



THE WORLD'S LIGHTEST FLY ROD AWAITS YOUR BEST CAST

By Tom Rosenbauer

Two years ago, we set out to make the lightest fly rod in the industry. Part of the problem was that graphite fiber technology, at least the fiber that can be used in a premium fly rod, just has not changed much in the past few years.

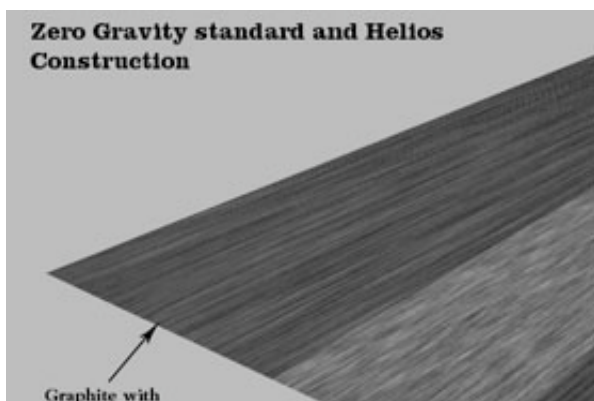
But we have a number of new rod designers in our rod shop, young guys who look at things differently than older, more traditional designers. They knew that all the action in composite design is not in fiber technology but in the prepreg and scrim technology—in other words, the stuff that holds the graphite fibers together and the material that gives a finished rod hoop strength, or resistance to crushing. If you can lessen the amount of graphite fiber you need by using improved resin systems, and if you can use a lighter scrim and less of it, you can design a fly rod with less weight.



And this is exactly what they did. Now scrim is pretty un-sexy stuff. All it does is to keep the hollow graphite tube used to construct a rod from collapsing under the pressure of a long cast or a big fish. Unidirectional graphite fiber can't do that by itself. In ordinary graphite fly rods the scrim is made from fiberglass, which is heavier, less expensive, and not as stiff as graphite. In Zero Gravity fly rods, the fiberglass scrim was replaced by graphite scrim with an epoxy binder, which allowed us to use less material and thus make a much lighter rod.

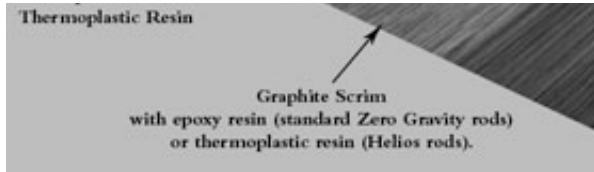
New Technology from the Space Satellite Industry

Building upon our Zero Gravity's exclusive thermoplastic resin technology, which is stronger and lighter than the epoxy resins used to make traditional fly rods, the designers found an exciting new scrim in the space satellite industry. This unidirectional graphite scrim with a thermoplastic binder gives us the same strength in our rods, but uses much less material. We reduced the weight on our new Heliosblanks by 25% less than our already lightweight Zero Gravity blanks. Then the rod team designed, from scratch, new reel seats that would keep the 25% weight reduction throughout the entire rod.



So, they came up with the lightest rod we've ever designed. I was pretty excited. Lighter rods are more fun and less tiring, but could this really make someone cast better or put a fly someplace they never could before?

New Design Coupled with New Technology



Then I got a chance to cast one of these rods. “Whoa,” I thought. “This is an amazingly light rod and it wiggles nice, but this thing feels *really* different.” And it wasn’t just the weight. When I asked Andy Stone and Frank Hoard, the new designers, and Jim Logan, VP and

head engineer in our rod shop, I found out why. The new material had given them the opportunity to take advantage of a new taper, a steeper and faster taper that was not stiffer, just more responsive and powerful.

Accuracy and Control for Freshwater Casting

So these Helios rods were fun on the casting pond. What would they feel like in real fishing conditions? I took a 4-weight to the Delaware River for trout fishing and tried it over some of the snottiest brown trout I’ve ever tangled with. That rod would put the fly just where I wanted it to go, almost like ESP. I took a 9-foot, 5-weight to Idaho’s South Fork, and the most amazing aspect of the rod’s performance was that I could switch from pounding the banks with size 8 Chernobyl Ants and then switch to tossing PMDs over finicky cutthroats on 6X with the same rod—and it still maintained the same control and accuracy in both cases.

Power for Casting Large Flies for Saltwater

Then I took a 10-weight striper fishing for big June fish on Cape Cod. It handled big stripers and big poppers in the wind like nothing I’d ever used, and after 10 hours of casting, my arm was not the slightest bit tired. The 10-weight then came along with me to Rhode Island in search of small bluefin tuna in August. The bluefins were not around, but the rod helped me make some quick, precise long casts into the wind for some nice bonito that were blowing up the surface but only gave you a few seconds to make a presentation before they steamed away.

Our testers have had the rods on trout all over the world, tarpon, snook, bonefish, redfish, and many other species. The universal reaction is that for hardcore anglers who fish on the edge and demand the most out of their equipment, Helios sets the standard for the next generation of graphite fly rods. Personally, I think they’ll make plain old backyard trout fishing a lot more fun as well.

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