Loops and loops...

Text: Miki Äikäs Photos: Miki Äikäs and Toni Valkonen

Connecting fly lines with loops has occasionally caused serious problems at least for me. I have tried every imaginable looping method from braided loops, loops made through the core of the lines to welded loops.

As we approach the end of the fishing season, let's call to mind the making of different connections so we can make new loops to our lines in the dark evenings of the winter, dreaming about the next season's big salmon.

These days almost all fly lines have factory-welded loops. However, I at least cut my lines and fix them to suit my purposes, so I need to make new loops after cutting the lines. In many lines that are actually designed to be customized by the fisherman, such as Guideline's Triple D, the markings of the line are located near the tip of the line, which I find a good thing.

In some lines the markings are found on the other end of the line, so after cutting the line they are no longer of any use. Some people make some kind of marking under the shrink tube when they weld the line and leave the shrink tube in place, which is not the standard practice. Transparent neoprene glue on top of the markings is also a good idea.

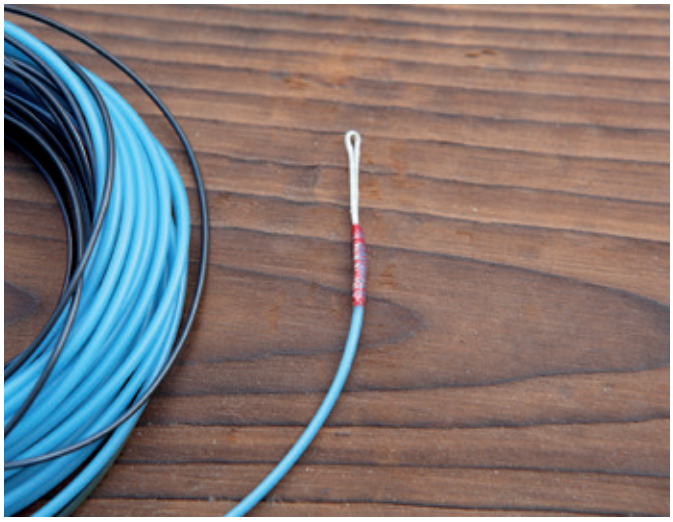
Today there are also excellent UV glues that dry fast, which is a quality that makes UV glues practicable when fixing fly lines.

I keep my lines in Minigrip bags and mark the bag with the line's weight and length.

While making the loops it is always wise to experiment on how the coating of the line reacts for example to super glue.

I once came across a line where the coating reacted badly to glue. When I was making a shrink tube loop a bit differently than usual, I used super glue to lock the tying thread, and for some reason the coating of the line started to stretch. When I tested the strength of my loop, the loop itself was good, but the coating of the line started to stretch, apparently because of the super glue, and separated from the core of the line. When I pulled on the loop it didn't break but the coating slid on top of the core and broke, and with it the loop also broke.

In other words it is recommended always to test the result properly, no matter what kind of loop is being made.



Welding

You should be careful when welding the loop, because on some lines the heat can damage the coating. This is hard to notice. I've experienced it on occasion, and the welded loop should always be tested by pulling it hard. Sometimes, when the surfaces are welded together, the line core "detaches" from the coating and the loop is attached only to the coating. Usually this results in catastrophe.

I find that lines with hard coating are easier to weld, whereas in some soft lines the welding must be done extra careful, as the coating is not as heat-resistant. This is of course only my observation and I may be wrong.

