

Clinic

A TWIST ON BIMINIS

Braid your Bimini twist, and you'll spend more time fishing and less time untangling.

WHEN YOU ARE CHASING big fish, all leader connections need to be as solid as possible. You don't want to worry about the fly hanging up on a sloppy knot during your casting stroke. Laid-up tarpon and cruising stripers do not respond well to a bird's nest tossed at them with a fly dangling somewhere in the middle. Serious anglers also need knots that will allow one to bulldog a fish if need be—or that will hold up if the fish is bulldogging them.

One of the most universal big-game connections in saltwater fly fishing is the Bimini twist, which is used to construct class-tippet and butt sections, or anywhere you need extra strength between leader sections of radically different diameter. Unless you tie enough Bimini twists so that the process is second nature, you might wind up in a knot yourself. But once you learn to tie a Bimini, you can take the anxiety out fishing it by braiding the two-strand section of the knot to keep the fly from fouling in the loop. If your Bimini twists are short, odds are you won't need to braid them. But if you are using the Bimini for a butt section in a leader, you'll definitely want to incorporate a braid. You will cast more confidently, catch more fish, and curse less often.

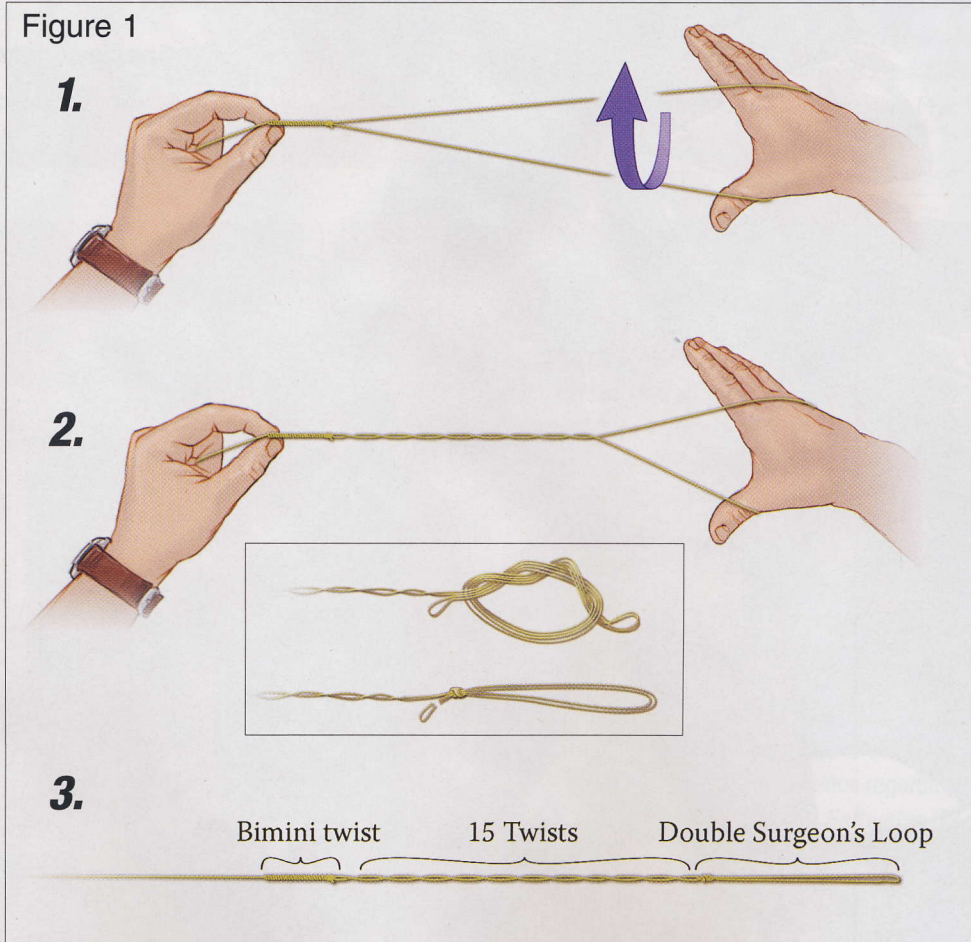
The fun starts after the Bimini knot is complete, and there are two ways to approach the braided section. The first is to locate the end of your loop precisely

where it would connect with your fly line, and cut it with a knife or a nail clipper. You now have one standing line leading to the Bimini knot and two standing lines

coming off the other end of the Bimini.

