

# THE CASTING CLINIC

With Al Kyte

## THE DOUBLE HAUL



One way to add distance to a cast is to increase line speed, and one way to add speed is by hauling, pulling on the line with your line hand during the cast. A double haul is two pulls, the first occurring during the back cast, the second during the forward cast. After the second haul, we sometimes shoot line for distance. The speed generated by hauling also helps control the fly line in the air, takes pressure off the rod hand, and drives the fly line into a wind. Hauling speed is produced both by pulling line through the rod, thus accelerating the line beyond the tip, and by increasing the rod's bend and the subsequent spring effect of its unloading.

Although the double haul can be important to your fly fishing, it is seldom easy to learn. You may have found the movements to be difficult to coordinate or the differing advice on hauling technique to be confusing. Experts variously recommend hauls that are long and slow, long and quick, or short and quick. They may advocate starting the hauling movement late in the casting stroke, or earlier, with the start of the rod-hand movement. Putting these differences in perspective and simplifying the learning may help get you past this hurdle in your casting.

I started reviewing double hauling by doing some frame-by-frame film study of various casting experts, focusing on the last haul that releases line into a long forward cast. I was surprised by how similar the double hauls of various casters were when using the same rod and a weight-forward, floating line. Typically, the line

hand delayed hauling until the rod butt had been rotated forward to, or just past, vertical. The hauling hand moved the fastest during the final tipping, stopping, and initial unloading of the rod. As the rod continued to unload, the hauling hand's movement slowed again before releasing the line.

Just when I thought I had a handle on this, Tim Rajeff mentioned that he would expect the hauls to be different with a fast-sinking shooting head. I looked at some shooting-head casting footage and found that some of these experts were making earlier and longer hauls than with a weight-forward line. This told me that we need to be cautious about making specific recommendations about haul speed, length, or timing.

A haul may also be influenced by other factors, such as the particular fly rod being cast. Although a competent caster can adjust the timing of a haul to different rods, the quick unloading characteristic of a tip-flexing rod seems best timed to a quick haul, whereas a slower, full-flexing rod seems best matched to a more leisurely haul.

I also vary my hauls at times when changing my casting purpose. I most often use a quick, short haul to tighten up my casting loops, a longer, slower haul to smooth out my timing or to cast in a relaxed, effortless manner, and a long, quick haul to impart high energy to the fly line for my longest casts. As I change such purposes, I typically change the speed and length of my casting stroke, as well. So a variety of factors may

affect the look of a haul.

I believe that one key to varying your hauls is being sensitive to the relationship between the movements of your two hands. Ideally, the line hand should reinforce what the rod hand is accomplishing. Thus, whatever time your rod hand consumes in initially bending the rod and starting the line smoothly, your line hand should spend moving slowly enough to help control that bend to keep the tip moving along a straight path. Whatever time your rod hand spends in accelerating the tip through the rod's final rotation, stop, and straightening, your line hand should spend moving fast. We may think of this relationship as an acceleration of both hands, but we are really coordinating the speed of the hauling hand to that of the rod's tip. This is most apparent when our rod hand is stopping the cast, yet the hauling hand and rod tip are still moving fast.

So variations in equipment and in the movements of the rod hand help account for differences in hauls. Yet why do some of us teach starting the haul as we start the rod hand, when the fastest part of the haul occurs later in the casting stroke? I already mentioned that shooting heads invite a relatively early haul. But, beyond that, I believe that starting the hauling movement early simplifies the communication of a complicated movement. When both hands do different things at the same time, as when hauling, it seems easier to start those movements together. It is similar to teaching a serve in tennis, where we commonly coordinate the movements of our tossing and racquet hands by starting, 'down together, up together.' So I first teach a generalized movement pattern, then, at some point, may fine-tune that coordination by slowing down or delaying the start of the haul.



**FIGURE 1. YOU CAN IMPROVE THE TIMING OF YOUR DOUBLE-HAUL BY PANTOMIMING THE "DOWNUP" MOVEMENT THAT IT INVOLVES.**

## A Sequence for Practicing the Double Haul

I've broken down the steps to learning the double haul into a sequence of exercises. Following this sequence may teach you the timing necessary to double haul effectively with a rod and line.