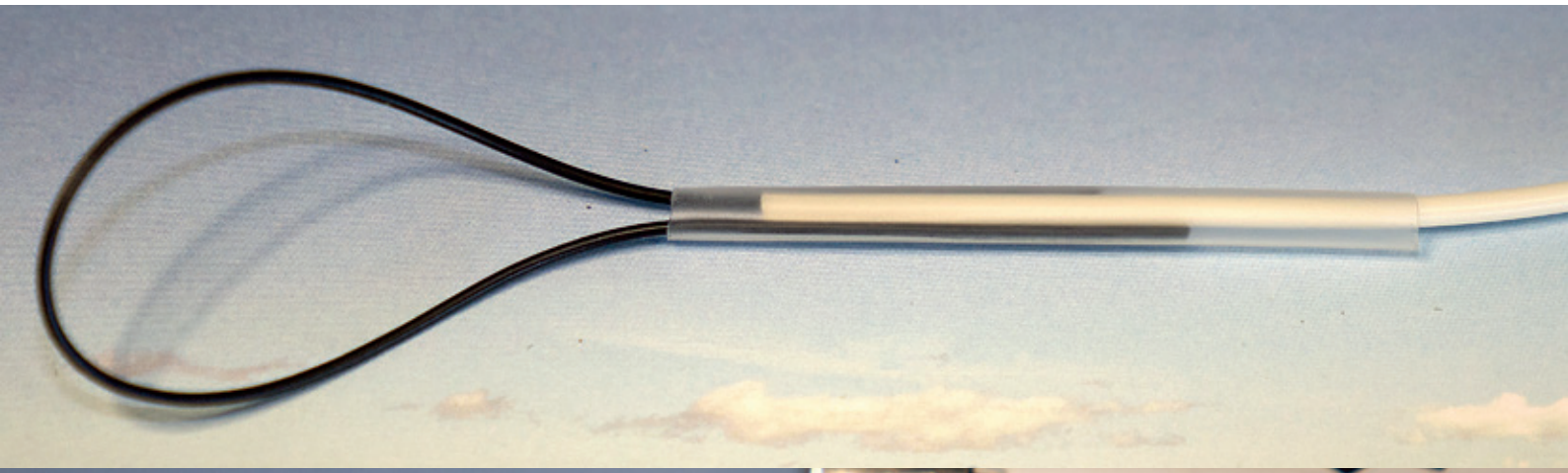
When I weld, I use a hot-air fan and a hair straightener. The shrink tube ought to be transparent so you can see what is happening all the time. When heating the line it is advisable to roll the line from time to time for example on top of the table so the weld mixes properly and becomes neat and even.

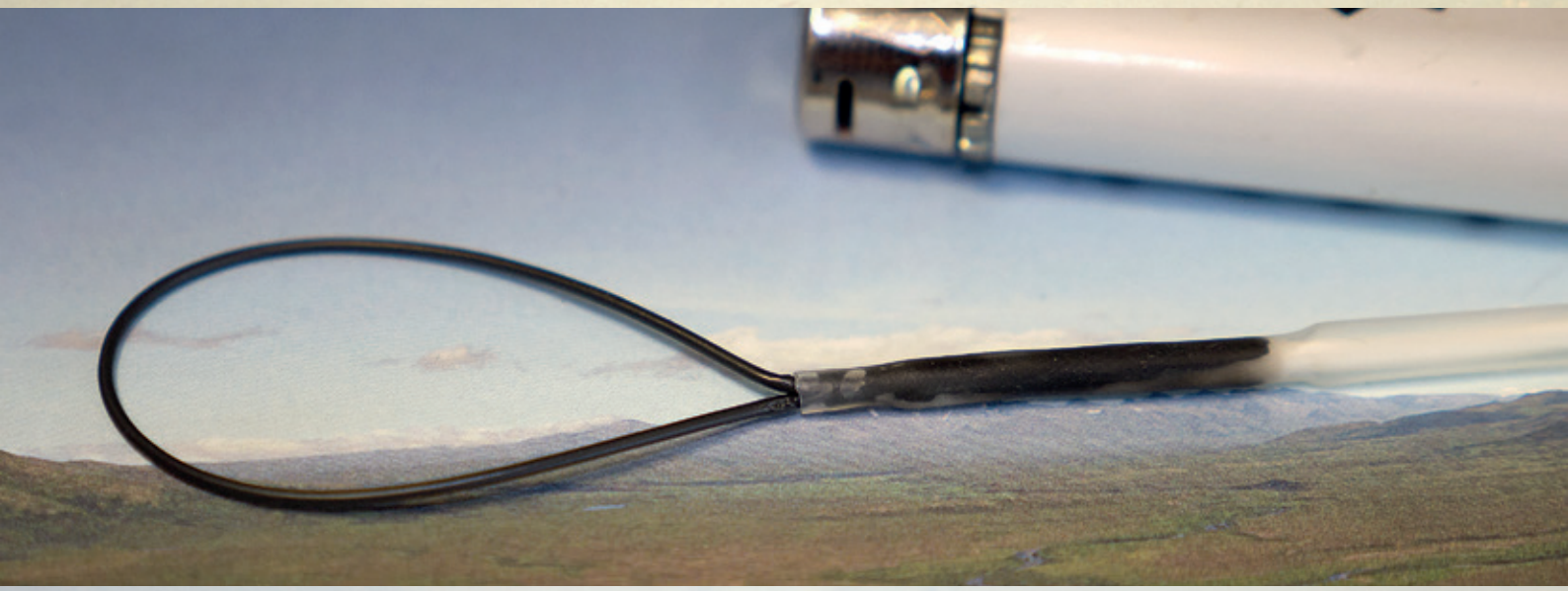
Make the loop from a thinner line with a Dacron core.

