



# The Tailing Loop

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Newsletter for Casting Instructors*  
*Winter 1996*

## THE POSITIVE STOP

*by Jim Green*

The various techniques of flycasting are all necessary for successful results, but the most important part is what I call a POSITIVE STOP.

The expertise of a flycaster can be judged by the way they execute this POSITIVE STOP. It is this STOP that forms the correct narrow loop and makes the line roll rearward on the back cast and forward on the forward cast.

Without a good POSITIVE STOP a person cannot become an expert caster.

Putting something in motion and then suddenly stopping this movement is not what we often do in every day life.

Having no previous muscle memory of this STOP makes it difficult to learn. Teaching a person to cast would be a piece of cake if the beginner would learn the POSITIVE STOP quickly.

The best way I have found to teach the beginner is to have them go through the casting stroke over and over again, as if they were false casting, without a line on the rod.

Have the student hold the rod with the wrist slightly bent back from the forearm and place the hand about three inches below the shoulder top. The forearm and biceps will form about a 90 degree angle.

This is the beginning position to start the back cast when false casting.

Do not bend the wrist or the elbow while lifting the biceps, forearm, wrist, and hand as a unit upwards by rotating the shoulder joint.

The hand will travel up, a casting stroke path of 45 degrees, until it stops close along side the eye. The forearm will assume a vertical position. At the same instant all this takes place come to a POSITIVE STOP by tightening the muscles of the shoulder, biceps, forearm, wrist, and hand. Now instantly relax the muscles and then re-tighten them slightly to dampen the rod vibrations.

The object is to stop all movement of the rod handle. The part of the rod above the handle, being the stiffest will come to a stop and if a line were on the rod a fast narrow rolling loop would be formed. The line always follows the

movement of the rod tip. The faster the tip moves so goes the line.

After the imaginary line and leader have almost straightened behind, move the arm unit downward by rotating the shoulder joint and return to the same position from which you started.

Again tighten all the muscles of the arm unit and make the rod butt handle come to a POSITIVE STOP.

The rod will unload forcing the tip to accelerate forward and again a fast rolling narrow line loop would be formed.

Have your students repeat this dry run over and over again. They must develop the muscle memory of the casting stroke and the POSITIVE STOP.

Once you feel that your students are doing pretty well, then start with the line on the rod. Make short casts until they have a definite understanding of the casting stroke.

Be careful that the student does not start the forward cast by jerking the rod forward. This can cause a tailing loop. Start the arm unit downward slowly and then accelerate to the POSITIVE STOP.

Teach the student to shoot a few feet forward and now work with that amount of line. This exercise will also teach the correct timing, for as the cast becomes farther they must wait longer for the back cast to almost strengthen behind before starting forward. Continue adding distance to the cast a few feet at a time. Continue working on the correct POSITIVE STOP. Return to a short cast and repeat the exercise again.

Loading the rod is really automatic for as the rod is moved, the line weight will bend the rod and as you accelerate the movement the rod will bend or load more.

The tricky part is to unload the rod. It is the correct POSITIVE STOP that unloads the rod and forms the fast rolling narrow loop. This STOP has been called various names. Just plain STOP, FLIPPING THE TIP, POWER SNAP, WHOMPING THE ROD, and I'm sure there may be more. Call it what you wish but the caster must make a POSITIVE STOP. **It is the secret of Flycasting!**

# THE TEACHING TRIPOD IN FLYCASTING INSTRUCTION

by Macauley Lord

Over the years, I've had the privilege of teaching fly casting and fly fishing to over 2,000 novices in nearly 100 3-day schools. Working with a group of instructors, our students get roughly 5 hours of casting instruction during a school. I offer in this note a humbling lesson my fellow instructors and I have learned about breakthroughs in casting instruction: there are none.

There is no foolproof system, no mantra, no "works every time". At least we haven't found it yet. What we have found, with the help of a sports teaching consultant, is that any one fly casting student learns by some combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic instruction. Let's call this the teaching tripod.

