



Anatomy of a Custom Built Rod

Part 3 – Grips and Handle Options

By Andres Perez, Blue Bay Custom Fishing Rods, LLC

Note that the opinions and explanations expressed below are based on personal experiences and are not typical to every custom rod builder.

As in many parts of the rod, the handle assembly and grips can be customized to an angler's specification. Anywhere from the length, diameter, shape, material and color can be made to fit a customer's specification and preference. The following are more specific explanation of the grips and handle assemblies and descriptions on how they can be customized.

- **Full and Split Grips:** A rear grip on a handle assembly can be constructed as a full or split grip. The full grip will contain the grip material from the bottom of the reel seat all the way down to the butt cap or gimbal. A split grip will contain a section where the material ends and begins,

exposing the blank. The split grip can be done to minimize weight, where overall rod weight is a concern. This area is also used as an opportunity to provide further customization by installing a thread wrap, decals or aluminum spacers.

- **EVA, Cork, Wood, Cord or a Combination of Materials:** The material of the grips is mostly related to preference. However, it is not recommended to install a wood handle on a fishing rod that is to be used mainly in saltwater. Some anglers like the softer feel of EVA and others like the cork. Cork handles tend to transfer vibration in the rod more efficient rather than EVA and thus making it easier to detect smaller bites. Other materials such as cord, carbon fiber and acrylic can also be used.
- **Shape:** The shape of the grips is also dependent on preference. Grips can be shaped to contour an angler's hand. There are also numerous standard shapes, especially for fly rods. For example, the cigar, full-wells or half-wells to name a few.
- **Length:** Typically, we establish the length of the grip on the length of the angler's arm. Too short and the butt cap can dig into the angler's forearm. Too long and it will be getting caught on the angler's sleeve every time they cast the rod. There are, of course, the exceptions to the guidelines, where an angler with a long arm would rather have a short handle to reduce weight or if fishing from a kayak.
- **Color and Inlays:** EVA and cork are available in different colors and shades. Grips can be constructed using strips of different colors creating inlays as one

would see in guide wraps with thread. These are typically cut from square pieces of EVA blocks or rings of cork and glued together. Once glued, the piece is then turned on a lathe, sanded and shaped to the customer's specifications. These are some of the types of advanced customizations that can increase the price of a custom built rod. However, it is also an area where the angler can truly set his or her custom rod apart from an off the shelf rod.

- **Butt Cap and Gimbals:** Butt caps are located at the bottom of the rod and can be constructed of rubber, aluminum, cork, EVA, etc. Depending on the type of rod, a gimbal can replace a butt cap, which will allow the angler to place the rod in a rod holder without the rod spinning due to the weight of the reel. Gimbals are mostly used on conventional rods.

Handle Assembly Selection: Selecting a handle assembly can be challenging and rewarding at the same time. The handle is the closest part of the rod to the angler and is in constant contact with the angler's hand. The feel and look to the handle assembly is one of the determining factors on the angler's experience with his or her custom built rod. If the grip's shape or material does not fit or feel right in the angler's hand, all aspects of fishing will be affected. If an angler is experienced, they will know what type of grip works for them. However, if the rod is built as a present or for an angler with less experience, the custom rod builder will assist in making sure the right selections are made through a series of simple questions in reference to the type of fishing the angler plans on doing.

Next: Part 4 – Reel Seats

Thank you for your time and hope to hear from you soon,

Andres Perez
Blue Bay Custom Fishing Rods, LLC
www.BlueBayRods.com
Miami Springs, FL