Should I use braided line or monofilament line when fishing the ponds in Hilton Head Plantation?

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I moved to Hilton Head from Nashville, Tennessee. Throughout my fishing life (50+ years) prior to moving to Hilton Head, I used monofilament line for all my fishing activities. However, after moving to Hilton Head Plantation, I have learned that braided line has many advantages over monofilament line that make it the line I now use for all my fishing activities [freshwater or saltwater]. I strongly encourage others to try it. Braided line can be purchased from 5 lb. to 150 lb., which can accommodate both freshwater and saltwater fishing needs.

Braided line is more visible than monofilament. Many people (as I did at one point in time) like to use clear monofilament line or monofilament/fluorocarbon leaders because they feel it is less likely to be seen by fish than braided line. I have come to the conclusion that worries about the visibility of your fishing line are greatly overrated. I have not found the visibility of braided line to be a problem whether used with slow-moving or fast-moving baits, even in clear water conditions. In stained or muddy water, fish rely more heavily on sound and motion (including pressure changes detected by their lateral lines) than sight. It has become my belief that the fish which attack fast-moving lures don't have the time to notice the line, and the fish that attack lures that are making a commotion on the surface (e.g. buzz baits) are unable to see the line because it is almost entirely out of the water and are focused on the noise, and the fish that attack lures that are being retrieved erratically (wacky worms, jerk baits) have their attention focused on the lure and its unusual motion and simply do not notice the line. Whatever the reason, I have been able to catch lots of fish using braided line, enough fish that I don't worry about whether or not the fish might be able to see my line.

Any problem that may result from the visibility of braided line under normal fishing conditions pales in comparison to the benefits resulting from the many advantages of braided line over monofilament line described below. For example, heavy or weedy cover such as thick pond scum, lily pad mats , hydrilla beds or weeds on or near the edge of the water can play havoc with your fishing line. In those situations (which we often encounter), the strength and abrasion resistance of braided line are far more important than the low visibility of monofilament/fluorocarbon line. You will land far more fish through heavy cover or weeds with braided lines than with other lines.

Braided line (1) is smooth and limp [no memory), (2) does not stretch, (3) has great overall strength and power in relation to its diameter and retains its strength when wet, (4) has high knot strength, and (5) very good resistance to abrasion. With braided line, you are able to (a) make very long, smooth, accurate casts, with a low likelihood of developing any loops or tangles, (b) feel strikes, (c) set the hook with power and without line break, (d) bring large fish through or around brush, matted pond scum, or weeds, and lift heavy fish out of the water and hold them by the line while they are flopping without the line breaking. When fishing near obstacles or near the bottom where line snags or chafes against sharp objects are common, the high abrasion resistance of braided line normally avoids the loss of your lure.

Braided line has several properties that make it uniquely better to use than monofilament (or fluorocarbon) line when fishing the freshwater and saltwater ponds within Hilton Head Plantation.

Braided line : **Much thinner**
No stretch
No memory
More abrasion resistant
Stronger -- Greater "effective" breaking strength
Maintains its strength -- not affected by water or sunlight

Much thinner

20 lb. braid is similar in diameter to 6 lb. monofilament; therefore, with braided line, you can use a much stronger line without increasing the size of your line.

Because braid is much thinner (smaller diameter) than monofilament; therefore, for the same strength of line, e.g. 10 lb. braid vs. 10 lb. monofilament:

(a) Braid cuts through the water much more easily than monofilament. This allows you to have a more direct connection with your lure, which makes it more sensitive, i.e., allowing you to much more easily feel what is occurring with lure such as detecting when a fish has taken the lure or detecting when the lure has become fouled by debris. Remember that as you retrieve your lure you are moving water at the same time. The greater the line diameter, the more water is being moved. A thicker line moves more water than a thinner line. This means you lure will actually run deeper with thinner line (braided line).

