

CASTING CORNER



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How to find the perfect fly rod

I have found the perfect fly rod. In fact I have found several. In my quest for the perfect fly rod I have managed to accumulate quite an arsenal. Let me take you on my journey in search of the perfect fly rod.

My first rod was a Fenwick FF857 fiberglass 7 weight. I still have it though as I get older it becomes more difficult to hold it in the air for more than one or two casts. I bought it at the time when everything American was cool. I bought it at the time when there was very little else on the market. It served me well. I learnt to cast with it and caught my first trout on it. It was perfect.

My second rod was also by Fenwick. Built many years later this new rod was made of graphite. It was called the *Ironfeather* and I can think of no better name for a fly rod. It was a 5 weight and I used it in all the streams of the New England plateau catching blackberries, trees and the occasional trout. Its only fault was that it would not cast where I wanted it to especially in the wind. However, its light weight and responsive action quickly made this my rod of choice and I soon came to think of it as the perfect rod.

At this stage of my fly fishing life I knew I could catch more fish if I could

cast further and more accurately. The problem had to be with the fly rod. So the search began again for the perfect rod. This time no expense was spared. After all I was working and there had to be some compensation for the hours spent away from fishing. I looked to America again and came up with the top of the range Sage XP. I ordered it without ever having held one in my hand. The advertisement said: "*Cast the rod and see how it quickly generates high line speed for long casts, yet still feels lively and active when fishing close in. Simply put the fast action XP's are easier and more comfortable to cast than any other high performance fly rod you can find.*" This rod had to be the answer. At last I had found the perfect rod.

There is only one problem when you have the perfect rod and that is you can't blame the rod for your casting faults. I still couldn't cast as far as I wanted and the fly still didn't always go in the direction I wanted especially when the wind blew. Maybe the Sage wasn't the perfect rod after all. It was time to look at other brands. "*So remarkable it will change your casting style. Cast this rod and you'll wonder how you enjoyed fishing without it.*" Now this sounded like the perfect rod. So with a trip to New Zealand looming and the need for a 6 weight rod I bought a G.Loomis GLX. I took both rods to NZ and discovered no matter how good the rod if you can't cast you will be in trouble when the dreaded northwester blows (see Casting Corner October 2011)

That trip to New Zealand taught me that it was not the rod but the caster that made all the difference. I set about improving my casting and have been at it ever since. I still have all my perfect rods and enjoy casting them. But now, with the skills and knowledge I have acquired over the years, these rods perform perfectly.

My arsenal has grown over the years as new rods were bought for specific rolls and occasionally old ones sold. I don't know how many rods I own now but if a golfer can have 14 clubs why should a fly fisher feel guilty about owning a few fly rods? These new rods were not necessarily from the high-end of the market as I have long learnt that actions speak louder than words ... and price tags.

So, if you are still looking for that perfect rod I hope my journey has been of some help. My search has ended, as has my income to finance any new purchases. I am content that I now have the perfect rod for all situations. All I have to do is to choose which one and to find the time to use them all.

To help you in your search for the perfect rod I offer the following ten points to ponder. If you take heed you might spare yourself a great deal of time and expense. If you don't, you will eventually find your perfect rod and probably enjoy the journey as much as I did. Good searching.

1. Don't expect the rod to cast for you.

No matter what the shop assistant or advertisement tells you the only way you can make a fly rod work is to pick it up and cast it. If you are just starting out in fly fishing it is tempting to believe that the perfect rod will make you a perfect caster. Not so! You will only get out of your fly rod what you are able to put in.

2. Get some casting lessons.

If you want to cast your fly rod get some casting lessons. Golfers do it, as do tennis players and many other sportspeople. Money spent on learning to cast correctly can be more beneficial than buying the most expensive rod. When you can cast well any rod can be perfect.

3. Know what you want the rod for.

The perfect rod for small streams won't cut it for sea runners and saltwater. Know where you will fish the most and choose a rod to suit. If you have to compromise consider buying a couple of less expensive rods for specific tasks instead one expensive all round rod.

4. Forget the hype and talk to owners and users

If you believe the advertisements and reviews every rod out there is perfect and will make you a better caster and fisher. Ask fellow club members, talk to people who fish with the rod regularly and remember to check if someone has a vested interest in the brand before you believe everything they tell you about the rod.

5. Road test the rod.

There is no substitute for testing the rod yourself. If you can put your favourite reel and line on the rod and cast it in a real fishing situation you will know if this is going to be your perfect rod. A wiggle and waggle in the fly shop is not a test.

6. Believe in your rod.

If you have gone to all the trouble or researching and testing your perfect rod don't doubt your decision. Be confident that the rod is doing its job and you are the one causing the problems. Confidence in casting and catching are the keys to success, Believe that your rod is perfect and it will cast perfectly.

7. Newer is not necessarily better.

If you don't believe in your rod the next new thing that comes along is going to tempt you. Manufacturers are always bringing out new models which they tell you are better. The main reason manufacturers produce new rods is to increase their sales. Rarely, does a new rod come onto the market because of a quantum leap in technology. Those classics of the past can still be perfect.

8. Check the Warranty.

Ask about the warranty. If the rod is perfect you will want to replace it if anything goes wrong. Some warranties are better than others and if you want to keep a rod for a long time you need to look at a rod company that is going to look after you and be around for a long time.

9. Price isn't everything.

You get what you pay for, so they say. When you pay top dollars you get the results of research and development, quality materials and a good warranty. You also get the cost of advertising the rod and the privilege of paying for the name behind the brand. Often you can get the same level of workmanship and materials without paying for the overheads. Look for quality and value and don't be blinded by the hype or price tag. A rod can be perfect no matter the cost.

10. One man's meat is another man's poison.

Just because your fishing mate tells you he has found the perfect fishing rod doesn't mean that it will be perfect for you. He may cast as smoothly as Roy, as elegantly as Joan and as far as Steve but put the rod in your hands and the results may not be the same. We all have different styles and like a rod to behave in a certain way. There is a reason why manufacturers make so many different models.

A final word of warning. There is no one perfect rod. A company might tell you there is *One* rod which is the only *One* rod you will ever need. You might find yourself "*jonesing* (look it up!) for a rod that is the arch enemy of mediocrity". You could look at the "best Rods on Earth." or a rod that "fears no fish." And then there's "*the rod you'll eventually own.*" How can you choose the perfect rod from all of these? Don't despair. There is a perfect rod for you out there somewhere. You just have to find it. And when you dodon't tell me. I can't afford another rod!