

The Double Spey Cast



How do you remember which cast is for which wind?

It's easy, just remember D/D and this will remind you of the phrase "Double Spey Downstream wind". Therefore it is easier to remember that a Single Spey and its counterparts are simply the opposite.

As with all Spey casts, the Double Spey can be used when there is no wind at all, but it is a very safe and efficient cast when used with a downstream wind.

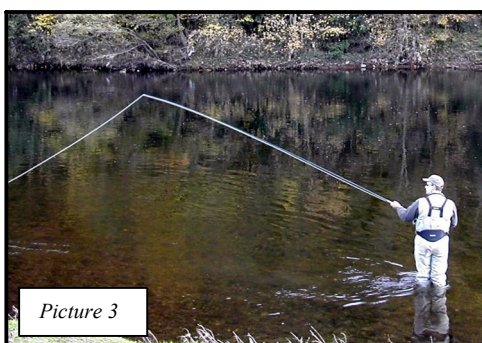
- In articles 3 and 4, we looked at the Single Spey cast and its counterparts the Snap T and Circle C which as previously explained perform better and safer when there is an upstream wind in attendance. That's all well and good, but the next time you visit the river you could find that the wind has turned full circle and you are now faced with a downstream wind situation, what do you do?
- This scenario can also occur when you are half way down a pool on the river and you have been fishing quite happily with a Single Spey cast in an upstream wind, and then suddenly the wind changes and begins to blow downstream; most of us have experienced this at some stage during one of our fishing trips. We now need to be able to transfer our D Loop to the opposite side of our body at the drop of a hat for a much more efficient and safer cast, whilst at the same time using the new wind direction to our advantage. Enter the Double Spey cast.
- An essential requirement for this cast when using a double handed fly rod is the ability to be able to use either hand uppermost on the rod handle, which again as explained in article 3, will be dependant upon which bank you are fishing from (*left & right banks of the river are explained in article 3 The Single Spey Cast*). The only difference between the Single Spey and the Double Spey casts when holding a double handed fly rod are as follows:



- This time, when you are on the left bank of the river place your left hand uppermost on the rod handle (*see picture 1*) and when you are on the right bank of the river place your right hand uppermost on the rod handle (*see picture 2*). This will prevent you from taking your upper hand across your body during the set up of the cast when creating your D Loop just prior to the delivery, and will also afford you the option of opening up to the cast more effectively and therefore presenting you with a much longer casting stroke where required. Although this cast can be made by adopting the aforementioned method, by doing so it will not allow you to realise the full potential of your delivery due to its restriction and you will be more inclined to pull the rod across your body during the forward cast taking the rod tip off a straight line path during the delivery, once again creating a tracking problem (*as explained in article 3*).



- The Double Spey cast is so called because it consists of two movements of the rod tip, which occur between the initial lift and the delivery of the cast e.g. an upstream movement and a downstream movement. So let's take a look at the mechanics of this cast, this time using the double handed fly rod.



- As with all Spey casts we start with the lift, which you should now be familiar with if you have followed the articles in sequence. In this case, from the left bank, (*see picture 3*) my left hand is uppermost on the rod handle as discussed above, so for this cast I am placing my left foot forward. Remember this is ergonomically sound, and as discussed in previous articles, will (*amongst other things*) help prevent your body from swivelling too far around when creating your D Loop.

- Where possible, make sure your fly is fished out and into your own bank prior to the initial lift, this will allow for a better cast from the outset as your anchor point will now be drawn closer to you (*on your downstream side*) during the next movement as apposed to being left too far out in the river. Lift the rod tip to 45 degrees whilst still pointing downstream to release some fly line from the water surface (*see picture 3*). It is at this stage where we introduce the double movement (*upstream and downstream*) with the rod tip.
- *Before continuing further, I should point out that there are several ways of creating a Double Spey cast for a variety of situations, but for the sake of this article we will look at one particular method so as not to cause confusion.*

