

The Snake Roll Cast



What is a Snake Roll Cast?

Where would we use a Snake Roll Cast?

Why would we use a Snake Roll Cast?

- These are just a few of the questions I am often asked to explain in more depth when teaching the Snake Roll Cast, so within this article I would like to address these questions along with a few others.

- **In Simple Terms**

The Snake Roll is simply a Spey cast that incorporates a rotation of the rod tip prior to the delivery of the cast. It can also be used as an alternative to the Double Spey cast in either a no wind situation or better still, when there is a downstream wind in attendance. As with the Double Spey cast, the downstream wind also makes this cast much more efficient as well as much safer. However, as with all of the Spey casts we have discussed throughout the previous articles we all know by now that it is never that simple and there are always reasons for every movement we make during each section of a cast, and this cast is no exception. So let's dig a little bit deeper.

- Apart from the obvious reasons for using a Spey cast such as obstacles behind, wind direction, safety and so on, this particular cast can be very effective on so many different levels as it allows us to do several things quite efficiently, such as:

- (a) Lift a significant amount of line in one movement.
- (b) Compress the D Loop to make it more dynamic.
- (c) Keep the rod tip low when space is an issue.
- (d) Maximize your D Loop much more effectively.
- (e) Change direction very quickly when necessary.

To name but a few, but how do we do all of these things? Once again we need to understand the mechanics of the cast to get the best from it, so here goes.

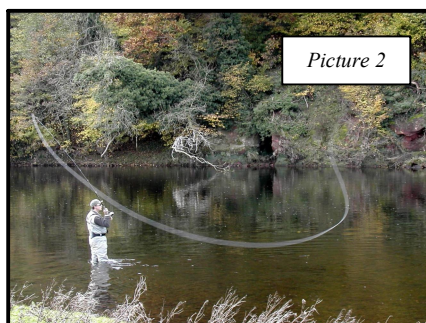
- **The Initial Rotation of the Rod Tip**

As the Snake Roll cast is designed to be used safely in a downstream wind, just like the Double Spey cast, it can therefore be used as an alternative cast to the Double Spey cast, this does not by any means suggest that it is a replacement for the Double Spey as it also has its advantages. That said, at the outset of this cast in relation to stance, grip, arm positions or whether you are on the left or right bank of the river, (*all of which have been discussed in previous articles*) everything should begin in the same way as the Double Spey cast, with the fly line and fly in a fished out position below you (*downstream*) (*see article 5*). Remember to keep the rod canted out to the side during the initial rotation and the delivery of the cast, (*also discussed in article 5*) or you may find the fly coming very close to you.



- **From the starting position**

Lift the rod tip (*where possible*) to 45 degrees, (*see picture 1*) (*to release some fly line from the water surface*) then make a progressive acceleration in the shape of a circle around the rod tip (*this circle should be clockwise if you are on the left bank and anti-clockwise if you are on the right bank*). This movement will initiate two important things, (**a**) it will lift your fly line leader and fly from the fished out position downstream of you, giving them no other option but to follow the path of the rod tip during its rotation through the air, (*see picture 2*) ultimately laying the fly line leader and fly out on the water again in the direction of your intended target, and (**b**) it will allow you to create the required D Loop (*behind the rod tip*) to make the cast effective, as the rod tip should finish up in



line with your intended target (*albeit 45 degrees behind*). Before this next stage (*The D Loop*) simply practice rotating the rod tip (*see picture 3*) and observe the effect it has on your fly line leader and fly, this will give you a better understanding of what you are trying to achieve before moving on.

- **Creating your D Loop**

After practicing for a while with the rotation of the rod tip, it is now time to create the required casting weight behind the rod tip that will make the cast work efficiently (*your D Loop*). This is done by drawing the rod tip back to 45 degrees on completion of the circle, and as the rod tip at this point should be slightly canted out to the side of your body, (*see D Loop article 5*) you will find that not only does this help to keep everything in line with your intended target, but it will also be in a much safer position, affording you a more relaxed and comfortable delivery.



- **Delivering the cast**

As we have discussed this in all of the previous articles I am not going to bore you by covering old ground, but will simply say that where possible your final delivery should maintain a straight line path throughout the forward stroke, accompanied by a smooth progressive acceleration to a stop at 45 degrees in front, with the emphasis on a nice high delivery (*if conditions allow*). The delivery can be improved by pulling your bottom hand in at the end of the forward stroke and therefore utilising the rod spring to better effect.

- **Improving your Snake Roll Cast**

The cast we have discussed up to now has covered the Snake Roll in its basic form, which will hopefully be of help to those of you who are just getting to grips with this cast, but some of you may already use this cast and wish to improve on it, in which case you may have been intrigued by the comments I made earlier in bullet point three above, which highlights some of the benefits of the Snake Roll cast in sections (a) to (e). To make the most of these benefits we have to adapt the cast slightly from its basic form. This is not something new, as in years gone by; many anglers have identified the need to do this to combat certain situations on the river. To understand this further, here is a brief explanation of the required technique.