(b) You can place many more yards of braided line on your reel than monofilament line, which could be especially helpful for saltwater fishing where one might be afraid that a large fish could take all of your line

(c) Braid is less affected by wind than monofilament

(d) There will be less slack line (both above and below the water) with braided

line than with monofilament line

(e) Thinner line (braided line) will come off the spool more easily allowing you to make longer and more accurate casts

(f) Thinner line (braided line) allows lure to act more naturally (affects action less than monofilament line) and to achieve greater depths

(f) You can cast braided line much, much farther than monofilament line. This advantage cannot be overemphasized. If you cannot cast far enough to reach where the fish are, you will not be able to catch those fish.

No stretch

When you set the hook with monofilament line, the line stretches. This stretch can greatly reduce the force or power exerted at the hook. Braided line does not stretch.

No stretch is especially important where the hook is buried in a plastic worm, because extra force is needed for the hook to overcome the resistance of and penetrate through the plastic worm before the hook can even begin to penetrate the jaw of the fish.

As the distance to the lure increases, the difficulty in setting the hook increases for a number of reasons. Thus, when you are attempting to set the hook after long cast, eliminating the problem of line stretch becomes very important.

Less stretch in fishing line results in more sensitivity to feel (realize, recognize) when a fish has struck your lure – an ability all anglers place high of their list of wants.

One situation where the stretch which occurs with monofilament line can be an advantage over braided line is when you are trolling lures. The elasticity of monofilament line which is what results in its stretch allows it to act as a shock absorber which will help to prevent the hook from itself out of the fish's mouth.

No memory

Unlike humans or computers, less or no memory is better when it comes to fishing lines. "Memory" refers to a line's ability to retain its shape after deformation. A line with a lot of memory (monofilament line) "remembers" the loops that develop when it is wound up on a spool. A line with no memory (braided line) will stay straight when it comes off the spool, and as a result develops less friction as it comes off the spool and passes through the rod guides, which enables longer, smoother casts.

When monofilament line is uncoiled as it comes off the spool of your reel during a cast, it retains the shape of the spool (because monofilament line has “memory”) which can be seen as loops in the line. The problem of memory in monofilament line tending to create loops, knots and bird’s nest tangles is especially noticeable on windy days.

Braided line has no memory. It is limp. Thus, using braided line minimizes the likelihood of any loops, knots or bird’s nest tangles developing in your line.

Loops in the line resulting from memory of monofilament line greatly increases the likelihood of (a) loops developing on the spool of your reel, (b) knots occurring along your line, or (c) bird-nest sets of loops developing along the line with monofilament line than with braided line. Braided line will at times develop loops, knots and even bird-nest sets of loops. Not only does braided line develop problems with looping of the line far less often than monofilament, undoing those loops/bird-nests is easier with braided line than monofilament line. When first trying braided line, I had a lot of trouble undoing any loops, knots or bird-nest sets of loops; however, by trial and error (usually referred to as experience), I have found braided line much easier to deal with than monofilament line. I end up having to cut off braided line far less often due to impossible looping of the line than I had previously had to cut off with monofilament line because of the same problem.

Loops in the line resulting from memory of monofilament line increases the amount of slack line that will exist in monofilament line than in braided line over same distance. This additional slack line with monofilament means that you will have to spend a longer period eliminating (reeling in) slack line in preparation for making a hook set with monofilament line than with braided line.

More abrasion resistant

Braided line is much “tougher” than monofilament line; i.e., far more resistant to nicks, abrasions and cuts than monofilament line. Cutting braided lines (such as to change lures, or to cut off any unnecessary extra length of tag line after tying a knot) can be quite a challenge. Clippers which will easily cut monofilament line do not work with braided lines. Braided lines are so hard to cut that you need to purchase and use scissors specially designed for that purpose.

I normally fish the freshwater ponds within Hilton Head Plantation. There are far fewer types of objects and far fewer characteristics of the fish you will catch (e.g., teeth, scales, gill edges) that can nick, abrade or cut you line in our freshwater ponds than in brackish/saltwater areas (e.g., oyster shells, barnacles). Therefore, from an abrasion resistance standpoint, braided line could be more advantageous in brackish/saltwater than in freshwater environments. However, when fishing brackish/saltwater, it is necessary to keep in mind that braided line has no stretch. Therefore, when trolling,

this lack of stretch could result in tearing the lure out of the fish's mouth far more often than if monofilament had been used.

