

Casting made child's play

For a good number of years Donald Downs has advocated teaching young casters with rods that suit their height. His reasoning is simple and compelling: putting an 8ft rod in the hand a pupil 4ft tall is like putting a 12ft rod in the hands of a client 6ft tall – not the ideal way to learn how to cast a single-handed rod.

Custom rod builder Chris Ward has taken up the idea and produced The Downs Teaching System: three butt sections, two middle sections and one tip, which can be made up into three rods of lengths to suit pupils of just about all heights. The shortest rod is just 48 inches long for pupils up to 3ft 6in tall, which means youngsters are equipped with a rod in proportion to their height.

A great idea, and I have to say the execution really works. The full sized grown-up Rod 3 has a super action for a beginner.

The Downs Teaching System

- **Sections:** 3 butts, 2 middle, 1 tip
- **Rings:** lined throughout
- **Handle:** Full-wells (high grade cork)
- **Reel Seat:** Fuji
- **Fighting butt:** No
- **Blank:** Gloss unground, dark grey
- **Thread:** Black
- **Build quality:** Excellent
- **Weight:** n/a
- **Rod bag:** Cloth
- **Rod tube:** No
- **Price:**
- **From:** Chris Ward
- **Tel:** 023 9259 8714
- **Website:** <http://www.rodcraftsman.com/>

It suits a #6 line, loads very positively and gives plenty feedback. The shortest – Rod 1 – uses a slender butt fitted with a short, slim handle to which one attaches the tip section. When you cast Rod 1 you soon find out how the action of Rods 2 and 3 work, the tip is stiff which forces the lower part of the rod to bend. Rods 2 and 3 both work very well with a #6 line. The wee rod, I felt, needs a heavier line, especially since one will be scaling down the whole deal.

This is a very specialised piece of kit, aimed at professional casting instructors, and it deserves



Chris Ward

serious consideration. In one bag it provides a student rod suitable for the smallest to the tallest client.

Chris Ward has chosen components for durability and function, hence the Fuji seat and lined ring. This is essentially a custom build so there are options should customers want other fittings.