

# Balancing The Tools

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There have always been as many opinions about the length, weight, actions etc. of double handed rods as there are fishermen. Some like shorter, some longer, some dig soft action with long bellies, and some like fast rods with tip action.

So, we can say there is no right and absolute answer in this matter.



Anyhow, as I have played double-handers for a long time, I have noticed that many casters simply don't learn to get all the power out of the rod. There can be many mistakes in casting, and with a totally wrong rod and line combination these faults, which many times could be corrected by adjusting the rod and the line to suit the caster's style better, can destroy the fishing totally.

Of course sometimes there is the opposite situation. When a beginner has the perfect tools in his hands but no clue about casting, he just can't use his tools as well he should.

Personally, I like longer rods like fourteen- and fifteen footers, because with these I have more reserve to work those pools I like to fish. I like fast action rods, not too stiff ones, but rods which have medium deep stroke with fast recovery. Still, after almost twenty

years on the market, Loomis GLX 15 footer is The Rod for me.

When I have to wade quite deep to get a right position to the fish, I want to have power on my rod, because with a longer rod I have a better chance to have a good pull on my line, especially in situations where there is slack water between me and the main current. It is easier just to keep the rod high and have the running line on the air, away from the slack water.

I use only shooting heads which are matched with my rods. Mostly Scandi-style heads, sometimes Skagit.

Let's recall, now that the season is over, some basics of casting, as I have understood them and learned to explain them.

I'm not a certified instructor, but have done teaching for years. I have noticed that there are many beginners out there who would like

to get some help, but sometimes, and for some reasons, there is quite a high threshold to ask for it.

The best caster is not always the best teacher, even if he is a certified instructor. Teaching can be very sensitive, and it is always between the instructor and the student how it goes.

Firstly, and maybe most importantly, a good, steady lift and placing the anchor properly spells 90% of a good cast.

When the lift starts from the water, the line should always be straight and "tight." The rod should be pointed quite low, almost straight to the line.

If there are curves on the line, or when using a sinking head, it is hard to make a decent lift. Then it is better to roll it up and straighten the line with a roll cast.

The lift should be smoothly accelerated, and the rod should





come around with a little angle and bring the line to the anchor and create the D-loop.

Pay extra attention that the line detaches properly and comes tight to your side.

When the anchor has been created and the forward cast begins, the belly of the line starts to move ahead first. As it goes first, it should be heavy enough to take the rest of the line with it. A good fly line flies in balance, and it is easy to lift from the water, even if it is a sinking line.

When using shooting heads like I do, it is good to leave some running line outside the rod tip. This is called “overhang”.

Actually, I call it a “shock absorber”, because I feel that it is easier to understand what it means, and what it is used for.

It is good to understand that every movement we make with the rod tip is transmitted to the fly line.

When we want to have a longer distance, we simply have to make a harder forward cast.

When we hit the rod, at the extremity of the forward move, the tip of the rod points almost to the water. So, if we have the shooting line inside, or very close to the tip of the rod, this “bad” direction that points to the water is transmitted straight to belly of the shooting head.

This causes that the belly of shooting head tries to go down at the beginning of the flight; instead, it should go ahead and keep the loop tight.

When we leave this overhang, the force of the bad direction kind of “dies” to the thin running line but leaves enough force for the belly go to the right direction – the horizontal direction.

We all have tried to cast with a spoon. If you reel the spoon right next to the tip of the rod, very often the forward cast forces the spoon to hit the water right away. The same goes for the shooting head, because actually it is a weight, just a longer shape than a spoon.

So, it is better to learn to leave this overhang from the beginning. If longer distance is needed, a longer overhang is needed as well.

Of course there is a certain breakpoint, where the running line just can no more transfer any force to the shooting head. Then the cast fails.

Every line,-rod and -caster combination have their own breakpoint on this.

Personally, I leave the overhang from half meters to two, depending

on how much distance I need and which kind of line I have on.

When the line has started its flight, many times the leader gets stuck to the fly line. As we know, this is called the tailing loop.

This is many times caused by change of direction during the cast. Turning the cast 45 degrees with not so good timing, incorrect anchoring, and a bit too fast forward cast causes the tailing loop pretty sure.

Also, when doing the forward cast, and if the tip of the rod tilts



**1.** The lift is done and the line has come to the caster's side. Between the lift and the forward cast there is a short moment when the rod has no load.



**2.** The forward cast is on its way. The anchor produces friction if it has been done properly, and the rod loads the force for the forward move. Notice how much the rod bends.



**3.** At the extremity point of the forward strike the tip of the rod points very low. The overhang kills the “bad” direction.



