

The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

3-Way Swivel Deep Bottom Leader System

Deep dropping to 200 feet and deeper when using a mono leader that has a dropper loop or surgeon's loop for the hook connection has always been a major concern for me. Twisting and tangling on the way down, especially with a long "hook leg" comes to mind. This is because the cut or live bait is the primary twist generator on the fall. I'm also reluctant to use those ring-type 3-way swivels, the angle of pull on the stem's "bulbed" end of each eye on the inside of the ring really bothers me, no matter who makes them, or at what strength they are rated. I can't put a big bait down deep hoping for a grouper or whatever to inhale my bait with one of those ring types as part of my rigging.

The Rosco, 600 lb. 3-way swivel is the simplest and strongest of the 3-way swivels...period. They cost around eight dollars for a six-pack and are available at Serious Tackle. Get the black ones if you have a choice. The correct orientation, top to bottom, when using this swivel is shown in the illustration. This positioning gives the maximum insurance against twisting and tangling because it has free rotation of the swivel eyes. The 5 ft. section of mono above the 3-way swivel is for cut-off and abrasion resistance. The swivel at the top of this section also gives increased twist and tangle insurance. This swivel can be a 350 lb. Rosco, size 4/0 in black, or a 500 lb. Size 10 ball bearing version that's also in black.

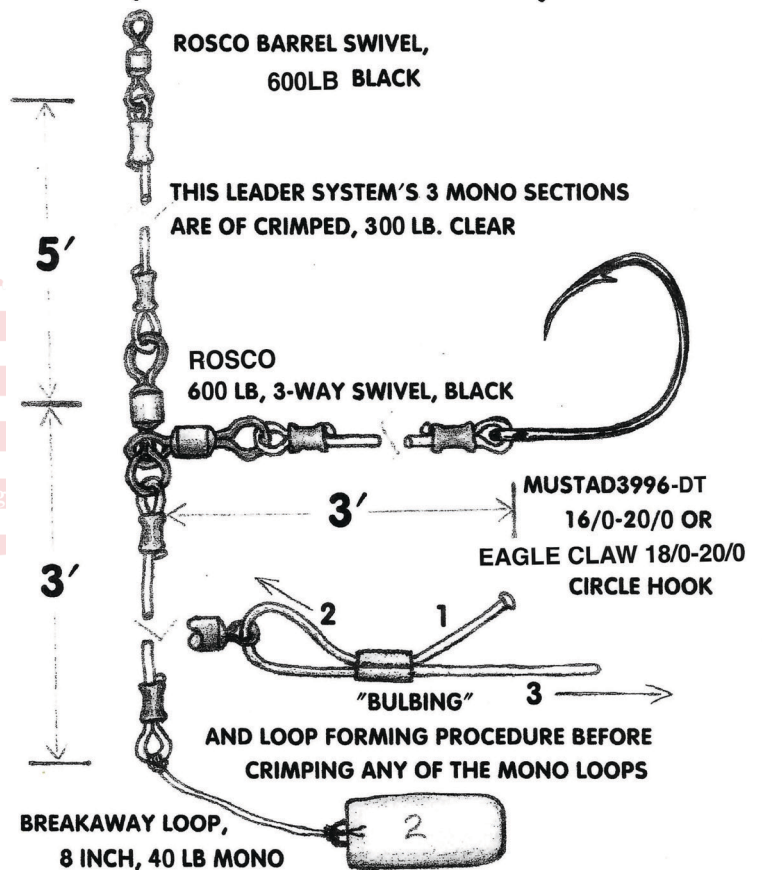
My hooks of choice with this leader are Mustad 39960DT in sizes 16/0 to 20/0 and Eagle Claw L2045G 18/0 and 20/0 – all are circle hooks.

The three mono sections of this leader system are 300 lb. clear. Crimped connections are much easier to make than tied ones, especially in 300 lb. and up. When properly crimped, it's almost a foolproof rigging method, using compatible pieces makes this a reality. To build the leader system as shown in the illustration, you need the 300 lb. Mono, 1.9 mm double crimps (black), a 4-position hand crimp tool which is designed for use with double barrel sleeves (crimps) and using its correct position for these sleeves. Squeeze the handles tight, till they no longer move, and then tightening will be complete. Make your crimp or crimps in the middle portion of the sleeve, each end should be "belled" as in the illustration.

