

The Single Spey Cast



In what situation do we need a Single Spey Cast?

Although all Spey Casts can be used in almost any situation, one of the first things to be taken into consideration when Spey Casting should always be the direction of the wind, if in attendance.

- *Wind direction and the important part it plays during Spey Casting.*

Although it is widely understood that Spey Casting was designed to be used when there are obstacles behind the angler, such as trees high banks etc, where an extended cast behind, such as an overhead cast, would cause you all sorts of problems, it is often forgotten that the Spey casts are also a series of casts that are influenced by wind direction. Obviously, if there is no wind in attendance, then this will not pose a problem, but as most anglers will tell you when arriving at the river, with the intension of fly fishing, that there is often an upstream or downstream wind to contend with. This is what dictates which of the Spey Casting techniques you should adopt, not just to make your casting more efficient, but also much safer.

- *Which wind direction for which cast?*

At this stage, it is important to point out that a downstream wind necessitates the use of a Double Spey cast and it's counterpart the Snake Roll, (*two of the techniques I have covered in articles 5 and 6*) and that an upstream wind necessitates the use of a Single Spey cast and it's counterparts the *Snap T & Circle C casts*, (*which I have also covered in article 4*). So before moving on to the others let's start with the Single Spey cast and why it is one of the Spey casts that performs better (*and safer*) in an upstream wind.

As many of you will be aware, the left and right banks of a river can be determined by turning your body to face downstream (*your back to the flow*) and therefore the left bank is on your left and the right bank is on your right. Bearing this in mind, a Single Spey cast should be adopted when the wind is blowing in an upstream direction, regardless of the bank you are fishing from, and believe me this does cause confusion amongst some anglers. Let me explain further!

- *Using the wind to your advantage.*

The casting weight or D shape of line that we create behind the rod, prior to casting (*as covered in articles 1 and 2*) must be placed on your safe wind side i.e. the side to which the wind blows the D loop away from your body. So in the case of a Single Spey cast, (*assuming that we do have an upstream wind in attendance*) your D loop (*casting weight*) must always be formed on the upstream side of your body, regardless of which bank you are fishing from. This is not only safer, but it also gives us a huge advantage as the wind will then fill our D loop like a big sail allowing you more time than you would imagine to deliver a much more efficient cast. (**Picture 1**) The wind also assists you with keeping your fly line under tension, which can be very helpful when you come to progressively load the rod during the forward acceleration. "Notice how much more efficient a Yacht is when the wind fills its sail".



- When using a Single Spey cast with a double handed Salmon rod, consider the following: When you are on the left bank of the river place your right hand uppermost on the handle (**Picture 2**) and when you are on the right bank of the river place your left hand uppermost on the handle (**Picture 3**). This prevents you from crossing your hands over during the set up of the cast allowing you to open up to the cast more effectively and therefore utilise a much longer casting stroke where required. Although this cast can also be made by crossing your hands over, this method 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 stroke, often creating a tracking problem. If distance is a requirement, then crossing your hands over will always be a limiting factor.



- **Tip**
Practise a little from time to time with your non-casting hand, this will not only be a great advantage when Spey Casting with a single handed rod, but it will also offer you more flexibility when fishing with double handed rods from both banks, (*utilising both hands*) as many anglers will often only fish from the bank they are most comfortable on. This is not as difficult as it may sound, and a few sessions will improve your technique, allowing you to fish from both banks with confidence.

- **Executing the Cast**

As you will remember at the conclusion of my last article **The Jump Roll Cast**, I mentioned that we were going to add a change of direction to that cast to create a Single Spey cast, as this will be of much more use to us on the river (*in a fishing situation*) than a jump roll cast will ever be. So bearing in mind the mechanics of the Jump Roll cast, (*article 2*) all we need to do with this cast is deliver it in a new direction e.g. 45 degrees from the bank, down and across the stream, and out into the river, as apposed to just sending it back from whence it came (*the Jump Roll cast*). It will now become apparent why we took the time to absorb and understand the Jump Roll technique first. Let's give it a whirl!



