

February Streamer Ties with Tom Regina... Mickey Finn

Since the first fish hooks were sharpened bone fragments and carved wood it is logical to assume the first “fly patterns” were streamers and historical evidence seems to bear that out. Bone and wood hooks were dressed with bird feathers and animal hair and fur. Men who invented the first streamers did not fish for sport - rather they fished to eat. The earliest fly-fishers didn't worry about matching the hatch. What they needed was something big, meaty and fishy looking. Something subsurface that would fool big fish. Streamers fit the bill. They were large meaty baitfish looking lures worth the effort of a big fish to pursue. Since iron and steel hooks had not yet been invented, streamers dressed on relatively large bone and wood hooks fit the bill. Yes, most anglers hung a worm or other natural bait on their bone and wood hooks. But those guys were not fly fishermen - they were just fishermen. Fly fishermen (and gals) used and use streamers to finesse the fish. After all, anyone can catch fish on a worm. But only some of us can do it fairly and correctly - we are Fly Fishers.

It is well recognized that very small dry fly and nymph hooks, size 18, 20, 22, and smaller, catch big fish, especially in tailwaters where most trout food is tiny bugs. It is also well recognized that large hooks or streamers also catch big fish and more consistently.

Of all the hairwing and featherwing streamers, the Mickey Finn is probably the most famous. We don't know who first created it (probably not the first fly fisherman). Whoever first tied alternating bunches of yellow, red, and yellow bucktail hair atop a tinsel wrapped steel hook created one of the most enduring fish catching streamers we have. If you want to take the full array of trout species in all kinds of water conditions when big trout are feeding on baitfish, you better have some Mickey Finns in your fly box. Better yet you better have Mickey Finn tied to the end of your tippet. For then you can wheedle Mr. Big Trout to your minnow like lure streamer - Mr. Mickey Finn.

Tying Instructions

Hook	Streamer 4X or 6X Long, Size 12-6. For example: TMC 9394 or Mustad 79580
Thread	6/0 black, 8/0 black optional
Rib	Small oval silver tinsel
Body	Flat Mylar silver tinsel
Wing	Yellow, red, and yellow bucktail, layered
Head	6/0 and/or 8/0 black thread with head and/or epoxy cement



1. Debarb and mount the hook in the vise. Using a jam knot start the thread about two hook eye length distance back from the hook eye. In tight touching turns lay down a smooth neat thread base a distance of 1/4" back along the hook shank. At this point tie in about a 5" piece of oval silver rib tinsel on top of the hook shank with the running part of the tinsel hanging back over the hook bend. Continue wrapping the thread to the hook shank mid point. At the mid point tie in about a 5" piece of flat Mylar tinsel, gold side up, on top of the hook shank with the running part of the tinsel also hanging back over the hook bend. (Note: Flat Mylar tinsel comes in several sizes or widths. Most flat Mylar tinsel is gold on one side, silver on the other. To use the silver side tie the tinsel onto the hook with the gold side up. When the tinsel is wound around the hook the silver side will be out. Visa versa for gold side out). Continue wrapping the thread around the hook shank and over the two tinsels to the hook bend. In close spiral turns return the thread to the thread tie on point in back of the hook eye. Cut away the tinsel tag ends.



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2. Wrap the flat body tinsel forward in slightly overlapping turns. Stop wrapping and tie off the flat body tinsel three hook eye lengths back from the hook eye. Cut away the flat body tinsel tag end. Wrap the oval rib tinsel forward over the body tinsel in about ten evenly spaced spiral turns stopping at the same point as with the flat body tinsel. Tie off the oval tinsel and cut away the tag end.



3. Clip a small amount of yellow bucktail hair from the - you guessed it - yellow bucktail. (After tying one or two Mickey Finns you will figure out what constitutes a small amount). Remove any fuzz or underbody hair from the hair butts. Stack the hair to align the tips. (Tip - It's mighty fine if the tips are not perfectly aligned. Staggered hair ends feather out naturally and appear tapered in the water). Measure the hair so when tied in the tips will extend just past the end of the back of the hook. Tie the hair in at the front of the body as shown in the picture. Use only five to ten thread wraps. Cut away the hair butts at a shallow angle so as not to leave a sharp shoulder.



4. Clip a small amount of red hair from the red bucktail. This clipping of hair should be close to the same size as the yellow hair. Clean the under hair from the butts. Stack the hair and measure it the same length as the yellow hair. Tie the red hair in on top of the yellow. Cut away the butts at a shallow angle.



5. Clip another bunch of yellow hair from the tail. This clipping should be the same size as the first. Clean, stack, measure, and tie in this bunch of hair. Cut away the butts and wrap a smooth tapered head. The head of Mickey Finn will not be small. The thread head represents the head of a baitfish so it should not be tiny. Half hitch or whip finish the head and apply one or two coats of head cement or epoxy cement. (Note: After I tie in the

last bunch of hair I change to 8/0 thread. The 8/0 thread makes a smoother and neater head. I then apply one coat of epoxy cement to the thread head instead of head cement. Why? I just like the way the head looks and I get to drink a few more Buds. However, as doc Birdwell says... "the fish don't care" so do it your way.

A tempered hook will bend or straighten out before it breaks. A forged hook will break before it bends....Courtesy of Tom Regina