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**Quality Matters in Fly Reels**

**By Brett Fogle**

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Like everything else in this world, quality matters when trout fishing. If all you will ever do is fish for small trout and pan fish, virtually any cheap fly reel will work just fine. In these situations, all a reel really does is to serve as a place to hold fly line. And even a cheap reel does this task ok.

Unfortunately, this all changes once you get a large fish on the other end of your fly line. If the fly reel you are using is not well made with precision parts, the line will come out with uneven tension or the fly reel may seize up altogether. The reason cheap fly reels are inexpensive is because of what is inside them. Most cheap reels have the cheapest types of parts that can be found. These parts break when least desirable and wear out very quickly. Remember, a fly reel has moving parts inside it. A cheap fly reel will quickly begin to wear out, often only after a year or two of moderate fishing. And it can fail miserably if you get a large fish on the end of the line.

A high quality fly reel will truly last a lifetime. A good quality fly reel, while it may not last a lifetime, will last many, many years and will provide reliable duty in the field. A very high quality fly reel will run around two hundred dollars or more. A good quality fly reel will be in the hundred-dollar range. A cheap fly reel will be less than fifty dollars. To me, at least, it makes sense to spend a little bit more now so that you don't end up having to buy another reel two years down the road or to have a fishing trip ruined by malfunctioning gear.

Another thing to keep in mind about fly reels is how resistant they are to corrosion. While this is vitally important in saltwater fishing, it is still important in freshwater fishing. A cheap fly reel has often nothing more than a cheap coat of paint on it that soon wears off. Once that's gone the reel will frequently start developing rust spots, among other things. A very high quality fly reel will resist all forms of rust and corrosion.

We're now familiar with quality issues on fly reels and you should be familiar with the different types of drag systems on a fly reel. Armed with that knowledge, it is time to move on to the type of retrieve a fly reel offers.

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### **Choosing A Fly Reel**

**By Cameron Larsen**

Selecting a fly reel for trout fishing has become, like many things in fly fishing, a somewhat unnecessarily complicated adventure. The problem is, reels have gotten so well-made, so functional, that you almost have to know what you are looking for. In the old days, reels held the line, your spare hand was the drag, and that was it. Tippets almost always broke when fighting an unusually large trout, and the rare one you did haul in was a great cause for celebration.

Well things are different today. Drag systems have changed, there are retrieve ratios (always buy 1:1 for trout), and everyone carries around an extra spool or two to change lines when conditions change. As is the nature of all information posted on the Big Y Fly Co. web site, we are here to try to simplify the whole thing.

### **Fly Reels Function**

First, lets start off with the function of the reel. Well the first thing a fly reel was ever designed to do, was to hold the line. Keep it in a nice, convenient, compact location, where we can strip it out as we need. Then we wanted the reel to 'reel' in the line preferably with a fish on, but also without. Guess what, almost every fly reel out there will do these things to satisfaction. The ultra cheap models, have lots of imperfections that cause the line to get caught up in the housing of the reel, and with a fish on a light tippet you will end up being frustrated in no time. The ultra cheap models will also in no time cease to work altogether, forcing you to pony up more dough and thereby negating the only advantage the ultra cheap model had to begin with. In short, stay away from the ultra cheap models.

### Fly Reel Drag

After the original function of the fly reel has been satisfied, the next thing to look at is drag. The drag is the fly reel's system for applying pressure to the fly line, so when you get that big fish, the fish has to work to pull the line out. A good drag will do just that, provide even tension the whole time. There are two types of drag out there, 'spring and pawl', and 'disc drag.' Fly reel companies all over have been bragging about the disc drag, it works like the disc braking system in a car. The disc drag system is THE system of choice for large game fish, from large trout on up. But I frankly prefer the spring and pawl system for 90% of my trout fishing, because it is smoother. Less likely to snap off a 6x tippet when the hooked trout makes a sudden change of direction. So in my humble opinion, if fishing a 5 wt or lighter, don't forget about the good old spring and pawl. Although it is getting harder to find in a quality reel, it is still out there.

### Fly Reel Size and other Considerations

This used to be fairly automatic. Match the weight of the rod with the reel, and the line. This is still true today. Although many manufacturers now tout the weight of the fly reels, and the less fatigue you will have after a day of fishing. I am skeptical that a couple of ounces of weight from the fly reel will make that much difference to your fatigue factor. Although I do agree, that the 'feel' should be correct, and if

possible try out your fly reel on your rod before purchasing. Or if you purchase the reel from the same manufacturer as your rod, they should be counter balance each other, and the 'feel' should be perfect.

Another size consideration is arbor size. Even on trout reel 5 wt. or less, large arbor reels are available. Large arbor reels store the line in larger coils, thereby minimizing line memory, which allows for longer casting. They also increase drag consistency, since the spool isn't spinning as often, a very nice benefit when using the disc drag reel. And the retrieve rate is faster than standard reels as well.

One last consideration is ease of spool changes, most moderate to expensive fly reels now all are easy to switch out spools, so you can switch from floating to sinking line, or what ever changes you like to make. But it doesn't hurt to try it out before purchasing, and also check to see how much spare spools are, while you're at it.

### Summary

Fly reels, like all aspects of fly fishing has come along way, in functionality, specialization, and price. Although due to improved manufacturing techniques, it is still possible to get a decent fly reel for about 100 bucks. You also can spend a small fortune, to decorate your fly fishing ensemble as well. As for brands, I recommend sticking to the major names, and review the warranties offered. The bigger names will be around, and the extra spools will be available for many years to come. Don't forget craftsmanship, Cabela's for one, puts it's name on some reels that really don't pass the muster. Although their mid-range reels are some of my favorites. I have liked every Orvis reel I ever fished, and there are many other names out there to choose from. All things being equal choose the one whose 'feel' you like the best. Then you should be happy with your purchase for years to come.

## Quality Matters in Fly Reels

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Choosing A Fly Reel

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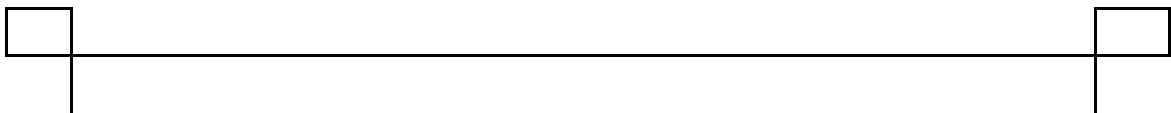
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