Think back to the pivotal moments in your development as a caster. You might have heard {auditory} some instructions that "clicked"; you might have watched {visual} a better caster than you and seen "the key to it all"; you might have had someone put their hand on yours and do the enlightening cast with you {kinesthetic}. According to our teaching consultant, if you are like most people, your breakthroughs came via one or two of these processes. My point is that if you as an instructor focus on only one or two of these to the exclusion of the other you may not be able to effectively teach many of your students.

The teaching tripod is a system that requires you to develop an arsenal of tips that plays to each of these three learning styles. A few examples: {You'll notice that many of these are only appropriate for certain casting flaws and would be counterproductive for some students.}

## VISUAL

- \* Watch my forearm/elbow as I cast.
- \* Watch only the rod as I cast.
- \* Notice the position of my rod as it stops on the back and forward cast.
- \* Watch how abruptly the rod stops.
- \* Watch the rod start slowly and power snap/flick/whuump/pop/accelerate to a positive stop...

## AUDITORY

- \* It's like flinging an apple off a stick, chopping with a hatchet, hitting a nail with a hammer, etc.
- \* Try to make the line slam into the rod both on the back and forward casts.
- \* Try to stop the rod straight up on the backcast.
- \* Make each successive cast with less and less energy so that finally you're not using enough energy to straighten out the line and leader.
- \* Try to throw the line up on the backcast and down of the forward cast.

## KINESTHETIC

- \* Put your thumb on the student's thumb and make the cast with him.
- \* Have the student put her thumb on yours and make the cast with her.
- \* Restrain the student's elbow so it doesn't fly out into an inefficient position.
- \* Use your hand as a roadblock to stop the student's rod in the proper forward or backcast position.

We have yet to find that we can predict or sense which methods will work with any particular student. We just keep covering different legs of the tripod until the student and instructor find something that works.

Occasionally, an instructor will have a student to whom he just can't convey the right visual, auditory or kinesthetic advice. He needs to have confidence that one of his colleagues will crack the code for that individual student. It is a mark of a successful instructor to admit that one of his cohorts may have a better idea than he does, and hand the student off to him or her. So, if you do teach in a team situation, rely on your partners for insight that you may lack. Consider them the other legs of your team's tripod.

## COMING EVENTS

Basic Certification - February 17-18, 1996; Annual Meeting & Fly Fishing Show, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact Mike Brown (515) 255-9056 or Jene Hughes (515) 282-4217

Basic & Masters Certification - Southeast Council Conclave, Jacksonville, FL; June 13-15  
Contact Fred Stevenson (205) 881-2754

Basic & Masters Certification - International Fly Fishing Show/Conclave; August 5-10; Livingston, MT; Registration form in the Spring *Flyfisher*

## FREE ADVERTISING

One of the benefits you have as a FFF Certified Casting Instructor is some free advertising. When students call the FFF and wants to know about instructors, we send them a list of Certified Casting Instructors in their state.

In the January issue of Meetings & Conventions Magazine there is an article on fishing and planning group trips. It says, "If you decide to contract with an independent guiding outfit, choose wisely.... Fly fishing guides should be certified by the Federation of Fly Fishers."

Black's Fly Fishing Directory will be published in the spring and it will list all the current FFF Certified Casting Instructors by state. This directory will also contain lists of equipment, manufacturers, lodges, fly fishing schools and clinics. It has a distribution of over 16,000 and you will receive a complimentary copy.

## NEWSLETTER

In an effort to improve *The Tailing Loop*, please send us your suggestions, ideas, thoughts on how to make it better. What do you want to see in it, how long should it be, how often should it be published, etc. Please send to:

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P.O. Box 1595  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
email: 74504.2605@compuserve.com

And as usual we need your articles, teaching tips and anecdotes for the next edition!

