attach a short instructor bio (1-3 sentences), including your location and Certification level. Please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow for your submission's possible re-publication on the Program's Website. Any illustrations should be in TIFF format. The Loop reserves the right to accept or decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission as it sees fit. All submissions should be sent to the National Office:

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COMING EVENTS

Pre-registration is REQUIRED!

Contact Evelyn Taylor at (406) 585-7592

Toronto, Ontario - Feb 15-17; Spring Fly Fishing Show; Certified Instructor; contact Bill Spicer (905) 543-9648

Lord; benefit for the North Eastern Council; cost is \$40; must preregister by March 16

Charlotte, North Carolina - February 16; The Fly Fishing Show; Certified Instructor; must preregister by Feb 8

Freeport, Maine - April 7-8; LLBean 2-day workshop & certification with Macauley Lord; contact Craig Uecker to preregister at 800-341-4341 x22666

Denver, Colo - February 23; International Sportsmen's Expo; Certified Instructor; must preregister by Feb 15

Toronto, Ontario - April 7-8; Isaac Walton Fly Fishing Forum; Cert. Instructor; contact Bill Spicer (905) 543-9648

Long Beach, Calif - March 10; SWC Conclave/Fred Hall Show; Certified Inst. & Masters; must preregister by Mar 2

Gulf Shores, Alabama - May 20; Southeast Council Conclave; Certified Instructor; must preregister by May 11

Halifax, Nova Scotia - March 15-18; Atlantic Outdoor Show; Cert. Instructor; contact Dennis Grant (902) 673-2590

Roscommon, Michigan - June 16; GLC Fly Fishing Conference; Certified Instructor; must preregister by June 8

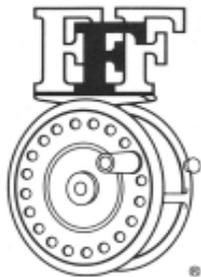
Salt Lake City, Utah - March 16 & 17; Internat'l Sportsmen's Expo; Certified Inst. & Masters; must preregister by March 8

Livingston, Montana - August 8 Masters; August 9 Cert. Inst; Internat'l Fly Fishing Show; must preregister by July 31

Phoenix, Arizona - March 23; International Sportsmen's Expo; Certified Instructor; must preregister by March 15

Freeport, Maine - October 20-21; LLBean 2-day workshop & certification with Macauley Lord; contact Craig Uecker to preregister at 800-341-4341 x22666

Brunswick, Maine - March 25; Teaching workshop & preparation for instructor certification test with Macauley



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