



## FISHING TIPS BY JOHN HORSEY

John Horsey, 5 times England Fly Fishing Team Captain is a Professional Guide at Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes. In the 13 years he has been Guiding, fishing methods, tackle and tactics have changed radically. Here he shares some of the tips that help him catch so many fish!

The start of a day's guiding begins well away from the water. Time spent discussing

leader choice, construction of knots and tippets, fly selection and other technical details is definitely time well spent.

Some of my clients have actually told me that the tackling-session in the car park, prior to the day's fishing, was worth the financial investment on its own. That in itself is a great compliment.

So I thought it would be a good idea to share some of their most frequently asked questions with you and the answers of course!

### What is your preferred choice of tippet material and why?

I use two types of tippet material – Fluorocarbon and Co-Polymer.

When fishing dries, I use either Kamasan Flycast, Rio Powerflex or Hardy Co-Polymer in 8lb breaking strain. This should be degreased regularly to make it sink into the surface film. If a fish spots any tippet material floating on the surface when about to take a dry fly, it will almost certainly refuse the fly and your chance is gone!

For everything else, I use Fluorocarbon. My favourites are Rio Fluoroflex and Fluoroflex Plus – mainly upwards from 8lb breaking strain.

Tippet material has seen major changes in recent years. Fluorocarbon leader material is without doubt, one of the single most important additions to the anglers' armoury in the last decade.

Being on the water as often as I am, there is no doubt in my mind that Fluorocarbon tippet material is less visible to fish than either Monofilament or Co-Polymers. It tangles less and more importantly, comes out of tangles better. It has a long shelf-life, is incredibly strong, has superb knot-strength and means that "smash takes" should be a thing of the past.

However, beware of cheap imitations, as some brands are not pure Fluorocarbon.

The way to test a true Fluorocarbon is to break a length off the spool and tangle it as badly as you can. This should result in a length of tippet with lots of kinks and something you would normally discard. Hold the tippet tightly in your left hand and run the fingers of your other hand down the tippet exerting pressure along the entire length. A quality Fluorocarbon will straighten completely in one go and it will be as good as new.

As a Pro Guide, I undo all my clients' tangles and as you can probably imagine, that alone has made my life a lot easier!

### How do you construct leaders?

Dry Fly casts.

I fish three dry flies on my cast and the set-up is simple. First I cut a 13 foot length of Co-Polymer tippet material from my spool and attach it to my Braided Loop on the fly line by means of an untucked, Half Blood Knot. I then cut two 10" pieces of tippet from the spool for the droppers. The Top Dropper is attached to the main leader just 3 feet from the Braided Loop using a 3 turn Water Knot. The Middle Dropper is attached 5 feet from the Point Fly using the same method.

Always use the droppers that point down to the Point Fly so as to avoid being broken. You now have a leader that is capable of "turning over" 3 flies even in a flat calm.

### Nymphing Leaders.

Lengths of leaders when fishing nymphs depends on factors such as the depth of water being fished and the feeding depth of the trout. However, in most circumstances, my standard set-up is an 18 foot length of 8lb Fluorocarbon, with either 2 or 3 droppers.

The construction is exactly the same as for a dry fly cast,

but the spacings are slightly different.

For a 3 fly cast, my top Dropper would be 8 feet from the end of my Braided Loop, with 5 feet to the Middle Dropper and another 5 feet to the Point Fly.

When using 4 flies, the distance between the top dropper and Point Fly is still 10 feet, with the two droppers equally spaced between.

### Leaders for "pulling" on Sinking Lines.

I rarely use leaders in excess of 15 feet for my sinking line fishing, as I cannot see the point! The fly that gets down to the fish quickest is the top dropper, so I like this to be no further than 5 feet away from the end of the sinking line. As usual, I have 5 feet between the other two flies, or space them as I do with nymphs when using a 4 fly cast.

One of the most important aspects of sinking line tactics is to "hang" the flies at the end of each and every retrieve. This makes the top dropper once again very important and it is vital that you can see this fly clearly. This is where a brightly coloured Lure comes in handy, as it is much easier to spot as it comes up from the depths to the side of the boat.





Now that we've sorted out how to construct the leaders for various styles of fishing, let's now have a look at a few of the most popular modern methods. Remember, these methods work equally well from both boat or bank.

#### The "Washing Line".

This is now a very popular method and involves a combination of Boobies and Nymphs.

The Booby was certainly the "fly of the year" last season, working as an attractor fly in it's own right, plus helping the other flies to fish in a particular fashion.

This is how the "Washing Line" method works, using a Booby on the point, with nymphs suspended in the middle and often another Booby on the Top Dropper.

Last season on Chew, the trout were feeding hard on Snail and corixa off Moreton and Stratford Bank. However, the weed growth was tremendous and although the fish were in at least 8 feet of water, only the top two feet were clear from weed.

Conventional set-ups meant the flies were constantly snagging the weed, but using the "Washing Line" method meant all flies were hung above the weed. The only problem was sorting out how to land some of these over-wintered 3lb plus rainbows once they were hooked!



#### Static Nymph fishing.

This is another method which has become synonymous with buzzer fishing and involves the slowest of slow retrieves. Sometimes the point fly actually sinks onto the bottom and the other flies are literally suspended through the various water levels.

Takes can be absolutely savage at times, but at others they are barely perceptible.

One way I like to "keep ahead of the rest", particularly in Competitions, is to watch the "Loop" for signs of a take. This method is similar to watching a Swingtip in coarse fishing and involves holding the rod tip about 2 feet above the surface of the water.

During a figure-of-eight retrieve, the loop of line from the rod tip to the water will fall and rise. When a fish takes the fly, the loop of line will visibly pull taught. Sometimes it will stay straight when it should have fallen slack. At other times, it will "flick" upwards as if someone has caught hold of the fly line and given it a sharp tug!

Whatever the degree of movement, the net result is the same - STRIKE! You will be amazed at how many fish you catch using this method, but even more amazed at all the fish you have unwittingly missed over the years!

#### Dries and Boobies.

Who would have thought that a method like dry fly fishing would be enhanced by a Booby? But at times, the combination

of a Booby on the top dropper and two dries on the Middle and Point fly positions is absolutely deadly!

The old method of pulling wets such as Soldier Palmers, Grenadiers and Wickhams through the wave has been superseded by the Booby and Dries combo. It works in two separate ways.

First, the dries - Hopper on the point and a Carrot Fly on the dropper - are cast ahead of the boat and left static for 5 seconds. If you do not get a take, instead of casting the dries to a new position, simply pull the flies back to the boat. The Booby will create a fantastic "wake" and the dries will fish sub surface behind this disturbance. Both rainbows and browns often find this combination too hard to resist.

The sight of a big, full finned Chew rainbow "bow waving" after the Booby before turning away and taking one of the Dries makes me ache to get back out on the water.

I hope that you too find the experience just as exciting in the coming season.

#### Tight Lines.

John Horsey