### Mel Krieger's Pantomime

Casting instructors around the world have adopted Mel Krieger's method for introducing the double haul movements by pantomiming without the rod or fly line. In this method, your dominant or rod hand makes a back cast with an imaginary fly rod, while your other hand pulls down on an imaginary fly line and immediately moves it back up toward the rod hand. Then, as your rod hand makes an imaginary forward cast, the line hand again pulls down and back up. The upward movement repositions your line hand to be able to make another haul. Mel speaks of these line hand movements as 'downup,' two movements in one word, to emphasize the lack of a stop after the downward part (Figure 1).

## Rod Butt and Rubber Band

Some people have trouble visualizing what their pantomiming hand movements are supposed to represent - it all seems too abstract. So as a follow-up step, I now have students continue these movements holding the butt half of a fly rod in the rod hand and a long rubber band in the line hand. The other end of this three-foot-long rubber band is knotted to the stripping guide. The rod butt effectively communicates the rod's back and forth movements, and the rubber band adds an exaggerated feel of the line's tension, which reminds you to complete the 'up' part of the 'downup'. Thus you never stop the rubber band in a stretched or 'down' position (Figure 2). I make these rubber bands by cutting and knotting together three of the largest rubber bands I can buy at a stationery store (size 117B), each is a foot long when cut. This practice also allows you to watch your hands to avoid the error of starting the haul before the rod's movement. If anything, start the rod butt moving first, then make your haul.

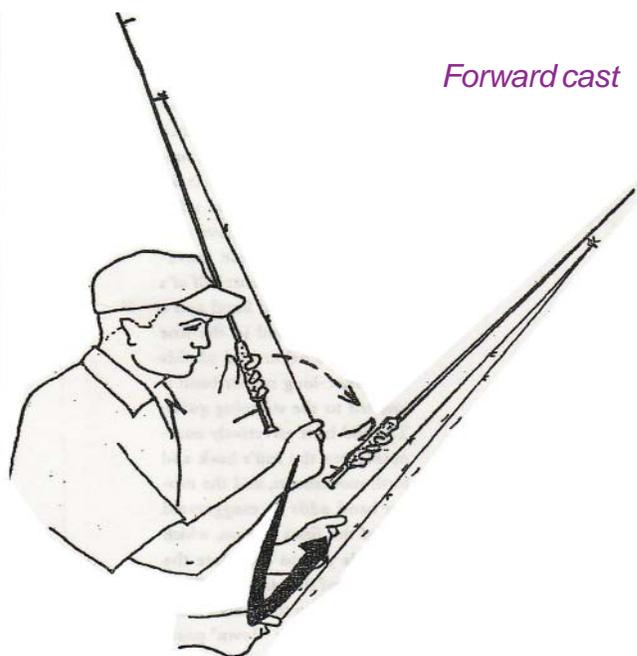
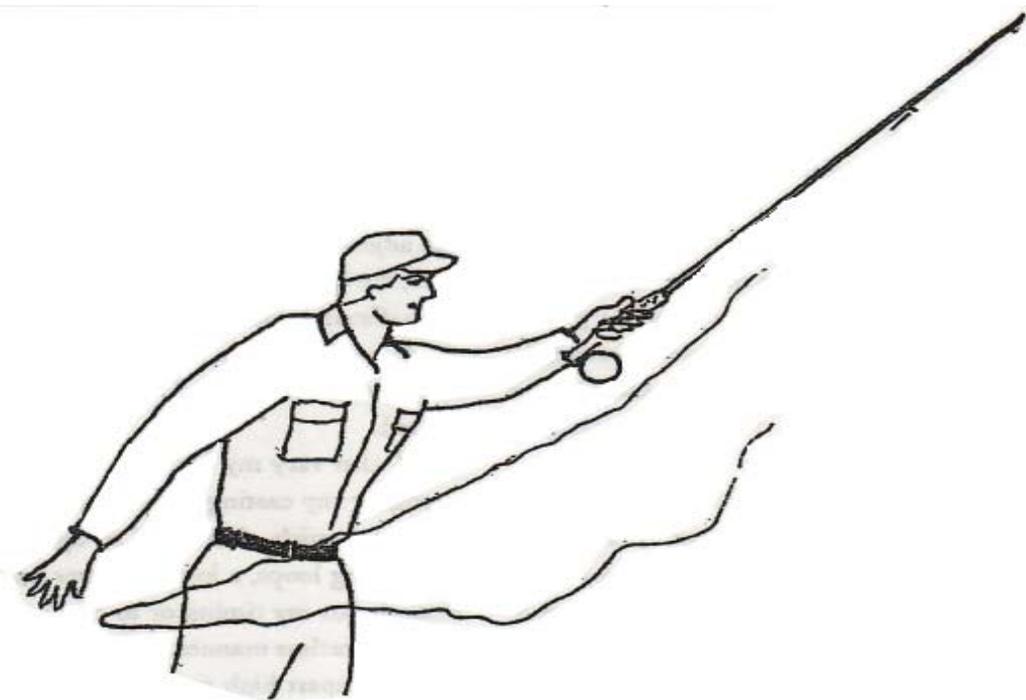