- **The Upstream Sweep**

The next objective after the lift is to draw the fly in an upstream direction from its fished out position, to a new position on the water of a rod to a rod and a half length downstream of you (*your anchor point position*) (*see picture 4*) (*this is only a guide as the position to which you take your fly is ultimately dictated by the angle at which you are going to deliver the cast*). This does two things, **a**) it brings the fly up into the required position, and **b**) it creates some spare fly line upstream of you which you will later require to create your D Loop when you eventually make your downstream sweep (*if you look at the shape of the fly line on the water above you, (see picture 4) it is actually already in the shape of a D Loop laid on its side, it is this D Loop that simply needs to be transferred to your downstream side to create your desired casting weight*). You are now ready for the second part of the double movement.



Picture 4

- **The Downstream Sweep**

Whilst making sure that the rod tip starts from a low position upstream, (*see picture 4*) begin the downstream sweep (*see picture 5*). This movement should be relatively slow from the outset becoming progressively faster as the line peels from the water surface, but not so fast that the line rips from the water, remember all you are trying to do is maintain line tension (*no slack line*) whilst creating your D Loop, too fast and you will introduce slack line just prior to the delivery because you will tend to try and force the D Loop in with a kick as apposed to letting it form naturally, and too slow you will not have generated enough momentum to pick up all the fly line from the water, resulting in an inefficient D Loop, line stick and a failed cast. The reason you start the downstream sweep from a low position is because this will allow you to climb the imaginary spiral staircase during the downstream sweep (*see article 4 page 2*) allowing you once again to release the maximum amount of line from the water surface in an upward direction and therefore delaying the fly line from falling whilst creating your D Loop behind affording you more time to make the forward delivery. If you prefer something visual to focus on then watch the water skier effect that the fly line creates on the water during the downstream sweep, the beginning of which can be seen in picture 5. As soon as this effect stops, the D Loop will be formed and the delivery must be made. Too late and the D Loop will collapse behind and too soon you will hear a click, this will be your fly flicking back in the air as you have tried to deliver the cast whilst the fly line is still moving and therefore speeding it up as apposed to allowing your fly (*anchor point*) to lock in. "If you hear the click you have gone too quick".



Picture 5

sweep from a low position is because this will allow you to climb the imaginary spiral staircase during the downstream sweep (*see article 4 page 2*) allowing you once again to release the maximum amount of line from the water surface in an upward direction and therefore delaying the fly line from falling whilst creating your D Loop behind affording you more time to make the forward delivery. If you prefer something visual to focus on then watch the water skier effect that the fly line creates on the water during the downstream sweep, the beginning of which can be seen in picture 5. As soon as this effect stops, the D Loop will be formed and the delivery must be made. Too late and the D Loop will collapse behind and too soon you will hear a click, this will be your fly flicking back in the air as you have tried to deliver the cast whilst the fly line is still moving and therefore speeding it up as apposed to allowing your fly (*anchor point*) to lock in. "If you hear the click you have gone too quick".

- **Casting styles**

There are several different casting styles you will encounter on the river as well as variations of casts (*as mentioned above*). There are some anglers who prefer to draw the fly upstream (*after the initial lift*) and downstream again (*in a straight line*) whilst turning their body to do so, and there are some anglers who prefer to face their target and simply cross their hands over during the upstream sweep, uncrossing them again during the downstream sweep, this is fine, as long as they are facing their intended target with hands uncrossed prior to the delivery of the cast as this will put them in a good position to realise the full potential of their cast. You should never force someone into adopting your style of casting if it does not suit them. As a full time instructor this is something I feel very strongly about. Whatever style or variation of the cast for that matter that you choose to adopt, it will only work efficiently if the mechanics of what you are doing are correct. It is these mechanics that you need to thoroughly understand to get the best from your casting style. Once this is achieved you can use several variations of these casts to combat the many and varying situations you will encounter on many rivers.

