

Buying a rod by Ian Shaw

One of the biggest purchases when buying fishing gear is buying a fly fishing rod. Top line rods now retail at over \$1,000, with some way in excess of that figure so it pays to be fussy and thorough in your selection.

The first step is to work out for what you're going to use the rod. What weight rod, is it to be used only in the Tyenna casting short distances under a tree canopy where a short 6', 3 weight is ideal. Is the rod to be used for back packing trip to the 'far' western lakes casting big wets in big winds, a situation where a 3 or 4 piece, 9' 6-7 weight would be ideal. Will it be used to dabble 3 flies across the surface at Arthur's from a boat, a use where a 10' 6 weight, 2 piece would be best.

The next step is work out a budget, sure it would be wonderful to get a 9' 6 weight B L Winston "Traditional", but can you really justify to yourself the \$1,600 price tag? Keep in mind that price tag does not necessary indicate how good a rod is to you. I can't over emphasise this, the big price tags are an indication of a quality rod with highest quality fittings NOT that it's the best rod for your casting action or style of fishing.

Generally 'custom built' rods are cheaper than factory rods. These rods are made to the factory recipe in Australia and are cheaper primarily because of the reduction in import duties etc.

Every chance you get, have a cast of rods belonging to mates and other members. This trialing of a bunch of different rods will enable you to work out what sort of action rod you prefer.

Most of the big rod manufacturers like Sage, Hardy, Scott, Loomis and Redington have rods that have different speeds or characteristics. Sage for example has a reasonably soft or slow rod they call a "Discovery Series", a quicker "VPS", an even quicker "SLT", a very quick stiff rod called an "XP" and ultimately the "TCR" which are only suited to the very best of casters. Redington are the same, they have a range of rods. It's not to say that one is better than another, but one is more suited to a particular casting action and fishing style.

All because some one else likes or dislikes a particular rod doesn't make a rod more or less suited to you.

The issue of warranties relating to rods is confusing. Some manufacturers offer a life time unconditional warranty, with the aid of a car door turn your 2 piece pride and joy into 7 piece and the manufacturer will replace it. The only cost being affray the costs he's picked by couriering the broken one to the manufacturer or the local rep and then paid to have the replacement sent here. That's normally around \$40. Scott, Sage, Reddington, Winston, Thomas and Thomas have this warranty. Most manufacturers now are pedantic in that they only cover the original purchaser. Custom built rods by these manufacturers also extends only to the blank. Break a custom built Sage, Sage will supply a new blank, and the custom building fees are up to you to pick up. Loomis has a program where if you break a section, they will replace it for \$100. Innovator has a different type of warranty again.

The next step is to have a look around the stores to see what's held in stock at the moment. If you're particularly interested in looking at a 'G Scott Sage' and it's not there, mention it to Steve and co. at the Fishing Connection or Greg and co at Bridges. Next time they do an order, they'll try and order one in for you to have a look at.

Given the cost of rods, the stores find it hard to hold a big array in stock. Just think, how would you like to order 50 rods from Sage at \$US700 each? Aussie stores can't afford to hold a big range.

Another way to look at this issue is that what you see on the racks is less than 10% of what's available, ask the guys.

All right, you've pretty much got it sorted out in your own mind what you want. It's time to get serious.

Go to the shops and borrow a couple of rods and take them for a cast. The major things the shops will want from you is a commitment that you'll take care of them, put some plastic over the cork grips so you don't stain the cork and definitely DON'T take 'em fishing, cast them only on grass.

The other courtesy when you trial rods is not to have them for too long. Don't grab 'em at 9am so you can try them that night, pick them up later in the day, even if you have to ring the boys and ask them to stay open later for 10 minutes to give you a chance to come in.

If you're a 'regular' the shop will have no worries about giving you several thousand dollars worth of rods to try.

Have a talk with the guys in the store; explain what sort of action rod you want and then trial several options. Don't take too many; you'll only confuse your self. For the same reasons don't have a mate try the rods with you, what is ideal for the mate isn't necessarily ideal for you.

After you've made a decision and handed over the plastic, just add water and have fun!

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