For example coated running lines or lengths of sinking lines are good loop material as they are usually thinner.

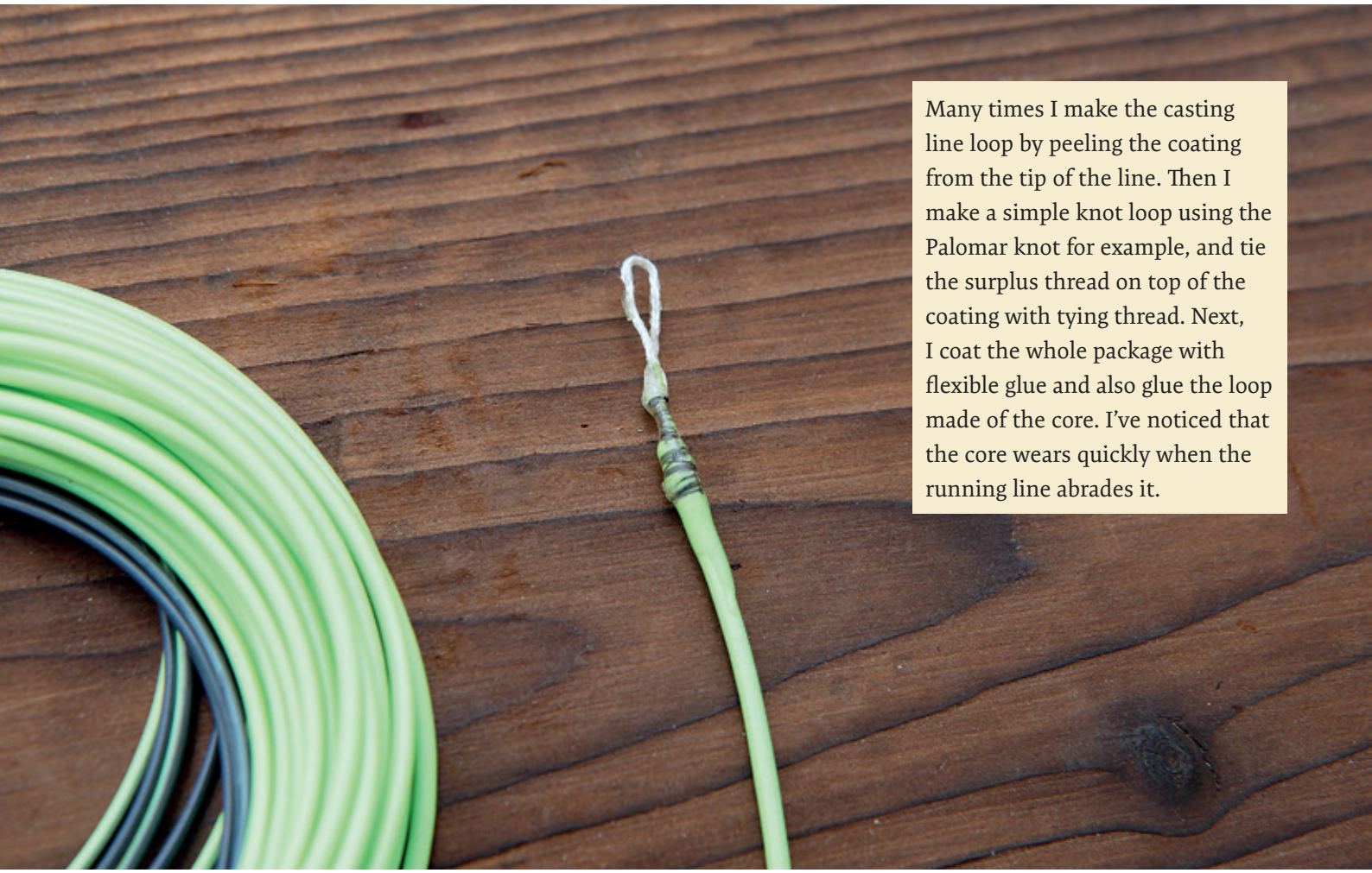
In these pictures, my friend Jarmo Arvila, who is very experienced with lines, uses a lighter for welding, so this can be done without any electric heater. Of course you have to be extra careful.