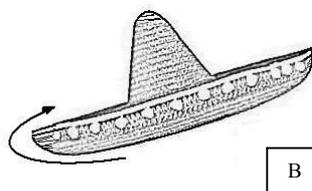
your new target out in the river. Some people prefer twisting their body to face downstream at this stage, (**Picture 4**) which is fine, as long as you're casting foot is still facing your intended target. Both techniques work well, as your body swivels back around during the set up of the cast, (*helping to generate line speed and assist with anchor placement*) to line up with your foot and therefore in line with the intended target prior to the forward delivery. The 180° rule (*180 degrees opposite your target*).

- With your fly fished out into your own bank, point your rod tip downstream towards your fly, as if you were going to execute a Jump Roll cast (*see Jump Roll article 2*). Now point your foot (*the one directly underneath your casting arm*) toward your intended target (*in this case 45° out into the river*). The rod tip should now be pointing directly downstream and across your body whilst you will be facing

- From this position, the mechanics of the Single Spey cast are almost exactly the same as the Jump Roll cast, the only difference being, that because you are now introducing a directional change into your cast, you have had to bring your fly line leader and fly much further around your body, so as to place your leader and fly into your anchor point position which is now upstream of you, but still (*as before*) out to the side of your casting shoulder (*approx. one to one and a half rod lengths away*) prior to the forward delivery (*see Jump Roll article 2 for explanation of anchor points*). Remember with all Spey Casts, all you are trying to do at this stage is create a roll cast set up with the D loop (*albeit larger*) leader and fly all facing your intended target, rather like a large wheel, "if its not pointing that way it won't roll that way".

Analogy

- An easy way to remember the D loop process (*up to this stage*) is to imagine that every time you are setting up your Spey cast, that you are wearing a very large imaginary Sombrero (**See A**). Raise the rod tip to the edge of the Sombrero, (*from the direction of your fished out fly*) then sweep your rod tip around the Sombrero, whilst at the same time creating a very shallow



arc off your casting shoulder. This is to make sure that you find your anchor point position on the water. The shallow arc will be easier to achieve if your imaginary Sombrero is worn with a tilt to the side, (**See B**) then all you need to do is to follow this tilt with the tip of your fly rod throughout the duration of the sweep. Do not at any point cut the edge off your Sombrero during the sweep as this will cause the fly line to take an alternative path, often causing you to either create slack line or worse still, miss your anchor point completely. "Follow the path of the arrow (*shown above left*) with your rod tip".

- **Tip**
Always remember, whatever path your thumb takes, the rod tip also takes, and whatever path the rod tip takes the fly line will follow. This simple rule can be a great advantage to you when fault finding, allowing you to analyse the cast at different stages, helping to identify the fault. “When your fault finding skills improve, then so will your casting”.
- If your D loop has been set up correctly (*180° opposite your target*) then you are now ready to deliver the forward cast. This is done in exactly the same way as you delivered both your Roll cast and your Jump roll cast, by introducing a smooth and progressive acceleration throughout, which is one of the key components to a good cast. If you have created a good anchor point and your fly line remains under tension at all times, (**Picture 5**) then the outcome should be a good one.
- Finally, (*as you did with the Roll & Jump Roll cast*) following the stop at the end of the forward stroke, lower your thumb, and therefore rod tip, in unison with the fly line leader and fly as they begin to fall, for a good presentation. “Job Done”!
- When first starting out, the Single Spey cast is often the most difficult of all the Spey casts to successfully pin down, therefore it is worth knowing that there are a couple of alternatives to this cast, which are not only useful in an upstream wind scenario, but also when you find yourself fishing in difficult situations, (*especially on rivers*) as they can not only assist with anchor point placement, (*if this is something you are having difficulty with*) but they are generally much easier to learn than the Single Spey, and can often alleviate the pressures of a frustrating day when your Single Spey is proving difficult to master. They come in the form of the **Snap T, and Circle C casts**, which I will endeavour to explain in the next article, as well as looking into the differences between the two techniques.



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