

The Loop)

The Federation of Fly Fishers' Journal for Certified Fly Casting Instructors
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POWER OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

by Soon Lee

FREQUENTLY I COME ACROSS THE STUDENT who is unable to load the rod adequately, resulting in an open loop on the backcast. The failure of the line to straighten out on the backcast adversely affects rod loading on the forward cast. To make up for this loss of loading control, the student typically applies incorrectly-timed and over-exuberant effort, which produces a tailing loop. I find in many instances that if I am able to improve the student's backcast, the student's forward cast corrects itself.

The length of line carried beyond the rod tip determines to a great extent the length of the casting stroke. For a longer carry such as 30 to 40 feet, the student is sub-

consciously aware of this. However, the student often feels (subconsciously) that to get ready for a longer casting stroke, the rod needs to be almost parallel to the horizon on the backcast.

My observation is that if I tell the student to stop the rod earlier on the backcast to obtain a tighter loop, the student has great difficulty doing so. He or she hears my instruction, but it does not register in his or her head. The student may turn and see that he or she is stopping the rod near horizontal on the backcast, but he does not seem to be able to cease doing so.

On the other hand, if I tell the student to stop the rod

earlier, then follow with drifting the rod back, the student instantaneously complies. After that it is just a simple adjustment of the power of the stroke to achieve a perfectly looped backcast.

This is an instance of the student's subconscious mind overriding my instruction (it happens in other casting situations too). The student's mind won't believe that the rod can be stopped early and still cast the line adequately by starting the forward cast at, say, one o'clock. This mental conflict prevents the student from stopping the rod early. My instruction is ignored. The student needs to be specifically told to stop the rod; then drift the rod back to get ready for the forward cast. My instruction is followed.

It is understood, of course, that with a short line carry, rod drift at the end of a cast is unnecessary, even counter-productive. With 10 feet of carry, the student can see both the forward cast and backcast readily, and has no mental pressure to get ready for a long casting stroke. But with a long line and with the backcast out of sight behind the student, he or she needs help to overcome the mental hurdle of getting ready for the forward cast. It may be as simple as reminding the student to stop and drift.

Soon S. Lee is a Master Certified Instructor from Upland, California. He teaches fly casting at two fly fishing clubs: The Inland Flyfishers in Claremont and the Deep Creek Flyfishers in San Bernardino.

THE ROLL CASTING BLOCK

by Paul "Sodie" Sodamann

WHEN TEACHING MY FLY FISHING CLASS for Kansas State University, I like to begin casting instruction with the Roll Cast. The problem is that the class is run indoors on a gym floor. Without water tension on the line, Roll Casting becomes a challenge to teach. Many devices and teaching aids have been devised and described, all of which work to some degree or another. I have come up with my own version of a Roll Casting aid—a casting block—and I am very happy with the way it functions.

My goal in developing the casting block was to allow students to practice Roll Casting in repetition without the need to reattach the end of the leader to the block. I also wanted to create a device that would avoid snagging the leader on each cast. Although my casting block does not allow the leader to straighten out at the end of the cast, it does allow the students to see the cast unroll. In addition

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the block allows students the opportunity to reposition themselves and try again without the need to walk to the casting block and reattach the leader.

The block is made out of solid-surface counter top material. This material is hard yet may be shaped easily with wood-working tools. My source of material is a local counter top company. They cut out openings for sinks and save these small pieces for me. I first cut these pieces into squares approximately six inches by six inches. I then cut the corners at forty-five degree angles, making octagons out of the squares. I round-off the sharp corners with a disc sander and smooth over the entire top edge with a router.

In the center of the casting block I apply a piece of self adhesive Velcro, pile side to the block and hook side stuck face down to the pile. The block is placed on the gym floor and the yarn fly is fastened between the Velcro sandwich.

With a block in place and yarn firmly attached, the student steps back to the distance at which he or she is going to practice Roll Casting and begins. As the student Roll Casts, the line rolls past the block but the yarn fly stays attached to the Velcro. As the student sets up for a second attempt, the line slides smoothly and cleanly back

over and past the block without snagging. By trimming the Velcro pieces to match each other, you can reduce the likelihood that the leader will snag on the Velcro. These blocks are not perfect, but they do allow for many uninterrupted practice attempts at the Roll Cast. They also serve as casting targets when attempting accuracy. I have used these same blocks outside on other surfaces and aside from the fact that grass and pavement are tough on fly lines, the blocks work.

Paul "Sodie" Sodemann is a from Manhattan, Kansas and has a Ph.D. in Education from Kansas State University. He operates a small fly shop out of his home and is VP of Conservation for the Southern Council.

SEND THEM TO THE BENCH

by Colby Sorrells

AS I WAS FIRST LEARNING TO FLY CAST I noticed that when fishing from a small boat my casts and loops were better formed than when I was fishing from shore. What was it that made my casting from a boat—low in the water and sitting down—better than my casting standing up? In order to find out, I went to the bench.

To simulate the low-riding position I had experienced in the boat, I sat on a small bench while practicing my casts. As it turned out, the bench helped emphasize the correct forward/backward movement of my arm. In addition, being so close to the ground provided a psychological assist in curbing the excessive wrist-breaking movements common to beginning casters—your line can touch the ground much more easily when you're that low. With such reinforcement, I soon noticed I didn't have the problem of throwing the line down too far. I was also able to trace the path of the rod tip along the fence top in my backyard. This movement gave me the straight-line rod tip path I needed.

The bench also assisted me with another problem beginners often face: Too much lower-body motion (which can de-emphasize proper arm movement). Using the bench removed all lower body motion and helped prevent unwanted downward motion on both forward and back casts. Weak-wrist, below-the-waist, rod tip levels were eliminated.