After welding, use scissors to remove the shrink tube.

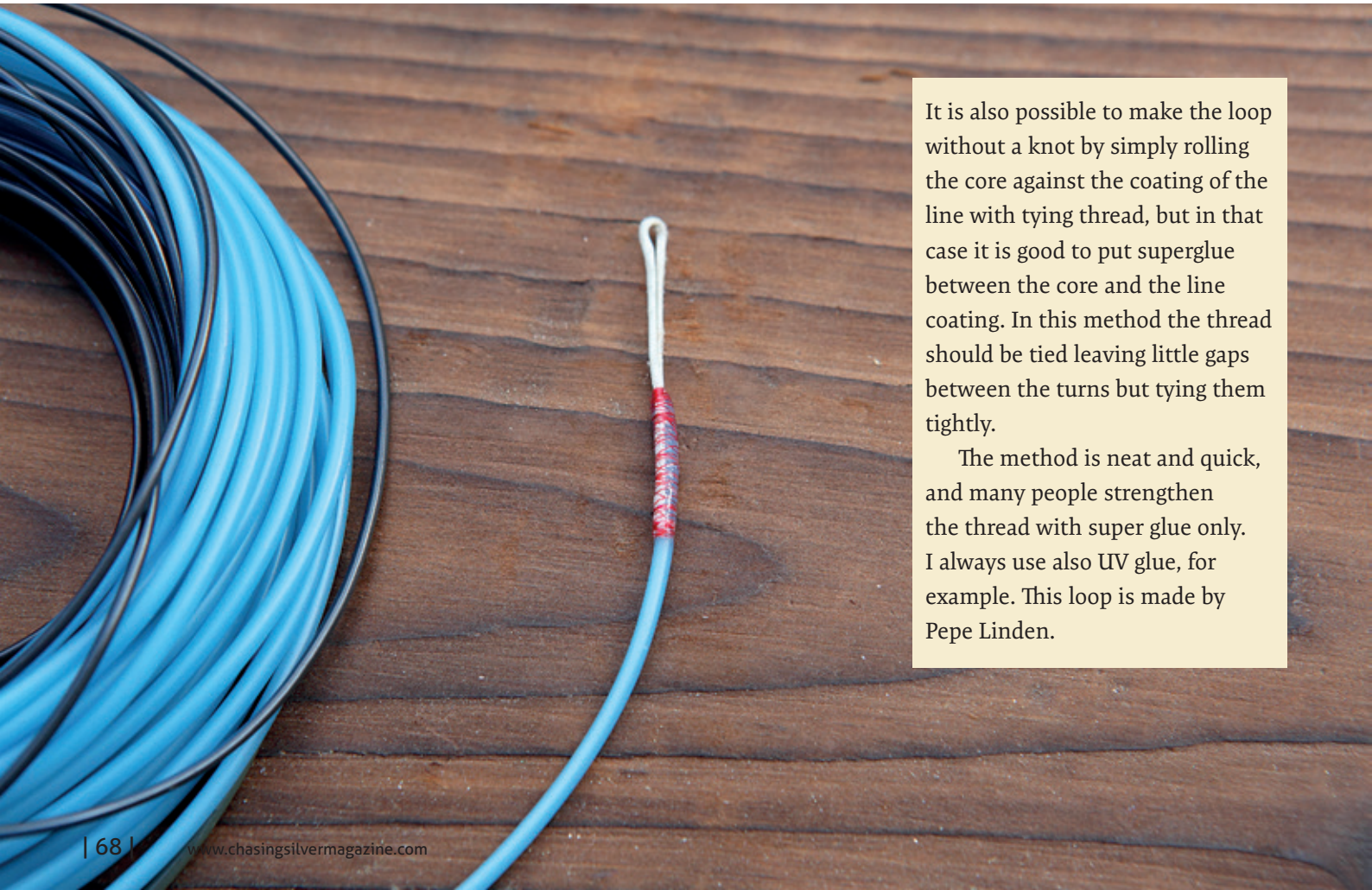




Making the loop from the core



Many times I make the casting line loop by peeling the coating from the tip of the line. Then I make a simple knot loop using the Palomar knot for example, and tie the surplus thread on top of the coating with tying thread. Next, I coat the whole package with flexible glue and also glue the loop made of the core. I've noticed that the core wears quickly when the running line abrades it.



It is also possible to make the loop without a knot by simply rolling the core against the coating of the line with tying thread, but in that case it is good to put superglue between the core and the line coating. In this method the thread should be tied leaving little gaps between the turns but tying them tightly.

The method is neat and quick, and many people strengthen the thread with super glue only. I always use also UV glue, for example. This loop is made by Pepe Linden.

