

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF DRY CASTING IN AUSTRALIA

The East Coast of South Africa and the East and West Coasts of Australia are in many ways very similar. Both are washed by a warm current and many species of fish are common to both. It is for these reasons that "S.A. Fishing" looks into the development of casting techniques in Australia through one of our overseas correspondants.

As there are many protruding rocky headlands and long ocean beaches, fishermen in Australia realise the need to be able to handle their tackle well in order to fish effectively. The major skill required is being able to cast accurately and with good distance. Much of the beach fishing requires long casts to be made out to the back of gutters formed by offshore sandspits. Techniques used for rock fishing often require whole unweighted baits to be cast well out to rocky outcrops where large fish wait for their feed to come into the broken water.

Fishermen in increasing numbers are realising the need to be able to cast well and more interest is being shown in dry casting competitions. The carry over to the practical fishing situation of knowledge gained from dry casting is very obvious to those who participate in both. Quite a lot of competitive fishing is done in Australia and those with good casting and tackle handling skills are those most often to succeed.

For about thirty years the Australian Casting Association has united a small number of clubs throughout the country. Some of the initial dry casting events had no relationship to practical fishing and it was difficult to get a large number of people to participate. Unrestricted events allowing the use of a strong throwing leader running onto very fine line were popular only with a few dedicated casters. These events have now been phased out and only one A.C.A. event now permits the use of a leader.

Each year the Casting Association conducts the Australian Casting Championship at Canberra, the Nation's Capital.

The events contested are:-

1. Artificial Bait Accuracy
2. 56g (2oz) Fixed spool distance
3. 56g (2oz) Revolving spool distance
4. 112g (4oz) Distance
5. Spinner distance
6. Artificial bait distance

All events are level line (i.e. the same thickness of line used from the initial tie to the end of the cast) except for No. 5. This event uses a 112g keel shaped spinner, (minus hooks) a leader and a minimum sized running line of 0.31mm.

There is no restriction placed on the use of rods. Reels are optional except for the two 56g events which separate fixed and revolving spool reels.

The artificial bait rig consists of a 112g sinker, and from it, a dropper attached to a piece of wooden dowel 9cm long and 13mm thick is tied. This "bait" although only light restricts considerably the distance the sinker would otherwise be cast.

The accuracy event is cast at 4 targets ranging up to 90 metres. The aim is to land the weight as close to the base of the target as possible. A tape marked in decreasing numbers swivels from the base of the target as a radius. This is used to measure the score at the point where the weight actually lands.

Many of the traditional casting methods are now changing. New comers to competitive casting have experimented with rods, reels and techniques. Revolving spool reels were almost exclusively used but now many more people are successfully competing with side-cast reels. A big percentage of the fishing done along the Australian coast is with sidecast reels. Because of the successes in the casting championships with these reels a flood of sidecast competitors is appearing on the casting scene. The highly specialised types of casting tackle have mostly disappeared and the average fisherman now feels that he can effectively compete using his sidecast fishing tackle.

A big boost to the casting scene came in 1975 when the Australian Anglers' Association introduced dry casting for State teams and individuals. These events are held in conjunction with the A.A.A. Convention and fishing championships held in a different State every 2 years. The events were designed so that average fishing tackle could be used with emphasis placed on accuracy and consistency. Attendance at these conventions can be up to 800 and competition is extremely keen. One accuracy and two distance events are cast. The team and individual results are worked out on a percentage of the best score. The percentage totals of the three events are then added together.

The distance events are cast on a V court 40 metres wide at 100 metres. As each competition has 2 casts in each of the distance events and both casts count in his score, it is essential that the casts be reasonably straight in order to land in the V court.

In these events sidecast reels are used almost exclusively. The caster brings the rod through a vertical plane thus ensuring the cast is straight. The movement is simple and easy to learn. The rod is swung through an arc of one hundred and eighty degrees from a point directly behind the caster and parallel to the ground, to a similar position in front of the caster. The learner should start the cast with both arms extended fully so that the rod is above the head and held steady, parallel to the ground. As the forward thrust is made the left arm pulls the rod butt downwards and towards the left side of the body, while the right arm pushes the rod forward.

The point at which the line is released by the thumb is reached as the rod is just past the vertical stage. At this stage the rod tip is bent back because of the resistance of the weight. The timing of the release is something the caster feels after practice. The rod is loaded ready to recoil and the line must be

released to coincide with the rod tip's forward movement.

If in the initial learning stages of casting the weight goes too high, the release has been made too soon. If the line release is made too late the weight will not gain sufficient height and will not travel any distance.

As the caster becomes more skilled using the sidecast reel, the style may be changed slightly so that the rod is brought more over the shoulder. This allows more weight and thrust from the shoulder to be put into the cast. When fishing from the beach many fishermen move forward down the beach when the cast is made. This forward body movement has also been used by many competitive casters. Some have developed a full run somewhat like the approach made by a javelin thrower.

This method of casting once mastered allows very light lines to be used. Casts using 56g (2oz) of 166 metres (180 yds) have been made with the sidecast using only 0.25mm (6lb) line. With 112g (2oz) weights, 0.30mm (9lb) line has been used to throw over 182 metres (200 yds). With the development of rods into new materials like carbon fibre and more efficient tapers, these casts are sure to be bettered.

The simplicity of the sidecast reel is such that a beginner can immediately learn to use one effectively. Given half an hour the average person can be taught to cast over 100 metres. This means instant fishing, and while good casting doesn't necessarily mean good catches it certainly can be an advantage when fish are scarce.

- PHOTOS -
- (9.5 x 12cms)
1. Reel is turned to casting position
  2. Position to commence cast
  3. Position at finish of cast
  4. Reel turned to fishing position
- (16.5 x 21.5 cms)
1. Shows desired rod "action" during cast
  2. Finish of same cast