

## **A weekend with a guru. Ian Shaw**

Early in December I was lucky enough to attend a fly fishing instruction course run at Miena and Arthurs Lake by one of England's best competition fly fisherman, Martin Cottis. Martin had fished for many years in teams with the likes of John Horsey, Chris Ogborne and others who we read about so frequently in the Pommy magazines. Martin was also the coach of the Australian team by the Aussies when they competed in the U.K. Martin is also a prolific writer on fishing in the U.K. with a website publishing his 'column' weekly at [www.fishing.co.uk](http://www.fishing.co.uk). The articles he wrote of his experiences down here gives an interesting perspective into a visitor's view of Tassie fishing.

Pommy angling and in particular the competition scene is one where they need to go out and quickly and efficiently catch big numbers of fish. Martin acknowledged at the start that he believed the tactics were 'transferable' to Tassie, but some of the fly patterns would not be. Hindsight shows that he was very insightful.

I've split the weekend into 2 parts, the use of sinking lines and fishing with a floating line. It's interesting that a lot of very effective wet fly fishing is done with a floating line – more of that later.

### **Sinking lines**

4 is the bare minimum of sinking lines that Martin would consider taking out, they include:

- Neutral density or a 'slow' intermediate
- Intermediate
- Medium sink (DI3)
- Fast sink (DI7 – DI8).

Fishing in up to 3 meters of water, the maximum sink rate required is a DI3 because by the time you have 5 meters of leader out with the heaviest fly on the point, no matter how quickly you retrieve your flies are going to be scraping the bottom. This is interesting because it's rare for Tasmanians to fish in water any deeper than 3 meters. In fact it means that in all but the strongest winds a floating line is all that is required.

### **Mark lines**

Clearly mark what sink rate fly lines are, in competition fishing it's not unusual to frequently change lines and it's pain to switch to a DI8 instead of a 'slow' intermediate.

Also mark 10 – 12 foot and then 20 – 24 feet from end of line by using some tying silk and a small amount of head cement or varnish to create a little knobby bit on your fly line so you can easily feel when you have this amount of line out (more about this later, but it's a valuable tip.)

### **Leaders**

English anglers now routinely use Fluorocarbon leader material for all of their sinking line and wet fly fishing. The primary advantages being that they are so hard to see and they naturally sink, their down side is that knots do have to be done well and the line lubricated before tightening. He believes quite strongly that most of the cheaper 'fluoro' is better than the more expensive stuff. Martin's leaders are routinely 5 meters in length with a 35 – 40 cm dropper tied 2 meters from the fly line and another slightly shorter dropper another 2 meters down. This spread will force more weight on the point of the leader making turn over of the flies slightly easier. Breaking strain is the normal 6 – 8 lbs. Martin does not use a poly or braided leader believing that they make casting too difficult. He has a loop on the end of his flyline enabling him to very quickly change leaders. He keeps a number of leaders rolled around small beer coasters in his bag ready for use so he doesn't need to tie new ones from scratch should he lose a leader.

### **Fly position**

The basic premise is that the heaviest fly is on the point, with the lightest or bushiest on the bob. If you are using a team of 3 Scuds or Nymphs, this means that the fly with the heaviest hook is on the point.

### **To fish sinking lines**

Cast out and give 2 good strips to straighten the line and cast. Keeping pace with the drift of the boat by using a figure of eight retrieve or in other words you are keeping in 'touch' with your flies, but not actually retrieving them whilst 'counting them down'. Start with a 5 second count, try 6 casts. If no luck, try a 10 count for 6 casts, then 15 count, etc etc. If and when you starting getting strikes remember the count and fish to that count or try fine-tuning that count by 1 or 2 seconds. You are

trying to find the band or depth at which trout are feeding. This was a valuable lesson from Martin. We were fishing at Arthurs on a windswept, crappy day, the sort of day when you would normally not go out. Martin stated he would keep casting until he started to catch fish and then he would target them at this depth. There was never any doubt in his mind that he was going to catch a good number of fish once he found the depth, and he did this in a 30-minute stint!!