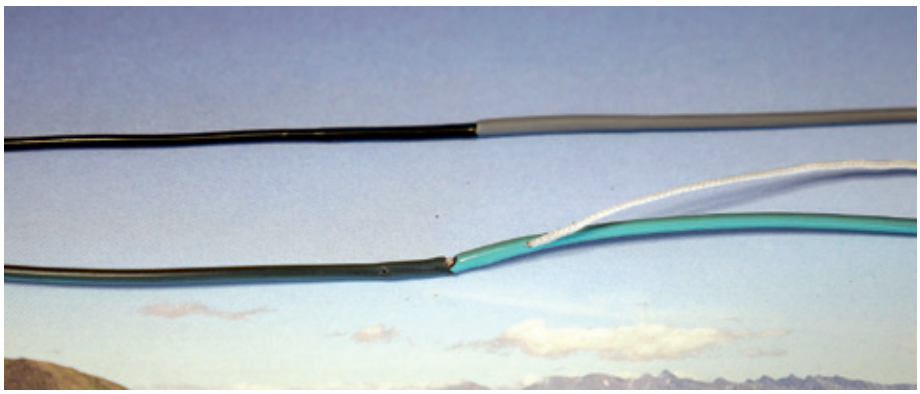
Threading with a needle

An old method of making a loop from the core is threading the core back under the coating with a needle. This results in a neat loop. The method is somewhat arduous and the key to success is the right kind of needle.

This method does not always work because some lines are so "dense" the needle simply cannot be pushed inside the line.

These loops and connections were made by Jarmo Arvila.

It is important to remove half of the core before inserting it. This makes it easier to thread the core through the eye of the needle and to push it back inside the coating. When the core is inside the coating, you should pull it back and forth to get it properly inserted.



Lines with monofilament core

In many lines with cores it is easy to make the loop, because the core bends easily into a loop shape. But when the core is made of monofilament, things get more complicated.

