

ROD BUILDING 107B

BY LARRY LEE

Rod Building 107 B — Guides—General

This is the second of three articles covering guide sizing and spacing on a blank. How important is this subject, really, when considering optimal performance of your rod?

Recently, I put out a question on a popular chat room on the internet asking if anyone knew anything about fly guide sizes and spacing. I received one useful response from Bill Kiene of Kiene's Fly Shop saying: "I was on Christmas Island with the Sage Rod Company party and head rod designer Jerry Siem had brought some prototype rods for everyone to cast. We used a different one each day and after the test we asked him if they were all different tapers we were casting. He said "No, they were just different guide sets and spacings." I would not have believed it."

Mr. Kiene also stated, "Steve Rajeff of G. Loomis and Jerry Siem of Sage said that it is okay to copy their guide sizes and spacing because they have already spent thousands of hours developing them with many world class fly casters over the years. In most cases with high-end rods, it is best to copy their selection of sizes and styles of guides and the spacing for their blanks. Be sure to make your wraps and amount of epoxy very similar too, if you don't want to take any chances."

I fully concur with Mr. Kiene regarding his recommendations.

However, is that all you need to know? Since I have a passion for rod building, and because of the training I received in becoming a Civil Engineer, I usually wonder why and how things work structurally and scientifically. **For me, the answer to the above question is no! I hope the answer is the same for you!**

I have read through various books, researched articles on the internet, conversed with club members, and experimented with the information I have found. I would like to share with you the rather interesting results of these labors.

There are two basic types of fly fishing casting:

1) A one-handed cast using one hand on the rod for front casting and back casting, and 2) a two-handed (spey) type that uses two hands on the rod.

The guides in the one-handed casting type must allow the line to slip through in both directions with very little resistance. Tip-top, snake and stripping guides must be sized to be large enough and spaced approximately to accomplish minimal resistance. When fighting fish, the guides must be spaced so that the rod does not receive too much stress in any one location to cause the rod to break at that location. After considering guide spacing and guide sizes, we have to determine the right number of guides, not too many, and not too few.

Guides in the two-handed casting type must allow the line to slip through in both directions, but more resistance may be allowed (smaller guides) because the line is not constantly passing in both directions as the one-handed method. When fighting a fish with two-handed rods, guides must also be spaced so that the rod does not receive too much stress in any one location to cause the rod to break at that location.

The next rod building article will provide more in-depth ways of selecting guide sizes and guide spacing for your new rod.

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