

X-Factor

Main Line Breaking Strength - Presentation vs. Durability

Since virtually all float fishermen run leaders below their main line, it would seem to make sense to run the heaviest possible main line to ensure that you never lose a float or have your line break-off in a snag. So we did a test, fishing the same rod and reel (Raven Vectra SST-3) with the same floats, but just changing the main line from Raven 6lbs (.009" diameter) to Raven 10lbs (.011" diameter). Here are our findings:

Casting

The first thing we noticed was that the lighter line casts easier and further. Particularly with smaller floats. The Raven 6lbs was simply nicer to handle, even when Wallis casting, where a little extra stiffness in the line helps reduce over runs (although the heavier line might have proven to be the better choice when Wallis casting with a heavier reel).

Mending

While mending the line upstream, the Raven 6lbs lifted off the water easily, hardly affecting the drift of the float. The heavier line tended to pull the float in slightly towards the shore. Even on a straight downstream drift the lighter line fished a little better. Although in faster water and with bigger floats the performance of the lines would certainly be much more similar.

Setting the hook

Here again the advantage goes to the lighter line. The 6lbs line cut through the surface and hit the fish cleanly, the heavier line seemed to drag the float across the surface for a moment before hitting the fish. When quick strikes are necessary, light line is definitely the way to go.

Fighting the fish

Surprisingly there was no real difference between the two lines. Once the flex of the rod comes into play it seems to absorb much of the line stretch, making the lines feel very similar. Oddly enough, even with a while running light leaders the flex of the rod compensated for any difference in stretch between the two line. We expected light leaders to break when matched with heavy main line, but this simply did not occur.

Snags

No surprises here, the Raven 10lbs Main Line wins hands down. The heavier line can take more punishment, still fishes well when damaged and only broke off once when it was tangled in a sunken tree by a big fish bolting for safety.

X-Factor Conclusion

Light line offers the best performance, but at the cost of abrasion resistance. Our suggestion: run the lightest main line that will withstand the conditions you're like to encounter - 6lbs in fairly open or snag free water to 12lbs around log jams and boulder strewn rivers. This, of course, must be adjusted to match the size of fish you are likely to encounter and the power of the current.

PERFORMANCE	LIGHT LINE	HEAVY LINE
CASTING	Best handling and distance	Better for Wallis casting with heavy reels
MENDING	Better overall performance	Less relevant in fast water
SETTING THE HOOK	Quicker response, clean line pick-up	Margin difference in fast water
FIGHTING	No clear difference	No clear difference
SNAGS/ ABRASIONS	Requires more frequent replacement	Can take lots of damage and more carefree