

Hi Denise

It is exceptionally hard to know where to start with this. There is an introduction document that goes with the published definitions set and I don't propose at this stage to replace it with this one, but, I will try to give a brief overview of the principles that we adopted and why we decided to take the path that we did.

Firstly, we understood that the objective of the definitions committee was to establish a glossary of terms which were to be used in discussions between ordinary instructors and could thus also form the basis of examination questions, from a position of common understanding, between candidates and examiners.

Secondly, we believed that the terms should be comprehensive and sufficiently descriptively powerful to cover all casts.

Thirdly, we believed that the terms should, as far as reasonably possible, reflect common usage amongst instructors.

It was plain that the process undertaken by the FFF definitions committee had been both prolonged and fraught and had not, in the opinion of various members on SL, delivered a comprehensive set of terms that could in any way successfully meet the objectives above.

In fact, the proposed FFF terms provided by Bruce appeared to be dysfunctional for many 180 deg casts, couldn't work at all for change of direction casts and appeared to be driven from a post-event analytical point of view that didn't gel well with real time judgements and the basic principles that we all use as instructors. The proposed terms certainly wouldn't float within the SL community.

We felt, particularly in the light of some of the highly conflicted threads on the SL forums, that we could make a fair stab at a set of our own without fear or favour from any one organisation or another and that we could draw, not only on excellent casters and instructors from different organisations, but also physicists, linguists, engineers and even philosophers who could add a new dimension to dealing with the problem. If these individuals could create a model which we could develop and use amongst ourselves on the SL forums then we believed it could also be established over time as a common language in discussions elsewhere and thus meet the first objective.

As you are aware the SL community is pretty anarchic but it is also international and so we felt that if we were able to establish terminology that could be understood and accepted worldwide via the SL forums then we would almost automatically meet objective three above.

To deal with the main issue of how to develop descriptively powerful definitions, we began by recognising that we must examine casts in the abstract, that there must be an idealised form of the casts that we were looking to describe and that the components of these casts should be capable of being taken apart in a similarly abstracted way. This was/is not a particularly palatable approach for the analysts amongst us but reflects the practice that most angling authors adopt in describing casts in the

angling texts and also the common method adopted by instructors in the field which is words not numbers.

The methodology we adopted was to simply ask what a cast is *for* in the most general sense and then to ask what the basic parts of that cast are *for* in a progressively more detailed way. This naturally generates a taxonomic approach to the definitions problem and provides the basis for groupings or subsets, within the whole definitions set, differentiated by purpose. To be fair to the FFF set there is some residual evidence of a similar approach in the terms but the driver within this set seems to be “effect” or “how”, not “purpose”.

FFF terms are principally determined by what happened, or what they actually do, by a circular reference to other terms. This means that if A and B have the same effect, employing the same rod motion, then A and B are the same, thus generating a meaning clash. This sounds odd but bear with me for a moment. For example, the FFF term “Creep” is a rod movement simply defined as one which reduces available casting arc. Providing that you could establish what the available casting arc was in the first place, this would make the Lift in a PU&LD cast or most Speys also “Creep”. We don’t see it that way.

The FFF definition employs the same faulty logic that says; all landscape gardeners use pickup trucks therefore everyone who uses a pickup truck is a landscape gardener. (Our pet philosopher says that is known as the “Fallacy of the undistributed middle”.)

The word Creep has unavoidable negative overtones and in our community, as a casting term, Creep is used to describe a perceived fault – so we defined it that way. Exactly the same rod motion can make a positive contribution to a cast, a form of drift, where the rod is repositioned to prepare for a stroke which needs a narrower arc than the one before.

Using purpose within a taxonomic system these similar component movements are separated, we can thus avoid meaning clashes and add new terms where necessary without disturbing the structure of the overall model. As we look to micro analyse movements, perhaps even within specific casts, they can be grouped and branched under the main headings as and when we need them. The model is therefore expandable and sufficiently flexible to allow a “special case” or fault to be included without reference to, or generating a conflict, with other terms.

By contrast the FFF methodology requires use of quantified but unspecified boundary values between the components of a cast and therefore leads to the need to define the start and end of each component. This is highly problematic in both an abstract and a real world sense. Every cast is different, physiological differences between casters, the properties of different rods, the lengths of line to be cast, even the weather, preclude the establishment of consistent hard boundary values.

A quantified boundary to each component in either an abstract or real world casts is not only near impossible to state, it is not, in any way, useful. We teach using relative terms, longer, shorter, faster, slower, and, even when a quantitative approach is taken after the cast has been made, by using the CA for example, the advice is relative not numerical. We would never find ourselves saying.....

“Right Mrs Blenkinsop, I would like you to apply 14.6 foot pounds of torque at the butt constantly accelerating through a casting angle of 62.1 degrees and over a casting stroke length of 4’ 2””

.....would we ?.....Blimey, I really hope not... 😊

In the FFF set this approach is implied but not specified. Specified or not, It must, by virtue of the variability of conditions, be an arbitrarily created and artificial division between components and it is impossible to see that there is any utility in it.

Whilst “purpose” does not necessarily preclude the superimposition of a hard boundary value for measurement purposes, or indeed, conventionally measurable terms, it happily permits the existence of soft boundaries and so we can successfully describe a Single Spey, for example, by allowing the morphing of Sweep into Casting Stroke by using the analogy of spliced rope that I explained in Scotland.

A further benefit of using “purpose” as the differentiating factor between the casting components is that it is wholly outcomes neutral and traditional teaching tools such as the five essentials can be freely wrapped around the definitions and applied to real world casts by instructors in the field.

I think that it would be wholly unreasonable to suggest that as individuals we have not had our differences in establishing the definitions now published on SL and we would be fools indeed to think that we could not improve on some of the wording within them. We are acutely aware that there are many common terms that have yet to be defined and we will continue, hopefully, to wrestle with the model in order to develop a truly comprehensive set.

Personally I think that it would be rather nice if we were co-operating with the FFF in this rather than perpetually banging heads.

Best Regards

Mark