**4.** The tip of the rod has recovered and the line is on its way.



badly, and at the same time the running line slips a bit too early, the loop has no time to form properly, and the anchor does not hold as it should be. Chances for the tailing loop are more than good.

There are some little tricks which you can use to avoid the tailing loop. When the forward cast is done and the loop is on its way, you can move the rod tip away and kind of give more room for the upper line on the loop to roll straight. The rod tip can be moved for example to the left when casting from the right shoulder. I also lower the rod actually quite often, when the loop is rolling out. This way I can make room for the tip of the line and for the leader to open and straighten properly. I don't mind if my loops do not look so good and tight, because I want have my leader straight.

Also, changing the length of the leader can be helpful, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter.

We all have seen "show casters", with extra tight loops in their cast. Many times, these casts are not all that useful when we are fishing. They stop the rod very high, and

with a quite light and short head they can create a very good-looking loop. These guys are excellent casters, but as said, there are still lots of differences between show casting and casting when fishing.

As we spoke about anchoring, it is good to practice placing the anchor. A good anchor is very important for the successful forward cast. The anchor should be straight, or better said, it should be tight, and there should not be curves on it.

It is good to understand that with a floating line, we have more time to let the anchor stay on the surface. This is obvious, because the anchored part of the line does not sink.

When we use a sink tip, or a sinking line, we have to increase the tempo. If we let the anchor stay too long on the water, it will simply sink too deep.

Also, when we are wading quite deep, we have to raise our hands to have enough lift from the surface. Also the tempo of casting is faster than casting from a stone a meter above the surface.

When doing the Skagit cast, the

idea for the anchoring is a little different. The Skagit line profile is very back-weighted, so even if the sink tip and a heavy fly sink, the Skagit has power to rip them off the water with it.

Personally I don't like a Skagit all that much. I feel it is a little clumsy, if compared to Scandi style lines. My favorite lines are Guideline Triple D's. They are easy to lift, even sinkers, and what is best about them is that I can customize them to my needs.

My point of using shooting heads is easy handling. Shooting heads are easy to change, when for example a heavier line is needed. Even if I almost all the time carry two rigs, I still have a few extra lines in my pocket.

When choosing a line for fishing, fitting the length of the line to the current is very important. This is a little hard to explain, but I'll try.

The rivers I fish, and the pools I'm looking for, have specific profiles, like under the rapids, where there is a very clear border between hard and slow current. Salmon like to stay in places like these.

When I'm on some specific pool and try to find the best angle to fit the line to the current, I feel that if the line I'm using is too long, I can't choose the angle of casting the way I want to.

Better said, some lines are too long to fit some currents, and they just don't have the room to swim like I want.

What I mean is that shooting heads work best when you have "enough" running line out. If the line is too long, I don't feel the pull I'm looking for.

I have found 11,5 meters to be a very good length for my lines. With this length of shooting head I can fit the line very good to the current with different angles, and the lines are very easy to lift and cast, even in tight and narrow places.

I know this might sound quite strange, but I really have had the time to think and test this.

Nowadays my lines, floaters to sinkers, are cut from 11-12 meters, and most of them are that 11,5 meter long.

The weight of the lines does not mean that much to me, as long

as they are possible to cast with the rod I'm using.

The average weights are 42 grams for fifteen footers and 38 grams for my fourteen footers.

Some words about the balancing of a rod and a reel. I like old reels: I own a few Bogdans, Perfect and 4/0 Cascapedia.

Those are quite heavy reels compared to the modern reels on the market. I still feel that my reels balance my rods quite good, but for some rods they do not work at all.

I have noticed that the rod-line combination can feel very different when changing to a lighter or heavier reel.

For example, my old GLX 15 footer with little under weighed Vision Ace float/ int tip line feels much better when I'm using a lighter reel on the rod. The line is in the lower end of a grain window got the GLX, but because it is a very good line for fishing, I want to use it.

When I have a Triple D on the reel, which is heavier and more back weighed than Ace, I feel a

heavier reel is better on my rig. Of course these are always little things depending on the caster's preferences, but before discarding any line it is good to test it with some reels.

Also, always test the balance of the rod and reel when casting, or at least the shooting head should be out of the reel when testing the balance, because if the head weighs something like 40 grams, it really feels different on the rod.

You should never fish with the shooting head inside the reel.

Practicing is very rewarding, and even if I have done Spey casting for a long time, every spring, after the ice have gone, I want to go and get some training for the upcoming season. It is better to practice before going fishing, because the fishing is way better when the casting is under control.

Also, playing with the lines, customizing them myself, helps me to understand which kind of lines I prefer. Of course, the line which suits me doesn't necessarily suit someone else. ■