Next, sit down and trap the Bimini knot between your knees or under your toe, controlling the two standing lines

Figure 1



After completing a Bimini Twist, you can take an extra step to prevent the fly from fouling by laying twists into the big loop. The quickest way is to insert one hand into the loop and create 15 or so twists (1). More twists are better than fewer because some tend to unfurl. You can tighten the twists by widening the loop end and then doubling over to tie a double surgeon's loop (2). The end result (3) is a twisted main loop with a smaller, two-strand loop on the end, which will mesh with the loop in a fly line better than a one-strand loop.

with both hands. Begin twisting one around the other, keeping tension on both lines. It's important to pinch the Bimini so that the lines won't spin and unravel as you twist them. Continue to make your twists until you reach the end of the line. The twists should be relatively tight. If you're in doubt, err on the side of more twists rather than fewer. To free some line and add more twists, pull the tag ends apart, and the twists will tighten down. Then, continue twisting the lines around each other.

Pinch the twisted section about four inches below the tag ends. Hold firmly, and let the tag ends beyond your fingers unfurl. Double the tag ends back along the twisted section, and tie a double surgeon's loop. Moisten, then seat the knot by pulling on the two loops. Voilà, the section is now braided, which should help eliminate the loops opening up to catch your fly.

With some experience, you can speed up the process and even tie the knot at night without a light. (See Figure 1.) To do so, leave the loop in intact; meaning,

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do not cut it. Instead, hold the Bimini knot so that it won't spin, place one hand in the loop, and twist that hand to wind the two lines around each other. When you are satisfied with the tautness of the twists, double a 4- to 6-inch section of the loop over the standing lines, tie a double surgeon's loop, trim the tags, and go fishing.

There are a many advantages to the braided construction. Most important is that you no longer have a loop that will foul. The double surgeon's loop also has a 100 percent breaking strength, so you won't lose strength to a weak knot. The doubled and twisted line creates shock absorption, and combined with the Bimini's inherent strength, you'll have an edge on tough-fighting fish. Finally, the two-strand loop adds a cushion when seating with the loop on your fly line. How many more reasons do you need to take the extra step when tying this critical knot? ■

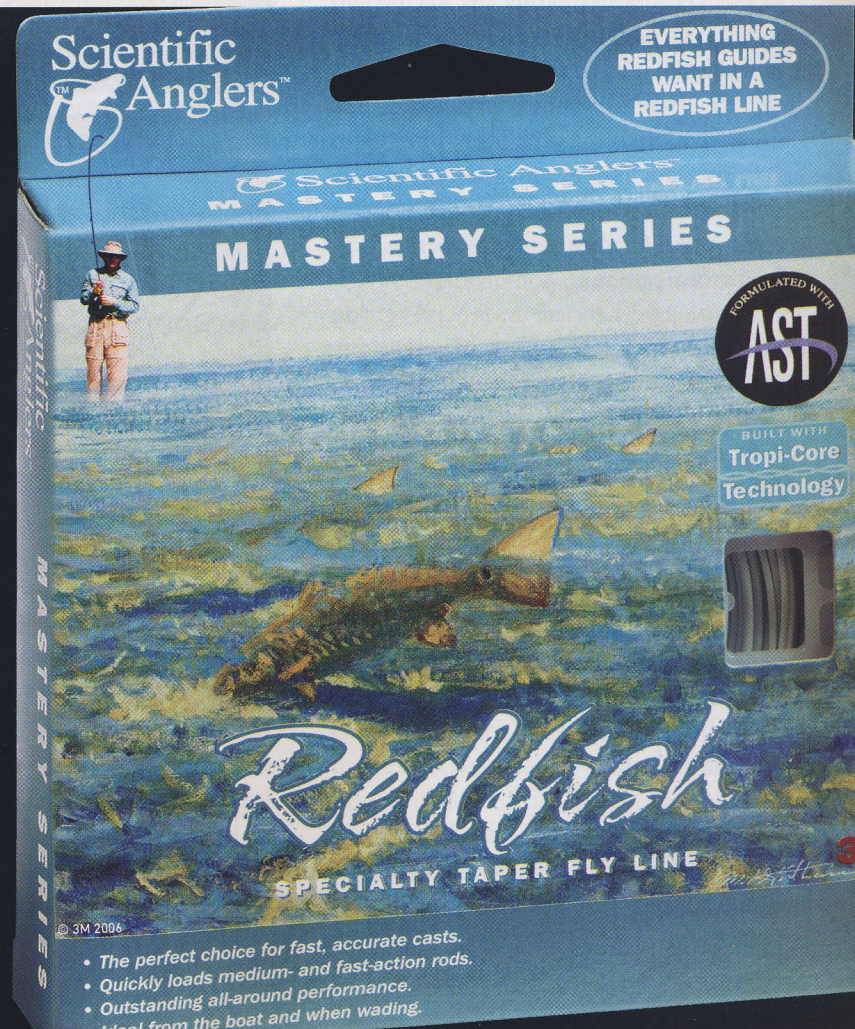
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