

CASTING POOL

THE ABILITY TO CATCH FISH is related to the ability to cast. Certainly, you have to be acquainted with the fish, its food, reading water, tackle items, and fly design, but in the last critical moment it all boils down to putting the fly over the fish—correctly and accurately. The more casts you know, the more on-stream opportunities you will have. A cast that has made a significant difference in my angling success is the roll cast, both normal and sidearm versions.

The distinguishing feature of the roll cast is that it allows you to make a forward cast without the need of an aerial back cast. This is especially useful when brush hangs over the stream from the near bank because the line essentially remains on the water and in front of the angler during the cast.

In the normal (vertical) roll cast, you raise the rod up and back with a *slow*, deliberate movement. This motion should be slow enough so that the line only slides along the water's surface. If you execute the lifting movement too quickly, the line will jump off the water and either tangle in itself or go behind you and into the brush. When the rod is slightly past the vertical, stop your arm movement. The line will continue to slide across the surface toward you until it hangs straight down from the rod tip (Fig. 1-A). At this time make the forward cast. Start *slowly*. If you start the cast too fast, the

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*Vertical, horizontal,
up and down*

The Roll Cast

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line will jerk off the surface and fall in a heap just in front of you. Bring the rod down and forward in a smoothly accelerating motion that ends with an abrupt stop. At this ending point, the rod will be at about 45 degrees from the horizontal. When you perform the cast correctly, the line forms a hoop that is perpendicular to the water. The hoop rolls forward and delivers the fly (Fig. 1-B).

In order for the roll cast to work, the fly must be *to the outside of the casting plane*. That is, for a right-hand caster, the fly should be *to the right of the hoop* (Fig. 2-A). For a left-hand caster, the fly should be *to the left of the hoop*. However, wind, current, or both may drift the line so the fly cannot go to the outside of the casting plane

when casting with the rod in the normal position. As an example, a right-hand caster fishing across water that flows from right to left cannot execute a normal roll cast because the line is held to the left by the current. If you try to cast with the line in this position, the hoop will cross itself as it rolls forward and the fly will catch the line (Fig. 2-B). If the line is on the wrong side to allow a normal roll, you can make a backhand roll cast which will position the fly to the outside of the hoop. Simply reach the rod across in front of your body or tilt it across the top of your head (Fig. 2-C).

I find the roll cast especially useful when fishing upstream. After making the forward cast, lift the rod at the same rate as the current is carrying the line downstream. When the rod is slightly behind the vertical, make another forward cast. The fly is only out of the water for a split second. This is extra valuable when nymph fishing because the fly does not dry out by repeated false casts and will sink faster. If a trout should intercept the fly just as the rod is fully raised, simply snap the rod down and forward as though making a forward cast. The line will slide toward you a short way and set the hook.

ALTHOUGH THE VERTICAL ROLL WORKS well to keep the fly out of the brush behind you, the vertical line hoop will not work under low-hanging brush. In the sidearm (horizontal) roll cast, the casting plane is tilted so that the hoop in the line forms in a hori-

zontal plane rather than in a vertical plane. This horizontal hoop travels very close to the water's surface, allowing you to throw the line underneath overhanging obstacles with ease. Because the hoop travels so close to the water, a horizontal roll cast will allow a longer throw than a vertical roll cast when the wind is blowing in your face.

Begin the sidearm roll cast with the rod in a normal position in front of you. Next, twist your forearm so the reel points to the left. Then, instead of lifting the rod up and back into a vertical position, move it slowly back and out to the side so that it finishes about shoulder high and nearly parallel to the water. The tip of the rod should be slightly behind your body (Fig. 3-A). Wait for the line to finish sliding toward you on the water, then accelerate the rod down and forward and stop abruptly. The rod should remain nearly horizontal during the forward cast. The hoop will form horizontally (Fig. 3-B) and lift the line smartly from the water, finishing with the fly just above the surface. A left-handed caster would perform the cast as a mirror image of this right-hand version. You also can perform the cast by holding the rod in position (arm across in front of your body with the forearm twisted so that the reel is pointing forward).

If the wind is blowing from behind you it makes an overhead back cast very difficult. A vertical roll cast is also difficult to properly execute because the wind from behind keeps the line in front of you when you raise the rod for the back cast. If the line cannot slide back past your shoulder for a short way, the line hoop will not form well, and the cast will be poor. Under these conditions, bring the rod back in the sidearm position where the line is low and protected from the wind. When the line is behind you, quickly but smoothly raise the rod to the vertical and make a normal forward cast. The wind will help on the forward cast by pushing against the hoop for a very long cast.

Use both the vertical roll cast and its sidearm version to pick the fly from the water during a normal overhead cast. The advantage of these roll cast pickups is that they cause less surface disturbance than a normal overhead back cast. If you stop the rod sooner than usual on the forward stroke of the vertical roll cast, the line hoop will form well off the water. As it rolls forward it will snap the line into the air. When the fly comes clean off the water, make a normal overhead back cast. For a sidearm roll cast pickup, move the rod straight forward parallel to the water's surface rather than forward and down. The line snaps smartly off the surface and finishes about shoulder high. Then make a normal overhead back cast.

Alone, in combination, or as a pickup, the roll cast and its sidearm version are useful line handling tactics that should be in every fly fisher's bag of tricks.

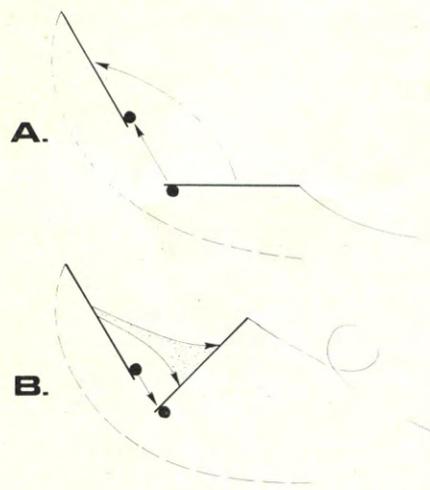


Figure 1

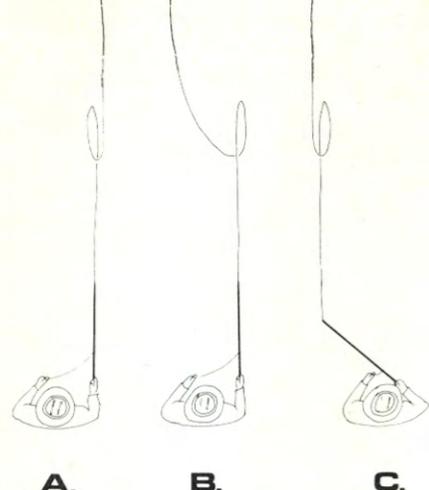


Figure 2

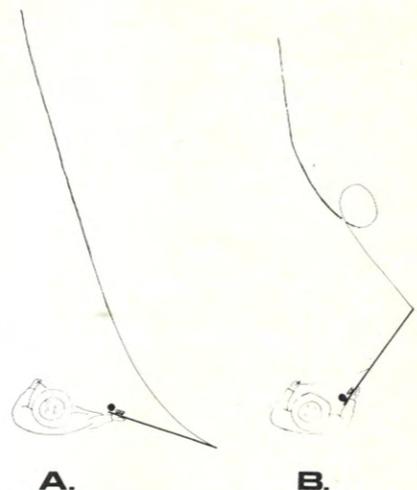


Figure 3

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