When fishing our freshwater ponds, there are many occasions during which your line can be nicked, abraded or cut; for example:

(a) When your line is dragged across or through obstacles on or under the water such as brush, rocks, concrete or corrugated pipes, weeds, vines, or debris (sticks, leaves, matted pond scum).
(b) When dragging your line through weeds along the bank
(c) When attempting to pull your lure out of tree limbs after you have accidentally snagged your lure in tree limbs behind you on the bank while attempting to make a cast

Monofilament line is easily cut. Some people (including some pro fishermen) when using monofilament line use their teeth to bite through the line in order to change lures; something that would be impossible to do with braided line.

Monofilament line is also very susceptible to nicks and abrasions. These nicks and abrasions greatly weaken the line; therefore, you need to frequently check your monofilament line for any nicks and abrasions. You do this by running the last several feet of line through your thumb and fingers. If you find any indication of nicks or abrasions, you need to cut off that portion of the line and retie your lure. It is important to remember that the knot where you have tied on your lure is just as susceptible to nicks, abrasions and cuts as the rest of you line. However, it is quite difficult to detect those problems at the knot. Therefore, back when I used monofilament line I would as a precautionary practice frequently cut off the last several feet of my line and retie the lure onto the line even though I had not felt any nicks or abrasions when I checked (felt) the line. As a result, I was routinely reducing the amount of line remaining on my reel. In spite of this, I still made it a regular practice to cut and retie because it was always very frustrating to lose a fish because my line broke. When you lose a fish due to a line break you also lose the lure, a situation which can be both disheartening and expensive. These problems are minimized or avoided by using braided line.

Stronger -- Greater "effective" breaking strength

The strength of fishing line is called test and is measured in pounds. This is the breaking strength of the line. Breaking strength is the amount of pressure (pounds) that must be applied to an unknotted line before the line breaks. Fishing lines are categorized by their pound test, such as "10 lb. test," based on static tensile breaking strength tests of dry, unknotted lines. A machine is used to very slowly increase the force being applied to a segment of dry, unknotted line until it fails (breaks).
This type of testing is the method used to determine the "pound test" that you see listed on the labels of fishing line in a store. For several reasons, this type of testing does not

reflect the actual strength that line will provide when in use.

It's irrelevant at what point a line will break in a dry state since no one fishes a dry line. Monofilament lines absorb water, and can experience significant loss of strength when wet. For example, lesser quality monofilament lines are from 20 to 30 percent weaker when wet than when dry. Therefore, in use, the actual breaking strength of monofilament line can be much less that the pound test shown on the spool label in the store. Braided lines do not absorb water and do not experience a change in strength from dry to wet.

Lines can lose up to 1/3 of their strength at the knot.

"Static" breaking strength test results do not reflect the conditions that a fishing line is likely to encounter. There are many situations in which dynamic forces are in play. For example, dynamic forces are in play when you make a strong, fast hook set, or lift a fish out of the water, or drag a fish through weeds along the bank, or when or when a fish is flopping around as you hold the line. The impulse created by these dynamic forces can easily snap a monofilament line at a far lower level than what it would take to break the line in a "" (non-moving, non-varying) situation. When I was in training at the U.S. Air Force navigator training school, we were told that the windshields on our aircraft could withstand a strike by a 2 lb. bird at 500 MPH or by a 500 lb. bird at 2 MPH. That is impulse.

Braided lines are made by braiding or weaving fibers of man-made material that is very strong and abrasion resistant. Braided lines are extremely strong. The Power Pro Spectra line which I use is stronger than steel for its size. The actual breaking strength of braided lines will commonly well exceed their pound test rating. Braided lines are so strong that you will have trouble breaking the line when you get hung up. Obviously, a fish is very unlikely to break it.

Maintains its strength -- Not affected by water or sunlight

Monofilament line gets OLD quickly. Light and heat cause monofilament to deteriorate quickly. The sun's rays will quickly begin to break down monofilament line, and will make it break down even more rapidly the more the line exposed to the sun. It is recommended to store bulk spools of monofilament line in a dark, dry and place under moderate temperatures. You do not want to leave monofilament line is a hot car exposed to sunlight, because you are setting the stage for it to fail.

