



General Practitioner

Text and photos: Miki Äikäs

I was standing in the freezing water at the top of the pool and wondering whether there was any sense to fish here. It was mid-June, the beginning of the salmon season in northern Norway, and the mountains were covered with lots of snow. The water was high but clear, and the first large salmon had entered the river. I was rigged with a 15-foot Loomis and Guideline sink 1-3-5 Triple-D, one of the best sinking shooting head lines I know. The casting went well, even if a light wind blew from downstream. In these circumstances a thinner shooting head is a way better choice than a fat Skagit. A little earlier at the Gapahug, the Lavoe, I had racked my brains to choose the right fly. First I considered a very large tube with a monkey wing, but then my eyes spotted a large GP – General Practitioner – on a 4/0 Bartleet single hook.

The GP was, and still is, one of my favourites, and in the mid-90's my buddies and I used it tied to very large hooks. And we caught fish with it.

I changed my leader to 0,45 mm from 0,40 mm and tied on my GP. In the northern light that huge shrimp looked like a Killer. I waded down the pool step by step and gave the GP

some time to swim slowly across the pool. Then I let it stay a little while on the dangle. I moved my rod back and forth and then reeled in the running line. After one cast I felt strong pull.. I lifted the rod high, and I felt the heavy weight on my Loomis.

Salmon, and a big one

I stepped out of the water and climbed up to the rocky bank. Now I was ready to fight. The salmon stayed in the same place very easily; I realized I was the weaker player. I tried to pull as hard as I could, but nothing happened.

“...is it better to catch ten small salmon or to lose one big fellow?”

I walked down river, and once I got a little lower than the salmon, it decided to set a new World Record in the 100 meters sprint. I looked at my Bogdan and was horrified: the line ran out very quickly. I was forced to follow it, and fast.

I ran like Ben Johnson in his best days and managed to reel quite a lot of line back in. The salmon was forced to stop at the tail of the pool, and

after that run it decided to rest there. I needed a break too. I thought that this was my chance. I pulled hard and took a few steps back and felt the salmon move closer to the bank. I was alone, and I knew it would be wiser to try to land the fish here than to let it go through the next rapids and try it lower downstream.

In the clear water I saw a big salmon with my GP hooked at the corner of his mouth. The salmon took a few rushes back to middle of the river, but soon he turned his side to me very promisingly.

My legs turned to spaghetti, and I was sure that he was mine. I kept the line as tight as I dared and moved back. The salmon surfaced, and I saw that he was a bright male, and a big one.

Then something happened. The salmon gathered his last forces and, with some extra power from the Fish God, jumped up and splashed to the leader and... F!#!#"€#€kkkk... the leader broke, and the fish slowly slid back into the river. I dropped down on my knees and yelled to the mountains. It took a while to reclaim my manhood and walk back to the camp.

I told my friend what had happened, and he was very amused.

He asked me, “Miki, what do you think? After all these years of chasing Atlantic salmon, is it better to catch ten small salmon or to lose one big fellow?”

Well, even after all those very big fellows I have lost and the few I have managed to land, I still have to say that losing the fight to a fish like this is still better than catching ten smaller ones. Losing makes a better story — plus only your imagination limits the size of the ones that get away.

We have caught many big Atlantics with the GP, and it is a very good fly when the salmon enter the river. All those Salars I have landed with it, most of those have been bright and covered with lice from the sea. And when a salmon takes the GP, it takes it hard.

Legend says that, when the shrimp enter a pool, if there is a salmon, it

will take the shrimp or leave the pool. True? You never know, and that's the best of it.

When you look back to the old days when it was still legal to fish with shrimp in Norway (some rivers still allow fishing with them), those shrimps were big ones and they were kept for a while in some kind of formaldehyde liquid to give them that annoying red colour and some smell that the salmon cannot resist.

When I fish with a GP, I put nothing special on it. In the early season I prefer to use sinking lines, like Guideline Triple-D of different rates, mostly Int./2/4 and sink 1/3/5. The depth of the pool is not so important, but the current is. A strong current needs sinking line to slow the speed, and on the other hand it is better to use a floater with int. tip in

some pools which are deep. Anyway, it is a good fly, but tying it is quite a task.

The developer of the original version was Mr. Esmond Drury. There are hundreds of versions of that fly, and also the materials have changed over the years.

In the original version the eyes were made from the Tippet. This version's eyes are made from red Amnesia running line. The tail can be replaced, for example, with Bucktail. A curve on the back of the fly is required, and that is why the Bartleet-shaped hook works very well. The Golden Pheasant is still one of the most multi-purposed materials you can get. In this fly it takes its place on the back cover very attractively. Also on the hackles this wonderful material is cool with its unique colour. ■



Materials:

Hook:

Single, Bartleet or so

Tag and butt:

gold flat holograph tinsel, and 3/4 part on that fluorescent green silk etc. Glue on the top.

Tail:

orange Polar Bear, or Bucktail, a few strands of Flashabou

1. cover over the tail:

red feather from the Golden Pheasant skin, short one

Ribbing:

gold holographic tinsel

Hackle:

orange or red, quite soft, tied on from the larger side.

Body:

orange or red dubbing with some Flashabou. Brush the hackle

Eyes:

red Amnesia running line, melt into balls and dip in black varnish

Middle cover:

red feather from the Golden Pheasant skin, larger one

Repeat the same procedure as 1. Part of the body

Third cover:

two pcs. red feather from the Golden Pheasant, longer ones

Head:

red



1. Start the butt as in the picture. Don't use varnish, because it will make the green colour much darker, even if the varnish is clear. The glue is the right way to do this.



2. When you place the GPH feather, use your thumb nail to soften the feather shaft. It'll be much easier to get the feather in the right position.



3. Dub the body, then turn the ribbing, and then the hackle. On every turn of the hackle, force the strands backwards. Then brush the hackle to point it down.



4. Place the GPH feather, a larger one, and again use the thumb nail, if it doesn't fit properly.



5. Set the GPH feathers, one by one, and make a nice head.



6. On the tail, if you use polar bear, it will be good if those separate hairs are of different length. The same goes with the Bucktail. Don't use too much flashabou, cause it will only destroy the shine of the PB.



7. Tie the ribbing under the hook, and tie the hackle beside the ribbing.



8. Place the eyes



9. Again, tie the ribbing and the hackle, dub the body, and brush again



10. GP from the fish angle