- **The D Loop**

Maximizing your D Loop wherever possible must be one of your main priorities as this will help you get the most from your cast. It is this D Loop that creates the required casting weight behind the rod tip to load the rod efficiently. So, the more fly line you can place in your D Loop whilst still maintaining a good anchor point the better your cast will be.



Picture 6

- All this considered, assuming that your anchor point has been set correctly, as soon as the water skier effect has stopped during the downstream sweep, (**visual aid**) the D Loop is set and ready to go. Make sure (*where possible*) that the rod tip has been taken back to 45 degrees, also ensuring that it is slightly canted out to the side of your body for a safer and more efficient cast. Although we have discussed this in previous articles, it is worth mentioning again that this outward cant of the rod tip (*see pictures 6 & 7*) not only keeps the cast safe, but also assists you with a straight line path of the rod tip during the delivery of the cast, which is very important. If you bring the rod tip around behind your back, you will tend to either swing the rod during the forward delivery taking it off the straight line path and once again causing what is known as a tracking problem (*fault*) or you will bowl the cast over the top causing the fly line to create a big open non efficient casting loop due to your hands being very restricted in the amount of stroke length now available to you. See for yourself; place the rod in your hands, first of all canted out to the side and back to 45 degrees and then straight up and back to 45 degrees. Which one gives you the longer straighter forward casting stroke?

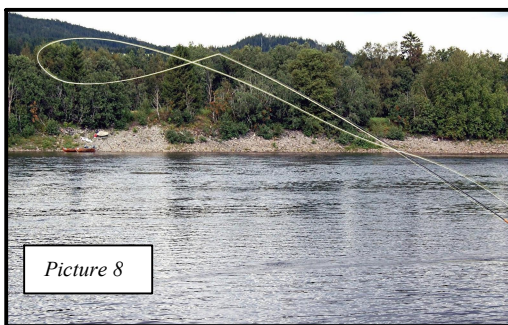
- In picture 6 you can see the D Loop beginning to form as the water skier effect is travelling downstream to meet the fly in the anchor point position. Once the D Loop is maximized i.e. the water skier has stopped, you will then have the maximum amount of casting weight available to you (*fly line in your D Loop*) to enable you to execute a very efficient forward cast (*see picture 7*). At this stage the D Loop will be assisted by the downstream wind which will blow it up like a big balloon, this will also assist with keeping the fly line away from you during the forward delivery helping you to keep everything safe. This will now be a much more efficient cast than the one you would make if there was no wind in attendance. From this position everything should now be under tension (*see picture 7*) and you are ready to deliver the forward cast.



Picture 7

- **The Forward Delivery**

As always, the forward cast should now be delivered with a smooth progressive acceleration to a stop at around 45 degrees at the front (*all things being equal*) (*see picture 8*) with the rod tip slightly canted out to the side from the outset (*see picture 7*) whilst travelling through the forward stroke in a straight



Picture 8

line parallel to the water (*do not swing or bowl the delivery as discussed in the D Loop section at the top of this page*). The stopping of the rod tip at 45 degrees will only alter if the wind is at an awkward angle e.g. downstream, but also coming in toward you in which case you may have to direct the forward stroke in a slightly downward plane (*but still in a straight line*) to take advantage of the least wind affected area. This will not happen too often, but it does happen. Once again after the forward stop and the fly line and fly are on their way, you can then

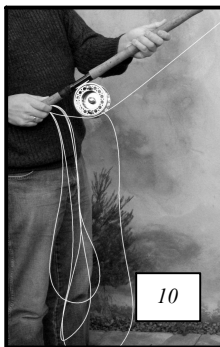
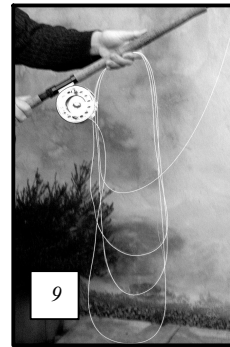
lower the rod tip at the same speed as the fly line, leader and fly begin to fall for a good presentation. You have now delivered a successful Double Spey cast.