If you'd like to build your own bench, make it about eight inches tall. This height places your legs and knees level with, or slightly above, your waist. For even a small child, this bench is low enough to allow focused concen-

tration on arm and rod movement. In addition, the bench prepares a caster for fishing in a low-riding boat, kayak or float tube.

Along with the obvious benefits the bench provides for a student's casting, it offers the convenience of being easy to transport. The bench is also something that a student can make and then practice with on his or her own time.

If your students have problems with dropping casts, do what I do and send them to the bench!

Colby Sorrells is a Basic Certified Casting instructor from Boerne, Texas. He is a member of the Texas Outdoors Writers Association and an avid old-tackle collector.

STATE OF THE LOOP

by The Editor

THE LOOP IS LATE. Two months in Seattle, followed by two weeks in Russia, and then a week in Utah put me well and truly behind in getting the "summer" issue of *The Loop* finished. On the spin-side, I could say, "all good things come to those who wait...."

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Regardless of timing problems, however, *The Loop* has been actively pursuing a larger-scale article for the upcoming Fall issue. The subject will be that of the Master's exam. Specifically, the top three things that those on the Board of Governors look for when interviewing (interrogating?) Master's exam candidates: The article should provide an insightful resource for the future (and I'll be sure to get it published before the next millennium).

NEW BOG MEMBERS

Dennis Grant - Nova Scotia, Canada
Tim Rajeff - Washington

To establish a closer relationship with the FFF European Casting Program, the following individuals were elected as Honorary Members to our BOG:

Günter Feuerstein - Switzerland
Charles Jardine - England

Both Günter and Charles are members of the European BOC

NEW MASTER INSTRUCTORS

Chuck Easterling - Arkansas
Capt. Gary Taylor - Tennessee

COMING EVENTS

Pre-Registration is REQUIRED!
Contact Evelyn Taylor at (406) 585-7592

MOUNTAIN HOME, ARKANSAS - October 2; Southern Council Conclave; Basic with Tom Lindra and Bill Gammel.

STRATTON, VERMONT - October 23; Women's Festival; Basic with Rhea Topping and Jan Kurahara.

PIKESVILLE, MARYLAND - November 13; Mid-Atlantic Council Conclave; Basic with Phil Gav.

ANNANDALE, VIRGINIA - December 4; Old Dominion Fly Fishing Show; Basic with Phil Gav.

SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY - January 28 & 29; The Fly Fishing Show Basic & Masters; must pre-register by January 14.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA - February 19 & 20; The Fly Fishing Show; Basic & Masters; must pre-register by February 9.

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WE WELCOME YOUR SUBMISSIONS via typewriter, FAX, disk, or e-mail. 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 black ink on white paper, or if submitted digitally, in TIFF format at 300dpi (if possible). *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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THE LOOP LIBRARY

by Gary A. Borger

Introduction by The Editor

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

This following piece is taken from Gary A. Borger's book, *Presentation* (Tomorrow River Press, 1995). As we began this issue of *The Loop* with exercises of the mind, so shall we end it. This particular section deals with the use of visualization in the learning of fly casting.

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“Learning the skills of line handling is greatly facilitated if the fly fisher employs both sides of the brain—the left side to organize the initial motions, the right side to “visualize” them in space. Each time you practice casting you should reinforce both left and right brain understandings. Begin by reading the descriptions and looking at the diagrams. Then, perform the cast without the rod. Watch your casting hand and arm and describe the cast to yourself. This is pure left side analysis. Now, close your eyes. Picture the pathway of movement of your hand and arm. Do not try to name the movements, just visualize them in space. If you cannot visualize the movements, go back and repeat the left-side analysis. Keep at it until you can visualize the movements with your eyes closed. Continuing with your eyes closed, move your hand and arm in concert with the mentally-visualized hand and arm. Do not try to name what is happening. Note the relaxed feeling of your hand arm as they seem to float along through space; this is true right-brain casting. Try to remember this feeling and the way you seemed to “just do it.”

Use these left-brain/right-brain exercises to run through the various casts fifty to one hundred times each. Be especially careful to watch your arm and hand and correct any mistakes while performing left-brain exercises. Be sure to “visualize” when performing the right-brain exercises. And while performing right-brain exercises, concentrate on learning the feel of the cast and be sure you don't try to name parts or movements. After such practice, you should be performing the casting stroke with ease. You will then be ready to begin work with the rod and line.

If you want to become a good caster, take your time and get the movements down correctly, don't rush and do them wrong. Someone

once said that practice makes perfect. True, but if you practice wrong, all it makes you is perfectly wrong! It's better to make 100 perfect casts in an hour and learn it right 100 times than to make 1,000 bad casts and learn it wrong 1,000 times. As paradoxical as it may seem, you'll actually learn to cast sooner if you don't try to rush the learning process. No one sits down at the piano for the first time and plays at a *presto* tempo. Rather one begins slowly at *largo* and gradually, as coordination develops, increases the tempo. And so it is with fly casting. Start slowly. Read the description of each cast carefully and “see” the movement in your mind. Practice slowly and carefully, without the fly rod, watching your hand and arm and correcting yourself until you can run through the proper movements in a relaxed manner, without having to stop and think of each step. If you do this, casting will come quickly.

If you've already learned to cast, but have bad habits, then use the visualization process to correct them. I learned to fly fish at age 11 without anyone to teach me. As a consequence, I learned many bad casting habits—bending my wrist too much, taking the rod too far back, casting down onto the water, etc., etc. As I read more and became familiar with the correct procedures, I corrected my bad habits by visualizing the movements and practicing slowly.”

Gary A. Borger is a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors and is sometimes (affectionately) referred to as “the old guy.”