I think Vision's Ace Float/Clear intermediate is a good line for fishing. Usually I cut the line shorter, so I have to make a new loop.

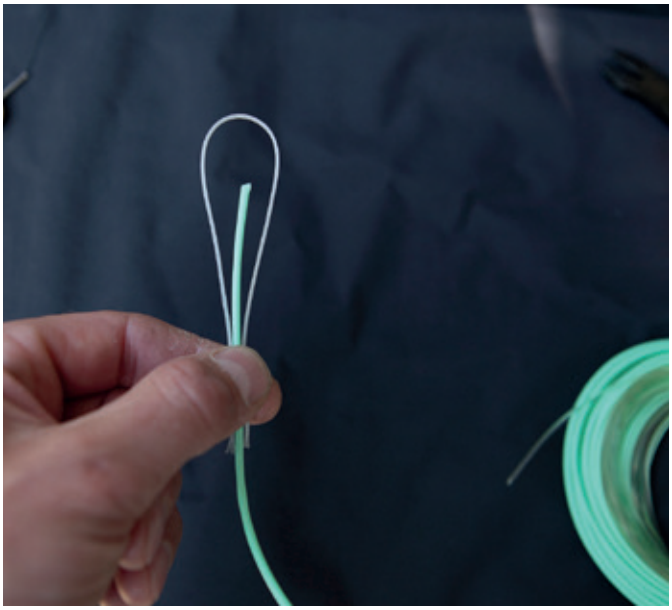
As the line has a monofilament core, there is no sensible and durable way of making the loop from the core. The butt end of the line is too thick for a braided loop.

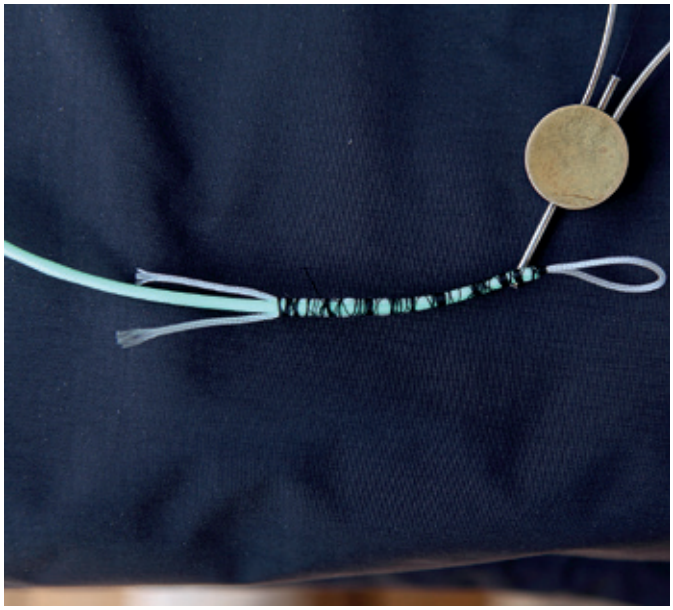
I don't like to use welding with monofilament lines because I fear the heat will melt the core and make the line weaker.

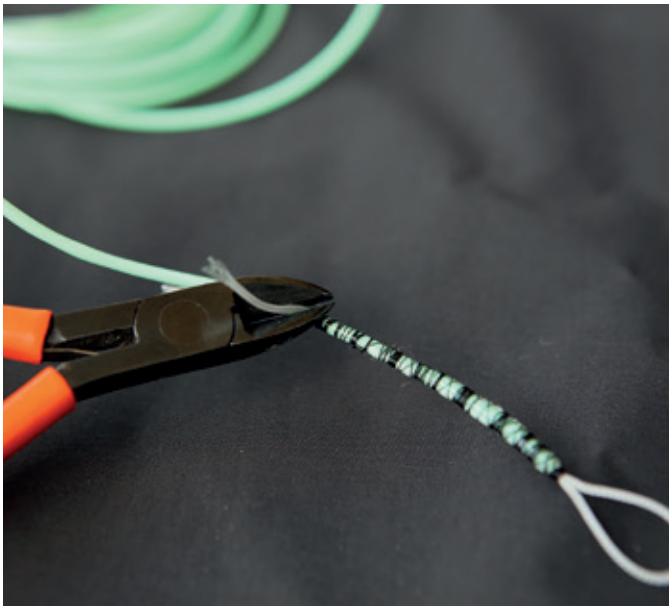
I thought long and hard about how to make a sensible and durable loop and finally came up with a brutal yet strong solution.