This is the procedure I use for making the crimps right and tight with a little insurance thrown in. Look at the part of the illustration that's below the "hook leg" of the leader system. The first step, which isn't shown, is to cut the mono's end at an angle — not 90 degrees across the strand, this makes it much easier to push through the barrel sleeve. Next, push



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the mono through the sleeve, then through the eye of whatever you are attaching it to, such as one of the swivel eyes. Then, back through the sleeve until it comes out the other side about three inches, as shown at number 1 on the illustration. While keeping this end away from all the rest of the mono, very carefully heat the tip of the mono with a butane lighter until it melts. . .take the flame away and blow out the fire on the end of the mono if necessary. Assuming that you have already turned off the lighter and put it down in a safe place,

blow on the end of the mono to cool it down and solidify it. Now, pull on the mono loop, as at number 2, in the direction indicated by the arrow. This will pull the bulbed end of the number 1 length against the end of the sleeve. Then pull the mono in the number 3 area toward the direction indicated by its arrow to close the loop to size at the swivel or hook, this connection is now ready to crimp. Repeat this procedure at all loop and crimp locations. The "little insurance thrown in" is the bulb on the mono end. Should the mono slip, which it should never do, the "bulb" can save the day. There's even a story from the West Coast that I read where a guy brought in a yellowfin tuna and saw where one of his crimped mono connections hadn't been crimped but held because the bulb jammed it tight when the fish was on. A fish story? I don't know, but the bulb is now part of my crimped mono connections.

On the illustration's bottom loop is a breakaway loop of 40 lb. mono. Make this loop by doubling a piece of mono and tying a double over-hand knot in the tag ends. Loop the breakaway through the bottom eye twice before going back through its end with the tied end of the loop. The breakaway loop's end with the knot and its two stiff ends are then passed through the sinker's eye and around its body, forming a loop at the sinker's eye. The sinker's weight will be determined by how much is needed to get your bait to your target depth and keep it vertical directly below you.

Braided line of 100# and over make a good choice for deep bottom drops for several reasons. The two biggest advantages are its virtually no stretch for best feel and hooksets; its small diameter also has less

resistance to the current "blowing" your bait presentation off vertical. Circle hooks are almost a must when fishing deep. Their hooking and holding abilities really work to your advantage; they also have much less chance of becoming hung up in structure than a similar-sized "J" hook. Circle hooks also require that you wait for the rod to bow hard and stay that way before you begin to wind your prize to the surface.

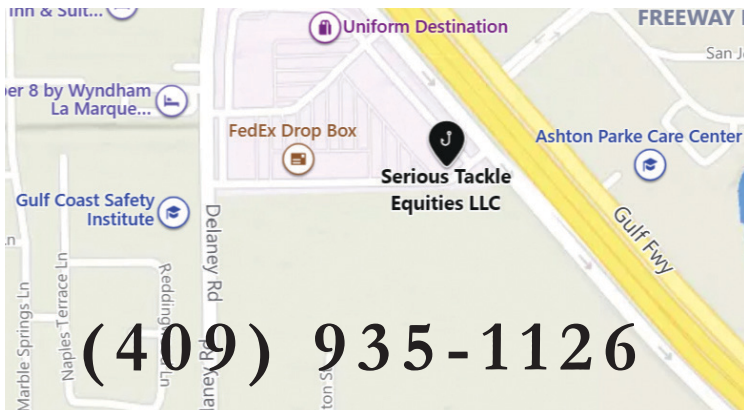
Dropping to the bottom with a big-cut bait such as a bonito or bluefish strip or a live blue runner is an offering that's hard for any self-respecting grouper or sow red snapper to resist. This rigging and tackle to match from the swivel up will soon have whatever's on your hook realizing they've made one of life's bad choices. The 3-way barrel swivel by Rosco is the right way to go deep and beyond with confidence. This particular leader system with its super strong and efficient 3-way swivel, 300 lb. mono with crimped connections, and big circle hook is definitely a deep confidence generator; give it a fry and you'll see what I mean.

If you have any questions, stop by
Serious Tackle or email me at
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