### **Styles of retrieves**

A steady figure of eight with an occasional stop and occasional twitch is the best general retrieve.

- Boobies are best fished with a 'twitchy' retrieve
- Nymphs are fished best with a steady retrieve

The roly-poly was considered to be the quickest retrieve, this involved putting your rod under your armpit and use your hands to retrieve line with a quick, steady rate.

The 'non-retrieve' is handy for nymphs where you cast them out and then retrieve the line at the same rate as the boat drift. This method can be deadly on Arthurs using Scud or Nymphs.

### **The lift and hang**

When flies are fished from a drifting boat, there comes a time when they must start lifting up towards the rod tip. The time that this occurs will depend on a number of factors including sink rate of line and drift rate of boat, this rise of the team of flies is a prime time for a strike. Roughly speaking this point is when 20 – 24 (keeping in mind this means that there is 8 plus meters out in possibly 2 – 3 meters of water) feet of fly line is out. (Remember my earlier comment about marking your lines)

The hang is when the flies are directly below you, roughly 10 – 12 feet of fly line out, stop retrieving, let the flies hang, if there is the slightest of movements on the fly line, strike.

Let the flies 'hang' at both the 10 – 12 foot mark and 20 – 24 foot mark for as long as you can bear it or until the boat over-runs the line.

### **Flies for wet fly fishing**

Martin prefers to use heavier gauge hooks, rather than using led to weight flies, thereby ensuring the bodies of most wets are tied slim.

#### Buzzers

On a "shrimp" hook like a Kamasan B100 or heavier B110.

In small sizes use pheasant tail fibres, goose wing fibres (biots) etc.

Most English Buzzers are now tied using flexible rubber floss (Uni makes a good one called Uni Flexx).

Try using two different coloured flexi-floss to form a very natural Buzzer pattern.

The thorax is merely a slightly wider wrap than the body and a dab of T-shirt paint (from Spotlight) on both sides of the thorax to create highly prominent wing buds.

#### Glues

Also known as superglue buzzers.

Same hooks as for the buzzers.

Simple silk body of the colour of the natural i.e. red, black, dark brown

Fine silver or gold rib.

Build up the thorax with extra wraps of silk and then add T-Shirt paint of goose biots for cheeks.

Add a couple of layers of super glue or Loon soft body

#### Other specific patterns

The Medicine. A small shrimp hook with a thin body made from wrapped stripped peacock herl, thorax of peacock herl with cheeks of Glo-Brite no. 7 (a yellowish colour).

Diawl Bachs. A nymph of brown cock fibres for a tail, peacock herl body, red wire ribbing, a brown hackle 'beard' and either jungle cock or holographic red tinsel as cheeks.

Pheasant Tail and Hare's Ear Nymphs. Tied in the traditional fashion, they are considered to be the best representation of the natural nymph. Use 6 strands of pheasant tail for a thick pattern, 2 for a thin buzzer style.

Bloodworms. A larval stage of the buzzer tied on very heavy shrimp style hooks using silk of various colours.

Lures. As per our normal of Yeti, Cat Fly, Alexandra, Mallard and Claret, Robin etc etc

Boobies. Boobies are reasonable well known to Tassie fishermen, but their use can't be overestimated because they cause the team of flies to rise up through the water column. The booby may not take a fish but their action on the team will often lead to a strike. A Booby tied on the point will cause the other 2

flies to remain well up the water column. A Booby tied as a 'bob' will allow the other 2 flies to sink to a reasonable depth.

Blobs. They are the new rage with the competition anglers in the U.K. and there is some talk about banning them. They are tied by cramming on as much Fritz or Estasz on to a hook and using marabou as a tail. The best colours in the U.K. are orange and then black, I'd like to try the Sunset Fly colours on the 'bows in 'the Dee'. The best method to fish a Blob is to use either a 'Roly-Poly' or 'Rutland' retrieve.

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