

Developing and Improving Your Double Haul

By John Hogg

Making a "haul" when fly-casting is done to increase line speed. This is useful for several situations: picking up a heavy line, as when float tubing with a sinking line; casting into the wind when a strong, hard cast is necessary; and, of course, for the 'ol heave ho' - when you want to throw that fly as far as humanly possible.

The haul is, essentially, a supplementary pull with the line hand, on the line itself, which is executed simultaneously with the casting stroke (either back cast or forecast). If a haul is made only on the back cast, it is called a single haul. If two hauls are made, one on the back cast and another on the forecast, it is called a double haul.

When to Haul

Casters in the process of developing the haul are at time frustrated with the timing of the haul stroke: "When, precisely, do I make the haul during the casting stroke?"

The answer is: "When there is a load on the rod." This then becomes the crux of the matter, because many casters do not properly load the rod, especially on the back cast. And if there is no load, there can be no haul!

Loading the Rod

So let's back up a step, and discuss loading the rod. It is, of course, a bending of the rod, but from a very specific force: that of the speed and weight of traveling line. When the rod is abruptly stopped (unloading the rod), the line continues to travel and the rod starts to load, because of the pull from the line. The caster now further loads the rod by starting a casting stroke in the opposite direction, and by adding the haul, if desired. But remember, the line cannot be slack in the air when the haul is made, because there is then nothing to haul against!

A fundamental error that disrupts this entire process is when a caster disrupts the rod's ability to load from this abrupt stop by overwhelming the rod with arm strength, and not giving the rod the necessary time to load from the line weight and speed.

Now we have to back up again, because many casters are not aware that an abrupt stop (called by some experts the "power stop") is the most basic ingredient of competent fly casting. Mel Krieger calls it the "whummp" factor. Others say, "Accelerate to a hard stop." Whatever you call it, the rod stroke must start slowly, accelerate rapidly, and stop abruptly, so that the line is flung by the rod top, not the caster's arm.

In sum, before a successful haul can be made, you must first have the rod loaded from the force generated by the line's own weight and speed.

Practice Tips

To develop or improve your haul, set up a single motion cast where the line will be preloaded for you. For instance, picking up line off the water leads almost to a natural haul. You will notice that, as the rod tip loads from the heavy drag of the line, your line hand will want to help out by giving a pull on the resisting line. Another means is to lay about 25 feet of line on the grass. Make a single side arm cast. As you start the cast, the grass will offer some resistance, which will load the rod, and you can then introduce a short haul. Once you get the feel of a proper haul, it is easier to develop longer and stronger hauls on an overhead cast.

Other References

A great reference for double hauling is Mel Krieger's second videotape, "Advanced Casting."

Also see "The Double Haul" by Sexyloops's Paul Arden. Good video and pantomime technique.