FIGURE 2. BESIDES THE PANTOMIME MOTIONS SHOWN IN FIGURE 1, YOU CAN ALSO PRACTICE ON THE TIMING OF YOUR "DOWNUP HAUL" WITH A ROD BUTT AND A LONG RUBBER BAND. THE RUBBER BAND MIMICS AND EXAGGERATES THE FEEL OF THE LINE'S TENSION.



**FIGURE 3. RELEASE THE LINE IN BACK AFTER THE SECOND HAUL.**

When you feel the coordination of these movements, try them with your rod and fly line. I like Mel's idea of starting with a 25-foot to 30-foot shooting head over-lined for the rod. Having the entire head beyond the rod tip intensifies the feel of the line's responsiveness to your pulling and recovering movements.

### **Double Hauling with a 'Part' Method**

If you still haven't got the timing of the double haul down, break the cast into two parts, practicing one haul at a time. To do this, start with the line on the grass in front of you, with the shooting head and about five feet of running line beyond the rod tip. The running line beyond the tip is called 'overhang.' Make your back cast, executing your 'downup' haul. As the line falls to the grass behind you, check to make sure your line hand has completed the 'up' movement toward your rod. Take a few steps forward if needed to straighten the line on the grass and make your forward cast and second 'downup' haul. Your line should fall once again to the grass in front. When you have repeated these move-

ments enough to feel confident, combine the two hauls with the line moving back and forth in the air. False casting your hauls increases your feel of the line and of the timing that works.

### **Shooting Line**

Next you need to learn how to make the final haul to shoot line. Practice this line release first without false casting. Lift your line off the grass in front with your backcast and make your first 'downup' haul. With the line straightening in the air behind you, make your forward cast. As you do, pull down and back on the line, releasing it when your line hand is farthest back and your rod extended forward (Figure 3). Thus there is no 'up' movement on this last haul.

### **Other Lines**

When double hauling with a weight-forward line, you are pulling a thicker fly line, rather than the lighter running line, through the rod guides. Adjusting to this added resistance may require shortening your hauls and/or delaying the timing a bit. Practice this by laying out 40 feet of fly line on the grass and use the 'part' method

again, this time with a sidearm cast. Start moving both hands back together to the side and, about halfway through your back cast, make a short haul. The line moving on the grass should become airborne with your haul and fall again to the grass behind your rod. Then start forward with both hands together, and halfway through your forward cast, make your second haul. Continue back and forth, eventually keeping the line in the air, combining the hauls. If slack forms between your hauling hand and the stripping guide, shorten your hauls even more. Practicing sidearm allows you to watch your rod movement in relation to your hauls.

Even if you have previously learned the double haul, these are good practice sequences to tune up your timing prior to a fishing trip. More people than ever are scheduling trips for species that demand distance fly casting. We previously discussed ways to gain distance by increasing your stroke length, rod bend, rod angle, line trajectory, and drift. Yet you haven't really added line speed to this mix until you have become effective with the double haul. I hope this helps.