- **Shooting Line**

Once your cast is going reasonably well and not before, in certain situations you may want to introduce a little more distance into your delivery, although I would point out that unless you know the beat you are fishing quite well and you know for a fact that the fish tend to hold quite far out in the river, it is often unnecessary to make a long cast as the fish are often quite close in. (*start with a short line first*).

- That said, if distance is a requirement, shooting line into the cast correctly then becomes a factor. To get the best from your cast there are a few things to take into consideration when doing this, especially if you need to cast a fair amount of line, which is sometimes the case on certain rivers.

(a) Line Management: If you intend to cast a reasonable distance, you will inevitably have at your feet, several yards (*metres*) of fly line hanging from your reel and being dragged downstream by the current or flow. This excess fly line must now be efficiently managed by you to prevent the current, flow, surface tension etc, from gripping it and holding it back during the shooting process, therefore preventing a slick delivery and ultimately reducing distance. To do this you must pass the excess line to your upper hand in progressively smaller loops whilst drawing line back in prior to re-casting. Always start with the largest loop first during the draw back process and work down to the smallest loop (*see picture 9*) this is so that when you make the forward delivery, the smallest loop will shoot first and the largest last, this will prevent tangling during the cast. Now transfer these loops to what will be your lower



hand and draw them all back behind the fly reel, gripping them against the lower part of the rod (*cork*) handle with only one or two fingers, usually your index finger and possibly the one next to it if you wish to use two, (*see picture 10*) this will help to prevent the line from tangling around the reel during the forward delivery of the cast and will also allow for an easier release. To help with creating the correct loop sizes, (*which will be dependant on the amount of line you have to manage*) count the pulls you make when drawing in the fly line e.g. 1,2,3,4, pulls, hold the 1st loop, 1,2,3, pulls, hold the 2nd loop, 1,2, pulls, hold the 3rd loop, and 1 pull, hold the final loop. In this instance, you should now have four loops in your hand each one smaller than the previous one, these loops can now be drawn back behind the reel and held against the rod handle ready to be delivered into the forward cast (*see picture 10*).

(b) Releasing line: The timing of the release of the fly line in the forward cast can also cause major problems, the most common of which is to release the line too early, losing line tension and worst case scenario, causing the forward casting loop to collapse in the air. This is a common fault and one we have all been guilty of at some point especially when using some of the specialized Spey casting lines (*which are basically weight forward lines*) on the market today, many of which are designed with very thin running line which can easily slip from your control unexpectedly when delivering the cast, although when used correctly they can achieve great distances where required.

(c) Trajectory: The path of the fly line is also very important especially when distance is your ultimate goal and therefore height now becomes a major factor. By ensuring that the rod tip stops at 45 degrees at the front before releasing the line, you are giving yourself the best opportunity of your fly reaching its intended target when going for distance. The lower the trajectory of the fly line e.g. travelling downward from the rod tip, the earlier it will hit the water and if it hits the water before your leader and fly have fully extended then the cast will fail (*land in a heap*). As discussed earlier the only time that this would be encouraged is if you were casting into a wind using a relatively short to medium cast, but when distance is a requirement, this would be a disadvantage as the more line you attempt to deliver, the more height you will need to achieve the required turnover of your fly line, leader and fly.

- Throughout this article I have purposely shown the Double Spey cast with the left hand up, off the left bank, not only for continuity, but also because the majority of anglers are right handed, this is the hand that scares them the most, but believe me it is no different to putting your right hand up off the right bank as the mechanics are exactly the same, it is simply because most anglers try to avoid this where possible and therefore do not get the required practice to make them efficient from this side. Put some time in with this cast from the left bank, and those of you who are left handed, put some time in with this cast from the right bank. This will assist with making you a good all round caster and enable you to confidently address many of the situations on the river you may have found difficult in the past.
- In article six, we will take a look at the Snake Roll cast which is not only an alternative downstream wind cast to the Double Spey, but can also be a very useful and dynamic cast in it's own right, and one you should familiarise yourselves with to get the most from your fishing.

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