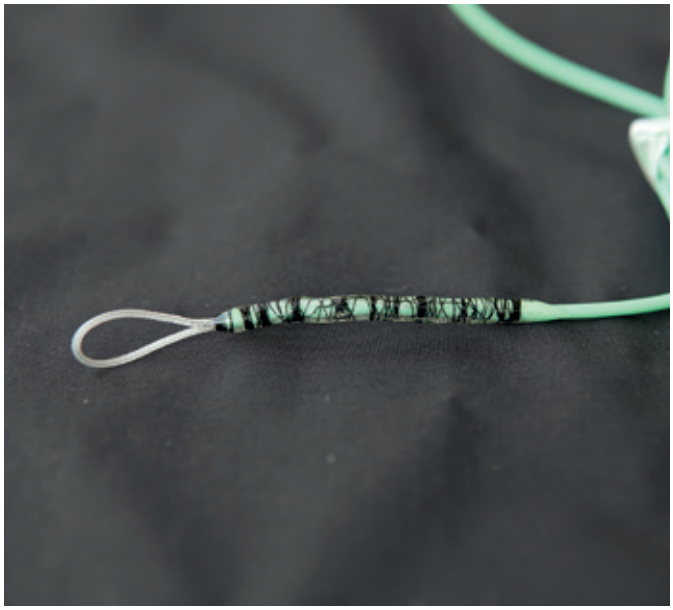
Here I use Gudebrod's Butt Leader that I attach without threading to the butt of the line. Enough wraps of thread guarantee that the loop holds. Super glue to lock the thread, then a coating of Aquasure, UV glue or similar flexible glue.

Not the most beautiful of connections, but it endures and slides nicely through the rod rings.









Braided loops

There are braided loops on sale, but I always make them myself. I've use braided Gralon line made of nylon, but as it is harder and harder to come by these days I'm starting to use Gudebro's Butt Leader.

I use Sawada monofilament as my running line and, unlike many others, make braided loops into the Sawada.

When using braid it is essential to bear in mind that the pull tightens the braid against the line. Glue should be used only on a little portion. If glue is used all the length of the braid, the glue is the only thing keeping it in place.

In my opinion, based on my experience, braided loops are extremely reliable and enduring as long as they are made properly.

I've used Sawada monofilament as my running line for ages and have always used braided loops. They have never failed – the running line itself breaks easier.

Using a braided loop it is sensible to rub the thin and slick surface like Sawada a little coarser so that the loop sits even tighter.

A braided loop to a monofilament running line

As I said earlier, I use braided loops in Sawada lines. The simple reason is that I hate knots in the running line, and while Palomar makes a neat little loop I personally prefer a braided loop.

Next, a little picture presentation of how I make a loop into the Sawada from Gralon.

1. Rub the surface of the Sawada coarse, about 20 cm

2. Thread the Sawada into the braid with the help of a needle.

3. Push the needle immediately into the braid again and pull the Sawada inside – repeat this 3 -4 times until the coarsened length is all covered.

4. Wrap tying thread around the braid to lock the entrance point, use super glue and cut off the surplus strands

5. Coat with flexible glue and make sure that the glue reaches past the connection and onto the plain Sawada.

6. Make a loop from the braid, pull out once and then immediately back in. A drop of glue

When the Sawada is inserted inside the braid more times than one, it guarantees that should the braid for some reason start to slide off the monofilament, it would not get loose with one pull as it would get stuck at another point.