## A TEACHING TIP FROM LEE FABER

There are a couple of techniques that I have found to be essential in my years of teaching. The first is humor, the second is repetition. For example, individualize the language to the group. If you're in front of a group of doctors you might comment that there are three essentials to fly casting, unless you are an attorney, in which case there are six aspects. Then state the essence of fly casting is loading and unloading the rod, repeat twice. Then state "now for the attorneys the essence is" and repeat six times. You have used humor to get their attention, and the repetition has fixed the objective in their minds. Of course if you are up in front of a bunch of attorneys you have real problems!

I use an old Al Kyte trick to teach the feel of the rod loading. That is to lay out 30-40 feet of line on the lawn, and have them stop the rod at twelve o'clock, then use a bit of doggerel applicable to the group. For example, (whatever city you are in ) is a nice town, or God Save the Queen, Hail to the Victors, or Fighting Irish No. 1, what ever most closely applies to the group. You have shown them the feel of the rod loading and got their attention on the pause in the back stroke. Have them then go forward and STOP, use your hand to stop their forward stroke early. The momentum will carry their hand forward. They usually will understand the feel of the loading and unloading of the rod. Have them repeat this exercise until they form loops. Usually this goes on for 20 minutes whereupon their hands are fatigued. Remember, they only have a few good strokes and you are trying to train their muscles. Then go onto roll casting, discussions of rod speeds, anything to give them a rest then try it again in ten minutes.

**Don't forget FFF membership is now a requirement for FFF Certified Casting Instructors!!! If you are not already a FFF member, please join today. Your membership # will be required on your 1996 renewal.**

## COMMON SENSE FLY CASTING

*by Bob Krumm*

Whenever I watch a fly casting demonstration, or a person trying out a different rod, the caster intently tries to cast all the line. It's almost like every fly caster has a mind set of "I must cast the whole line".

It's amazing to me that many fly casters equate distance with how well they can cast. Don't get me wrong; there are fly fishing situations where long casts are a necessity, but most of the time long casts are not necessary.

When I was a teenager, my Dad gave me a bit of advice that has served me well for the past 35 years. He said, "if you can cast 30 feet accurately, you'll out-fish those guys casting 60 feet or more."

Reflecting on my Dad's advice leads me to basic conclusions about my fly casting: first, I fly cast to catch fish, not to impress other fly casters.

Secondly, most fly casters fish for trout in streams. Most trout streams can be classified as "small" or "medium" in size. In other words, for most trout fishing situations a 60 to 90 foot cast is not only unnecessary, it's impossible due to the small size of the stream.

In this light, let us look at what we can do to become better fly casters and, in turn, better fly fishers. A high priority would be to achieve accurate casts. Practice casting to targets is the easiest and surest way to achieve accuracy. Arrange your targets so they vary in distance and size. Also,

having obstacles around the target or in the path of your backcast will help.

Remember, too, that the presentation is a vital part of your cast. Make sure to stop your power at 11:00 o'clock and then lower your rod to 9:00 o'clock. This presentation will turn your leader over and allow your fly to land on the water gently.

Since most fly casting problems involve the backcast--the mechanics of the cast or encountering obstacles--one of the surest ways to overcome those problems is to watch your backcast. You will be able to cure starting your forecast too quickly, under-powering your backcast, and avoid obstacles. Remember, more power should go into the backcast than in the forecast.

While I'm talking about short casts, I think that a brief mention of the roll cast is in order. A roll cast enables a fly caster to fish water when a backcast is impossible. Dave Whitlock and Joe Robinson teach a roll cast that involves raising the fly rod so that the fly reel is level with the caster's cheek, pointing the rod back to 1:00 o'clock in order to set up. A roll cast needs the friction of the water in order for a caster to be successful with it, so you'll either have to practice at a casting pool or on the stream.

The next time you pick up a fly rod, think thirty feet and try to make that cast as accurately and delicately as possible. You'll become a better fly fisher if you think short.

**Federation of Fly Fishers**  
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