



Tips & Techniques

Mainline choice and heavy leader to mainline connections for GT casting re-visited



After having headed fishing charters in different countries for more than 10 years, I personally and the team at GFA have seen well over a few thousand anglers from across the globe, who have used a multitude of different brands and types of braided mainline along with various techniques to join mainline and leader for GT casting. A prime reason we all love fishing so much is that you don't always win and you keep learning as you go along, the angler who does not adapt his equipment and techniques will not progress as much as one who does and is prepared to innovate. While we all agree that the mainline has to be braided for GT fishing there is a debate as to whether to use hollow over non-spliceable braided mainline and a greater debate more importantly on which knot or method is best to connect the mainline to the heavy leader we need to use if there is going to be any hope of landing a good sized GT.

Back in the late 1990's I personally lost my fish (Mahseer) of a lifetime because I let someone else tie a knot for me and since then have taken it upon myself

to learn my knots and improve them for the best results possible.

Hollow braid- Is it better?

Having used both hollow (or spliceable) and non-spliceable braids from various manufacturers let us look at whether the extra cost of splice-able hollow braid is actually justified.

Given that braided lines have almost zero stretch, the amount of shock load coming into the whole system is very large at high drag settings demanded by GT anglers. In this respect, the normally higher number of fibers woven together into the tubular structure of hollow braid, is more likely to survive the shock load if it is slightly damaged or has a weak spot as compared to non spliceable braided line. (Damage or weak spots can occur during manufacture or from abrasion by various means such as from your gloved casting finger contacting the same point of the line and damage during fishing from rubbing structure or from fish teeth



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The tubular structure of hollow braid versus the multi stand non-spliceable braided line viewed from the front.

(e.g. Long toms) or tail flukes (e.g Giant Trevally) from the fish coming into contact with the line).

Prolonged exposure to sunlight can also damage braided lines and once this happens it will part randomly and at the least expected moments such as on the strike, leaving the angler in most cases bewildered as to what is going on and or assuming a huge fish lost!! In most cases the sun damage is only to the exposed part of the line or your casting length i.e. 50-70 meters. In the case of sliceable braided line you can cut off the offending end and splice in a new one leaving your line with a seamless 100% connection, with non-spliceable line you have to trash the lot and get a new spool of line.

Many claim that non-spliceable lines cast further and is of smaller diameter which allows for better and more line being spooled onto the reel. While this may be true the difference in my opinion is negligible and nothing that cannot be compensated with more elbow grease in your casts or at the time of line spooling.

Having used both extensively there is no doubt in my mind that for top water GT fishing hollow spliceable braid comes out tops over woven non spliceable braid. This is simply because it does not burst on impact under high loads and of course it's very nice to be able to just

splice in a bit of new line to replace a damaged section without replacing the line with a brand new 300 yard spool. This in my opinion does more that justify the few extra dollars you pay at purchase.

The leader knot debate – Our Take

Coming back to best way to join a mainline to a leader debate, there are many ways to do this and all of them do work if properly tied, there is no question about that. However, while they all land big fish, we will look at some of the factors that contribute to usability and the advantage and disadvantages associated with a few of the most commonly used connections, we end with our opinion of the most suitable to land big fish based on our experience in this field.

Factors that determine usability and selection of the leader knot

We have put down what we think is important to consider in your choice of connection for leader to mainline below:

1 Ease of tying

How easy is the knot to tie on a moving boat? (In the excitement of knowing the bite is on and you need to get your lure back in the water asap). Do you need any special tools to tie your knot? Nothing beats a healthy amount of practice so please make sure you are completely familiar with how to use tools (if required) and make a perfect knot, knowing that it will stand up to whatever stress you can load it with. You fish better knowing you have full confidence in your equipment.

2 Wind knots / ring wraps when casting

It's a simple concept that the leader because of its larger diameter travels slower through the air than the smaller diameter braided mainline which a lot of anglers don't fully understand, so the longer your leader length inside the rod guides the more chance for the for the braided mainline to travel faster and over take the leader before it exists the tip guide of the rod. This is the main cause for wind knots and line wrap around the rod guides, couple this with the fact that you have just launched a lure weighing over 100 grams



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in weight at high speed, it's very easy for this to result in damaged line or worse still broken rod guides.

3 Recommended length of leader

A large GT is upwards of 1.20 meters and we have landed them up to 1.65 meters long, while we are mainly concerned with the frontal end of the Geet which is formidable by any standards, there are razor sharp flukes just forward of the tail on either side, these in contact with your leader or mainline can damage or even cut through either. There is also less stretch, the shorter the leader (see point 5 for more information). To be safe (you are never completely safe till the fish is boated!!) in case you get some abrasion damage we would recommend a leader between 2 to 2.5 meters long. Your leader length outside the rod tip also has to be correct to enable both snap casting and distance casts when required. In this case as well the 2 to 2.5 meter leader length holds good.

4 Casting Distance

Being able to get your lure into the most likely looking spot accurately and quickly is of paramount importance, distance does matter and the heavier your setup the greater the effort required by you to cast further. A thicker leader and knot is less aerodynamic and will not cast as far, but not by much and we could go as far as to say by 5% less tops, a competent angler can make up for this with better casting technique and by using lures that are less wind resistant. Having said the above a bulkier leader to mainline connection will cast shorter than a streamlined one, however a personal opinion would be to go for the heaviest combination of strength and functionality.

5 Suitability on GT over 30 kg

Giant Trevally is a brutal fish and it has not earned its reputation by leading a peaceful existence, when they get to and over 30 kilos in weight the fun starts. There is the tremendous force by which they normally crash a big lure with every intention to kill it instantly and the powerful runs and intense head shakes that make up the initial fight, this is followed by the Geet getting sideways in the latter part of the fight to maximize the water resistance to enable it to stay deep. Considering the above with heavy mainline (i.e. PE 8 and over) and

a thick heavy leader i.e. 200 lb., there is very little stretch or shock absorption in the system, this creates a load capable of bursting the mainline or opening the strongest and largest of hooks, so any leader line connection has to have both strength and the ability to act as a shock absorber.



Big Giant Trevally like this beast here will test you and your tackle to the limit.

6 Appearance & looks

This one is for those select anglers who insist on the neatest possible connection, perfectly tied knots are great to look at and involve skill at tying consistently, especially on a moving boat. Fishing is a sport for pleasure and we would like any angler to enjoy their experience, being comfortable with and enjoying using your equipment is an important factor on any fishing trip.



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Heavy Mainline to Leader connections from Left to Right twisted leader with spliced loop, FG knot, PR knot and Albright knot

As stated earlier there are many different connections and all of them do work, we have evaluated the most commonly seen knots and their variants based on our experience and personal opinion put them into an easy to view table.

Here is our evaluation in order of preference with a maximum possible rating of 5 Stars

Knot Name	Ease of tying	Resistance to wind knotting	Meets required length	Casting Distance	Suitability (big GT)	Appearance & looks	Overall Rating
Splice & Twisty	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	4.5 ★
FG Knot	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	4.0 ★
PR Knot	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	4.0 ★
Yucatan	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	3.5 ★
Albright	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	3.5 ★



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Useful Tips to cast better and land more fish

- Inspect your line, leader and knot frequently, check your lure and terminals too, if you have any doubt cut and re-tie or change your setup.
- Look for small wind knots especially if you have to cast into the wind
- Do not overfill your reel spool
- If you take a few casts into the wind cast downwind and reel in fast to repack your line on the spool before casting upwind again.

Tight lines and good luck

Darran Davis