

DOUGLAS SKY G S906-4

Fly Rod Review by Brian Clark

Whenever a newcomer to fly fishing asks about the best all-around fly rod weight, the standard answer across most of the community will be identical: the venerable 9ft 5wt 4pc model.

For most newcomers in trout-focused regions, that's not a bad answer. It would've been my answer for many years – but no longer. For the last 30-ish years as I've ranged ever farther afield from the Rockies, my favorite all-around rod has unquestionably been a 9ft 6wt 4pc model with a fighting butt. Why? Two simple answers: streamers and salt.

No, wait – it's not that quite simple. I have more answers: large trout, speckled trout, redfish, bonefish, carp, bowfin, and even bass, when necessary. That list of species implies a mix of salt and fresh, warm and cold, and both streamers and topwaters. You've already seen where I'm going here: the 6wt FB (aka "691") is an exceptionally versatile rod.

I should know: I've got a bunch of them. I'm a shameless gearhead and rod monger, but I've got more 691s than anything else. I was therefore thrilled to find that Douglas had recently released their award-winning Sky G rod in 6wt with a fighting butt, the "S" version (for "Saltwater") or S906-4. I first threw this model at the first-ever Gulf Coast Casting Confab (see Andy Dear's run-down of this event earlier in this issue) in late 2024, and many of us really liked it. Douglas was gracious enough to share a sample with OTFM, and I've been fishing it more than any other rod over the past few months.

I'm delighted to report that all the good things you've heard about the Sky G rods are true for the S906 as well. There's a little something for everyone: it's not so fast that newcomers will struggle to find their stroke, but it's powerful enough that advanced casters can make it sing. It's delicate enough to make precise and accurate casts at a variety of ranges, but it's also gusty enough to punch big flies into the wind and handle inshore saltwater species.

Most of all, it works very well with a wide range of fly lines. If you've followed many of my rod reviews in OTFM, one of the things I'm keen on is fly line pairings. I'm convinced that saying almost anything about a fly rod without talking about which lines were tested is borderline criminal. It's like evaluating a house without mentioning the neighborhood or praising a



musician without indicating what instrument they play. It's like recommending a doctor without identifying their specialty, or a restaurant without explaining what cuisine—never mind, you get the gist. We take line pairings *very* seriously around here, and finding a rod that works well with a variety of line tapers and weights always makes me happy. Here's the list:

- SA Mastery Expert Distance in WF5F, WF6F, and WF7F (for accuracy and competition distance)
- SA Grand Slam Amplitude WF6F (for redfish from a skiff)
- SA MPX WF6F (Mastery and Amplitude) (30ft head = 175gr)
- Rio Elite Bonefish WF6F (30ft head = 173gr)
- Rio Big Nasty Sink Tip WF6F (throwing big streamers for largemouth bass)
- Celestial Tournament Trout Distance WF5F and WF7F (for competition distance)
- Airflo Super Trout WF5F and WF7F (for competition distance)
- Airflo Superflo 40+ Expert WF6F (marsh fishing from a skiff)
- Cortland Long Belly WF6F (for accuracy and competition distance)
- Monic Henley Clear WF6F (mostly for skittish carp)
- Single-hand Spey: OPST 200gr, 225gr, 250gr



Believe it or not, none of those were obviously bad pairings, which is extraordinary. The SA MPX and Rio Bonefish in WF6F were unquestionably my favorite floating lines for most fishing scenarios, and I'd have a hard time choosing between them. It did really well with the Big Nasty WF6F, so that would probably be my first choice for chunking articulated streamers. My time with the OPST Commando lines was limited, but both the 225gr and 250gr would work for most casters. Among the long-belly competition lines, it's a bit harder to choose. For accuracy, the MED6 was hard to beat, but the MED7 was pretty clean as well. For extreme distance, go with the MED5 or Celestial WF5F.

From pure fishing perspective, this boils down to two things: bigger flies and bigger fish than what most folks in Troutland are throwing and catching. Sure, a 3wt or 4wt will make more delicate presentations of dry flies, and a longer and more supple stick works better for Euro-style nymphing. The venerable 5wt is still a fine choice for many situations. But for putting chunky flies in front of a diverse range of

powerful fish in a wide variety of places, I don't think there's a better choice than a 6wt with a fighting butt.

Why have a fighting butt? Because every rod should have a fighting butt, that's why. I often hear complaints about line getting looped over the fighting butt; my answer is simply to get better at line management. Some folks say that the bulky butt gets in the way; my answer is bracing. If you aren't familiar with that concept, watch this video from Nathaniel Linville: <https://vimeo.com/82350744>

Again, my gold standard for fly rods is versatility, and my demands of a salt-ready 6wt are broad. I want a rod that can handle redfish on the Gulf Coast, respectable carp in moving water, bowfin in tight cover, and which can swim articulated streamers for big browns. The Douglas Sky G S906-4 can handle all of those, and then some.

MSRP US\$845

Website: douglasoutdoors.com/fly-rods/sky-g-series

Available at fine fly shops across the world