- **Morphing the cast**

I use the word morphing as its definition refers to one shape being turned into another, and this is exactly what we want to do to the shape of the fly line in the air during the rotation stage of the cast if we wish to improve upon the basic technique.

- **So Let's Take a Look**

As before, lift the rod tip to 45 degrees, (*to release some fly line from the water surface*) and slightly inward toward your own bank (*only very slightly, as too much can result in the fly coming very close to you during the next part of the cast*). At this point you can stop if you wish, but I find that if you continue into the next movement without stopping, you tend to feel the progressive loading of the rod spring much more effectively.

- This is where the movement changes to create a more dynamic cast. Instead of creating the perfect circle with the rod tip, (*as described earlier*) we now want to squash that circle into the shape of a rugby ball laid on its side, so that the travelling fly line in the air follows the path of the rod tip to make the same shape (*if you draw this rugby ball shape with your thumb then the rod tip has no choice other than to do the same*). (*See picture 4*).



- To help with this movement, imagine there are two horizontal bolts above and below each other on an imaginary door parallel to your casting shoulder, and the rod handle is also the handle of the imaginary bolts. As you approach the 45 degree lift position, simply push the top bolt in (*out above the water*) and pull the bottom bolt out (*back in toward your own bank*) this will compress (*squash*) the shape of the fly line in the air, and as it is drawn back to create what would

have been your conventional D Loop shape in the basic Snake Roll cast, it will now create more of a V Loop on its side (rather like this >) behind the rod tip (*see picture 5*).

- This will enable you to do three things. **(1)** It will allow you to draw your anchor point (*end of fly line leader and fly*) back to the required position (*parallel to your casting shoulder a rod to a rod and a half length out to the side*) much more efficiently due to the extra line speed you will have generated. This could be especially useful if you are carrying a large amount of fly line in the air. **(2)** It will assist you in your attempt to maximize the amount of fly line (*casting weight*) behind the rod tip and therefore assist with compressing the rod spring to maximum efficiency during the forward cast, and **(3)** where required, it will give you the option to keep the rod tip lower than normal due to the rugby ball shape (*oval shape on its side*) you have created in the air with the rod tip, this is of great benefit if you have to make a cast under low branches of overhanging trees or for use in confined spaces.

- By tilting the rugby ball shape upwards during the initial rotation of the cast (*sending the rod tip high*) as apposed to keeping it parallel to the water, you can send the cast higher at the front, ultimately giving yourself more time during the set up of the cast for a more relaxed and comfortable delivery. This will also prevent you from throwing the fly line downward during the initial rotation, which is a common fault with this cast especially if you are using a heavier than normal fly, as this movement will make the fly descend faster and therefore crash into the water surface at speed, this is better avoided where possible. The forward delivery is the same as before (*described above*).



- Although the improved technique can be very effective and tempting to try from the outset, it can also be dangerous if executed incorrectly, so I would only recommend moving on to this method once you are comfortable with the basic Snake Roll technique as it is then and only then that you will notice the improvements as well as gaining a better understanding of the cast. I would also suggest that if you are fishing with a sinking line, it is always beneficial to raise your sunk line to the surface prior to using the Snake Roll cast, this can be done by using the basic Roll Cast (*see article 1*). Also as discussed in article 1, eye protection should be a major consideration when using any fly casting technique.

- You may hear some people say that the Snake Roll cast is simply a fancy platform cast used by instructors at Game Fairs, but after reading this article I think you will agree that this is not so, and in addition to all of the positive reasons we have covered for using this cast it is also a cast that can get you onto a fish very quickly when required, as one rotation of the rod tip will allow you to change direction in an instant even if your target fish shows upstream of you, as long as you make the initial rotation in the direction you wish to deliver the cast.

- **Points to remember**

Over the course of the last six articles we have covered several important points which are essential components of a good Spey Cast, (*as well as many other casts*) so to keep them fresh in your mind; here is a short list of these points:

- Left hand up left foot forward, Right hand up right foot forward.
 - For best results begin your cast when the fly has fished out.
 - Try to keep your anchor point adjacent to your casting shoulder.
 - Make sure you maximise your D loop where possible.
 - Introduce a slight outward cant of the rod tip when creating your D Loop.
 - Make sure your D Loop is set up to face your intended target.
 - Avoid delivering your cast with crossed hands. (*Double handed rods*).
 - Maintain a straight line path throughout the delivery of the cast.
 - Maintain a high delivery where possible during the forward cast.
 - Make all movements smooth and progressive especially the delivery.
 - Try to keep your fly line under tension throughout the cast.
 - Manage your line in loops when shooting line for distance.
- **Finally**
I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all visitors to the Border Game Angling website for taking the time to read my articles and I hope there has been something there for everyone.

Clive Mitchellhill