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Final comments/recommendations

There are many brands of braided line. Power Pro Spectra Fiber microfilament braided line made by Shimano is highly rated; and is the brand I like to use. A picture of what the packaging for this brand is included below. For several years, I have used 15 lb. Power Pro Spectra braided line in a Moss Green color. Colors other than Moss Green are available including High-Viz Yellow and Vermillion Red. Braided line is much thinner than monofilament line. For example, the diameter of the 15 lb. braided line I use is equivalent to 4 lb. monofilament line There are many advantages to purchasing bulk spools (500 yard or 1500 yard) of braided line over purchasing small spools (150 yard or 300 yard). Braided line is substantially more expensive than monofilament line, but braided line not only has the many advantages over monofilament described above but also lasts much longer. As of 2-9-19, 500 yds. of 15 lb. Power Pro Spectra braided line could be purchased on-line through Walmart for $ 40.95.

Included below are pages showing the knots which are recommended by Shimano for use with its Power Pro Spectra line. I have the following comments:

(1) On the page showing how to tie the Arbor knot, Shimano states that you should "wrap your spool with electrical tape before installing line to prevent slipping on spool." This is very important; otherwise, over time you will find that when you try to reel in your line (especially if you have a fish on your line) turning the handle does no good. You may think that your drag is set too light and tighten it, but to no avail. What is happening is that braided line is quite smooth (one of the reasons it casts so well), and over time, all the line spooled on your reel tightens resulting in the portion in contact with the spool to begin to slip around the spool. All the line on your spool spins as a unit around your spool. How tight your drag is set has no effect on this situation. The use of electrical tape on the spool is a new recommendation provided by Shimano to avoid this problem. For several years I have used an alternative method for overcoming this slippage problem – using monofilament as a backing. If you install a limited amount of monofilament line on the spool before adding the braided line, and use a Uni to Uni Splice (Double Uni knots) to tie the braided line to the monofilament line, you will not experience any spool slippage problem.

(2) On the page showing how to tie the Arbor knot, Shimano recommends the use an Arbor knot to connect your braided line to the spool. I am sure this is the preferred method especially if you are connecting the braided line directly onto the spool. However, if your are instead connecting monofilament line as a backing to the spool rather than connecting the braided line directly to the spool, you can use the simpler Uni knot rather. I have used the Uni knot for this

purpose for decades, and have never had any problem.

(3) On the page showing how to tie the Palomar knot and the Uni knot, Shimano describes the Palomar knot as an easy knot and the Uni knot as the stronger knot for tying terminal tackle (hook or lure). This is a new recommendation by Shimano. In the past, the Palomar knot was the only knot Shimano recommended for use with its braided lines. I have used the Palomar knot for several years, and have found it to be an excellent and very strong knot. For our type of fishing in the freshwater ponds, where your line endures frequent and heavy abrasion, I have liked the fact that the connection of the Palomar knot to the hook/lure involves a double loop of line through the eye of the hook/lure. The Uni knot only has a single line through the eye of the hook/lure. Although I have been very pleased with the Palomar knot, I intend to experiment with using the Uni knot for tying on hooks or lures. The point is that both the Palomar knot and the Uni knot are recommended for use by Shimano for use with its braided lines, with the Palomar knot being the easier knot to tie. If you choose to use the Palomar knot rather than the Uni knot because you find Palomar knot is easier for you to tie, you should feel comfortable that you have an excellent, very strong knot that is quite suitable for the conditions we encounter in our freshwater ponds.

Be very careful when pulling on a braided line with your hands. Braided line is so strong and thin, it can cut fingers to the bone if pulled too hard to quickly. You need to distribute the pressure preferably where you have clothes between the braided line and your bare skin. For example, if I have a lure which is hung up, I do not try to pull on the line with my bare hands. Instead, I will normally wrap the braided line around my arm several times and then slowly rotate my body in order to put and increase the pressure on the lure that is hung up.

Braided lines are so thin they can bury themselves on the reel spool. To avoid this, when putting line onto your spool, make the line go on tightly (let line run through your fingers under strong pressure). Also do not set the drag on your reel too tight. The drag on your reel should be set just light enough that the line will begin to slip on the hook set.