

Tailing Loops - The Caster's Dilemma

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A tailing loop is a fault that plagues intermediate and advanced casters alike, usually on a cast where one is trying to maximize distance and/or power. Tailing loops rob that cast of distance, power and accuracy – and they tie your rig in knots and snarls which cut into your fishing time – other than that, there is nothing wrong with them.

Have you ever seen someone ramp up for that long cast...extending more and more line on each false cast, and then with all of their strength, make that final heave.....only to see the leader and front of the line just pile up in the air, and drop in a heap? Or have you ever examined your leader only to discover a variety of overhand knots and snarls that have somehow miraculously tied themselves? Both situations are the result of tailing loops. The only difference is the degree of uncontrolled power that was applied to the cast.

If you look at the accompanying diagrams, you will see that the basic tailing loop is in fact a closed loop that is formed as a result of the fly and leader dropping below the lower segment of the fly line.

What causes the tailing loop is a dip in the path of the rod tip. (Remember that the line follows the rod tip.) Instead of the rod tip following a straight line path (SLP) during the casting stroke, it takes a dip. And that dip is caused by the rod bending excessively, which in turn is caused by excessive power being applied to the casting stroke, (and usually too early in the stroke as well.)

There are several identified faults that can cause this 'inappropriate' application of power (too much, at the wrong time), but one of the primary ones is that aggressive 'flick' of the wrist at the start of the casting stroke. Instead of power being applied with smooth acceleration and ending in a hard stop, we have a drag racer start. Don't feel bad if you have believed this to be the right thing to do as even one of our most famous casting authors uses the term 'power snap' that in my view, implies sudden, fast power, rather than smooth and controlled.

Correcting a tailing loop will take some study and effort. First, don't throw two tailing loops in a row. If you throw one, stop and analyze what happened. Back off on the attempted distance and power. Cast smoothly. Make the rod tip "sling" the line. Release on a well-controlled false cast, rather than applying extra force to make that final heave. And finally, come to our casting practices!

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