

The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

Tony Pena Knot, Serious Tackle Modified

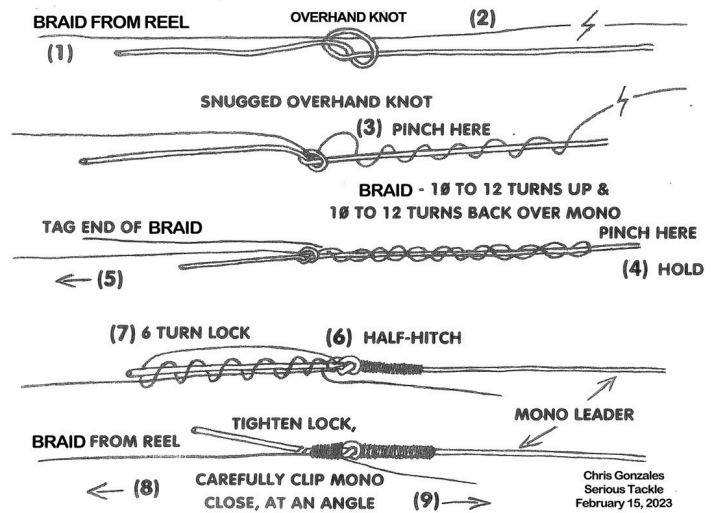
The question that I'm asked most often about my tackle when fishing offshore is "what kind of knot do you use to connect your Braid to the mono leader"? For years, I used back to back uni-knots. Then in the late 90s, I discovered the Tony Pena knot.

This knot was developed by renowned California offshore specialist and writer, Tony Pena. Its strength and small size make it a must for any fisherman needing a Braid to mono connection. It's a 100% strength knot that I've used over the years, the last three in modified form, all without a single failure. There are other knots to make a reliable Braid to mono connection, this one is smooth through the guides, and its strength is second to none.

Tony Pena's knot doesn't have the ½ hitch and 6 turn lock as in the illustration, that was my idea. These last steps don't make the connection any stronger, they just smooth out the overhand knot in the mono side of the knot. Anglers historically have used rods with rollers or stainless-steel ring guides for the most part. The original Tony Pena knot works well with these rods but gives a bump/jolt to ceramic or silicon carbide insert guides on the retrieve. The inserts may be loosened and possibly knocked out of their guide's frame. This modified knot virtually eliminates that ring shock problem. I have knocked out a couple of ring inserts from the guide frame with the original Tony Pena; this is why I started putting the smoothing six turn lock against the mono's overhand knot. The lock knot is much more durable in my applications than the smoothing it out with Zap-A-Gap – I tried that first and I like the lock a lot better. The Braid wraps around the mono leader will pass through the guide easily on the cast and the lock smooths out the other side on the retrieve or with a lot of pressure on the line.

This knot is not only strong and smooth but it's easy to tie with a little practice. To start, tie a loose, overhand knot in the mono leader as shown at the top of the illustration, leaving about 12" of a tag at (#1). Insert the Braid from your reel through the overhand knot (#2) for 12" or more. Firmly snug, but not tighten, the mono's overhand knot

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around the Braid. Form a loop, (#3), in the Braid, hold with your left thumb and index finger. Next, wrap the Braid around the mono 10-12 times as in the illustration, then pinch at (#4) with your right thumb and index finger; hold the Braid wraps, releasing your left hand grip, then make an additional 10-12 wraps back toward the Braid loop next to the overhand knot in the mono. Run the tag end of the Braid through that Braid loop to the point shown. Holding the mono tightly, well outside of the Braid double wraps, slowly pull on the Braid from the reel (#5), not the Braid's tag end. Wrap your Braid around a gloved hand for safety sake and watch the Braid spiral around the mono and toward the overhand knot as you pull the Braid up snug tight. Next, tighten the "firmly snugged" overhand knot in the mono; now give the final tighten to the Braid wraps by holding onto the mono and again carefully pulling on the Braid from the reel.

This is where my modification of the Tony Pena knot begins; the lock knot that allows for smooth passage of the overhand knot end of the Pena knot through your ring guides. The half hitch and 6-turn lock (#6) & (#7) are shown around the Braid from the reel and the mono's tag end. Do the half-hitch first and hold it in place with your left thumb and index finger while forming the lock knot. Tighten the lock knot by carefully holding the Braid to the reel (#8) and slowly pulling on the Braid's tag end (#9) to tighten the lock knot, then cut off close. The next to last step is to cautiously

apply a small drop of Zap-A-Gap to the lock knot where the tag end of the Braid was cut off with scissors. The final step is to carefully cut off the mono's tag end at a slight angle, close to the outer end of the lock knot. While tying this knot may sound complicated, I assure you that it isn't; following the text and illustration will give you a foolproof, 100% knot strength, slick through your ring guides, easy to tie, Braid to mono connection.

This knot can be used for just about any Braid to mono connection where a small, high strength knot is needed. With mono of 100# or more, use a double overhand knot in the mono instead of a single. Also increase the Braid wraps to 15 to 25 around the mono. On my reels used for red snapper, kingfish, ling, wahoo, cobia, etc., 100# Braid is used with an 80# mono leader. Drags are set at 15# at the strike position, giving 25# at the full position. The 100# Braid is the size of 20# mono and is much easier to untangle a backlash than say, 50#. The other benefits of the 20# mono size of 100# Braid are all related to keeping a larger spooled line diameter on the reel. This allows longer casts, and the drag works smoother and cooler since the spool turns less per foot of line pulled through it. You also get more line back on the spool per turn of your reel handle and this lets you greatly increase your reels line capacity.

My line preference is solid 8 carrier Braid in colors blue, white, Hi-Vis

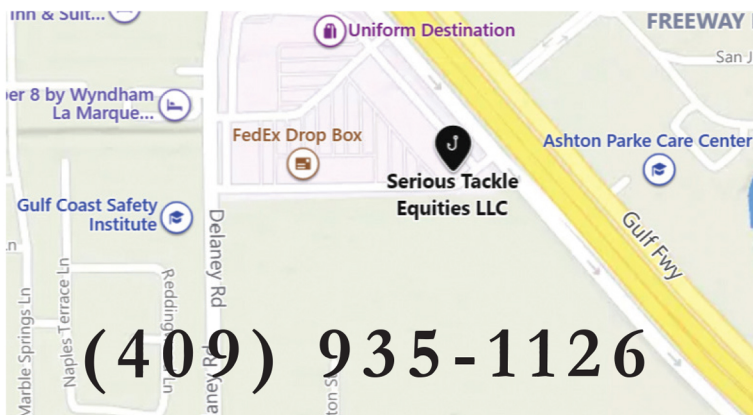
yellow or orange. Using these colors gives you two important advantages; you can monitor your lines position and others near you can do the same. This helps avoid tangles, cutoffs and lost fish. With a 15 to 20' mono leader, the colored Braid isn't going to be seen by the fish, even in clear water. If you have a concern in this area, use the blue Braid as it becomes almost invisible in blue water. Using a 15 foot 80# mono leader gives you a mono length that allows many chances to re-tie at its outer end due to cutoffs, lure or hook changes, etc. The mono is also much safer to handle while bringing a fish aboard than the thin Braid.

While this knot may look complicated, I assure you that it isn't. Following the text and the illustration will give you a foolproof, 100% knot strength, slick through your ring guides, easy to tie, Braid to mono connection. It's a snap to tie the Serious Tackle Modified Tony Pena knot correctly – Its "experienced tested", and the edge you may be looking for. If you have any questions about this knot, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at chris@serioustackle.com.

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