

Why We Spey, the Way We Spey!

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So recently the Club held our third annual Spey competition. Had a ton of folks competing and I think I can safely say that a great time was had by all of the participants and attendees. If you were there I think you would agree and if you weren't...well, I think you missed out.

The nature of the competition, which is casting distance, is quite different from what you may have seen in single-hand events. Each competitor attempts to complete a maximum of twelve casts in six minutes; six over each shoulder and of those six, three with anchors on the left side (an anchor is that portion of the line on the water that helps load the rod through surface tension) and three on the right side. The best cast of each of those four scenarios (right shoulder/left anchor; right shoulder/right anchor; left shoulder/left anchor; left shoulder/right anchor) is added into a total and the person with the highest score wins. If you fail to make one good cast in any of these four categories you stand to lose up to 25% of your total score. Ouch!

A question I hear all the time is “*why do Spey casters **HAVE** to cast over both shoulders and why do they make all of those different casts?*” The answer is simple—it’s called wind. Spey lines are thick—usually much thicker than single-hand lines and they catch wind just like a sail and this can prove to be quite problematic.

In Spey casting we have six basic casts at our disposal to use, given the circumstances we find ourselves in while fishing. Doesn’t matter if it’s in a river, a lake, or even the surf, we use one of these six casts to deliver the fly and hopefully hook up. Two of these basic casts, the Roll Cast and Switch Cast, are more foundational and lack the ability to change direction—they cannot easily move the line and fly from a downstream position hanging in the current to a mid-river spot from which you can swing the fly and catch fish—therefore they are not used as much

when fishing except in slack water. In fact, the Roll Cast is actually the finish of all Spey casts. So, if you can’t Roll Cast you’re...well...let’s politely say you are going to have difficulties.

The choice of which one to use of the other four depends on the wind direction, and the equipment and system you are using. Let’s start with the single most important reason to choose one cast versus another: wind direction.

Of the six basic casts, four are change-of-direction casts. In one or two moves you can start the cast from a downstream position, cast and re-present your fly mid-river and start fishing on the swing. The four casts are the Double Spey, Snap T (or C), Snake Roll and Single Spey. These four casts can be classified into two different types—Sustained Anchor (two-part casts) and Kiss & Go (single move), and all of these casts are separated into two wind directions—downstream and upstream. Here’s how they break down:

	SUSTAINED ANCHOR	KISS & GO
DOWNSTREAM WIND:	Double Spey	Snake Roll
UPSTREAM WIND:	Snap T (or C)	Single Spey

Regardless of the strength of the wind, knowing and allowing for its direction is crucial in keeping you, the caster, safe and free from pain and personal damage. The point in using these different casts is to get the wind to blow your "D" Loop away from you, so that each cast places that loop (and your anchor on the water) on the downwind side of your body. This will save on the number of body piercings you receive that would be better done at a shop or booth in the mall...

Taking it a step further, the side of the river you are on will dictate the shoulder over which you make that cast. If you have a downstream wind you **NEED** to use either a Double Spey or a Snake Roll to re-present the fly. If you are River Right (the right side of the river looking downstream), that cast will be made over the right shoulder. If you are River Left, it would be made over the

left shoulder. With an Upstream Wind, it works similarly with the exception that the shoulder used is reversed. On River Right, you would use a Snap T (or C) or a Single Spey over your left shoulder, and on River Left, the cast would be over the right shoulder. So remember, wind direction dictates the cast; the side of the river you are on dictates the shoulder over which you make that cast.

Equipment and system choice will often, though not always, determine which type of cast to make. Those individuals competing in the tournament were primarily using Kiss & Go casts like the Snake Roll and Single Spey, which they knew would maximize distance. But they probably wouldn't use those same casts if, instead of a 15' rod, 70' line and floating leader with yarn, they were casting a 13' rod, 23' Skagit head and 15' of T14 sinking tip/leader with a bunny-strip Intruder fly and tungsten cone head.

Most likely, they'd choose a Sustained Anchor cast like the Double Spey or Snap T (or C). These types of casts are much more efficient to use with heavy equipment designed to fish deep. Only accomplished casters can manage a Kiss & Go cast with this type of equipment. It requires excellent timing, and patience, to master.

So there really is a method to the madness that you see when you watch someone Spey casting. You need to first consider the direction of the wind, then the side of the river you are fishing from as well as the type of equipment or system you are using **BEFORE** you make your mind up on which cast to make. If you don't, I hope you have someone with you to remove that large hook stuck in a delicate location...

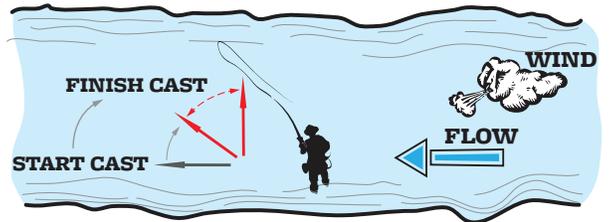
Tight lines but not too tight!

SPEY CASTS (AND WHEN TO MAKE THEM)

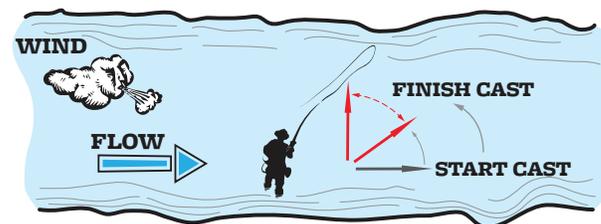
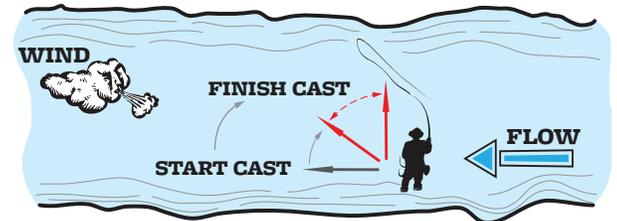
NOTE: River Left or River Right is determined by which side of the river you are on while facing downstream

RIVER LEFT

- SITUATION:** River Left
Downstream Wind
- CASTS:** Left-Hand Snake Roll
Left-Hand Double Spey

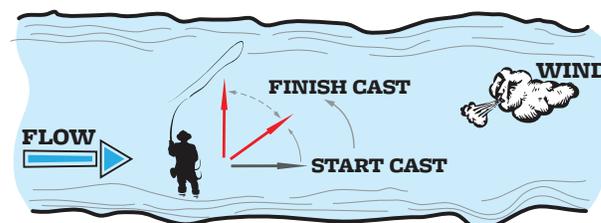


- SITUATION:** River Left
Upstream Wind
- CASTS:** Right-Hand Single Spey
Right-Hand Snap 'C'



RIVER RIGHT

- SITUATION:** River Right
Downstream Wind
- CASTS:** Right-Hand Snake Roll
Right-Hand Double Spey



- SITUATION:** River Right
Upstream Wind
- CASTS:** Left-Hand Single Spey
Left-Hand Snap 'C'