

## Reels

By Kevin Brennan

I had a good buddy, who just happens not to be a fly fisherman, ask me about the sport while watching me study the latest catalog. He asked, "How do you get the fish in once you hook it?" I told him that most of the fish around here I just strip in. Then he asked, "How do you get in the trout that you catch?" At the time the biggest trout I had caught was a whopping 13". So my answer again was "I just strip them in."

He asked "Well, then which reel would I need to fish around here?" I pointed to the six wt., which was a steal at a mere \$300. Once again, I got a puzzled look. "You are going to pay three hundred bucks for something to hold your line after you finish fighting him with your hand? Couldn't you just use a toilet paper holder? That would be cheaper!"

Now I had the puzzled look. He was right. People love shiny cool looking things. That is what sells reels. But like my friend brought to my attention, all they do is hold your line while you fight the fish with your hand most of the time. Now I am not saying that you don't need big reels that have truck stopping drag systems. But, for most of us in most fishing situations, all you need is a place to hold your line from one hole to the next, and, on rare occasions, to help in the fighting of a fish. I am the type of guy that likes solid things (with my kids they have to be). I have never been one to have something just because it has somebody's name on it or it's the cool thing to have. I try to

make sure that all my gear is very utilitarian. It needs to last and it needs to work. I am willing to pay for a solid reel, but not a trendy one. I think that you could place the reels that you need into three different groups.

### **The Pan Fish or Small Stream**

**Reel:** This reel needs to be light and small - a pawl drag system is fine. The body material is not that important. It could be stamped, forged or machined. For all intended purposes, this is a line holder with limited drag use.

**The Bass & Lake Reel:** This reel can still have a pawl drag, but I would think of moving up to a disc drag system. Your primary target fish would be Big Bass, Pike and Musky. As for body and spool material, you could still use stamped metal, but again I would opt to move up to forged, if not machined construction. With this reel the drag will become more of a needed option to fight a fish.

**The Big Mean Fish Reel:** OK, this is the one that can end up hurting the bank account. Disc drag is a must. You need to be able to stop big fish that have one purpose and that would be to empty your reel as fast as possible. You can always tell the guys who thought that he could palm a 30 lb. salmon. He will be the one that has a half-moon burn in the middle of his hand. The fish that you need this type of reel for are Salmon, Big Pike or Musky, or just about anything that swims in saltwater. You need a machined reel because, if there is a weak spot in it, they will find it. Also, you

need to be aware of the finish of the reel. Saltwater can turn a nice reel into a useless pile of junk in no time. If you think you might someday fish salt, get a finish that will stand up to it. I did not mention any names of any reel companies because I don't want to get into an argument over whether or not a reel is worth the price. I do feel that you get what you pay for, but you may not need what you are paying for. I just want you to think about what you really need in a reel, instead of what you want. I too like shiny cool looking reels, but to keep from getting that puzzled look from your non-fly fishing friends or that other look from your wife when she finds the receipt for your new reel. Remember, the fish don't care what is on

*"I try to make sure that all my gear is very utilitarian. It needs to last and it needs to work"*

