

Patrick's Hopper

Harry, at Cooma

Goodnight Barlow

15 May 2005

Dear Members,

I know some of you have met my younger brother Patrick when you've dropped by the house. He has that electrical business in town, but he struggles a bit.

I try to have a talk to him now and then and point out where he can lift his game but he doesn't like being told. To his credit, he runs a very nice shop and works long hours. It's one of those electrical store franchises and he gets plenty of support from the wholesalers, so the shop's very colourful and full of Sony and Sunbeam placards and whatnot.

He insists that all the staff wear a special shirt and tie; they're all local kids and in a small place like this that sort of thing always gets a few customers in. But the main problem, as I see it, is my brother's personal style. Such as it is.

He's got a liking for those white framed wrap-around sunglasses like you sometimes see Shane Warne wearing at airports. Patrick wears them all day in the shop, and they look a bit daggy with the shop shirt and tie.

To make matters worse, Patrick has always had this funny habit of looking at people sideways when they talk to him. I remember Dad was always telling him to look people in the eye, otherwise he'd seem shifty, but he never did get out of the habit.

He was always sipping Dad's whiskey and then topping up the bottle with a dash of water, so whenever Dad got on his back about anything, of course he'd look shifty. And my father was drinking weaker and weaker Johnny Walker and

bragging to Mum about how he could handle his drink much better as the years went by.

Whenever Dad went down to The Australian and had a proper scotch he'd just about have to be carried out, which he put down to them filling the big upside-down Johnny Walker bottle with cheap rubbish.

Patrick's also got this peculiar phrase that he keeps coming out with: 'Thaaaat's riiiiight!' When he drops one these, if you didn't know him any better, you'd swear he was on the verge of understanding the Duckworth-Lewis system. Which, as you might guess by now, he can't, I can tell you that right now.

So you can imagine the scene. Someone walks into the shop and here comes my brother. Because he's got Warney's I'm-in-the-money sunglasses on, he bumps into an electric whipper snipper or something that's sticking out in the aisle and knocks it over. 'Don't worry, I'll get one of the girls to fix that. Betty! Come here love. Hello... can I help you?'

Confused? I'll bet you are, and you weren't even there!

His strange idea of customer service would work well with most people except for one thing: he's looking at them sideways—but the customer can't see that because of the sunnies—they think he's talking to someone called Betty.

He then stands there apparently smiling to himself about the electric frying pan display, and they squeeze past between him and the Breville foot spas and go looking for someone a bit more sensible to serve them. If they can't find anyone else they'll sometimes walk back to him, tap him on the shoulder and ask him if an LG microwave is as good as Toshiba. He's just as likely to give them the old 'Thaaaat's riiiiight!' but he still doesn't

seem to look at them.

A few minutes later they get the feeling this clown's started following them around the shop and they get the heebie-jeebies and leave. And later he complains to me that they all drive down to Canberra and shop at Harvey Norman.

What, you might ask, has this got to do with fishing?

Well, it just so happens that by a quirk of nature, my brother is a brilliantly innovative fly tier. When he was about fifteen he came off Mum's quad bike and had to spend a month or so in Woden Valley Hospital. Dad bought him a Veniard fly-tying kit to pass the time away, and he started knocking out quite good flies. I offered to pay him half the going retail rate for anything he tied that was useable and he has kept my boxes full ever since.

Once of his greatest creations was prompted by me ordering a dozen Hopper Hackles from him. You might already know how difficult it is to get the right feathers for the yellow wings. This set my brother thinking, and one night at home he was feeding his cat when he noticed that the cellophane-like plastic Whiskas bag had a clear window in the front so you could see the cat biscuits, and that window was surrounded by yellow. So he cut out the shape of a few sets of wings from the plastic packet, tied them in and Bob's-your-uncle. The full dressing is different to Howard Joseland's original pattern, but is very easy to tie.

Patrick's Hopper

- Thread: Tan bug thread, e.g. tan Talon.
Hook: Fine wire hopper hook, i.e. something with a slightly long shank, about a size 10.
Body: Pale tan artificial dubbing ribbed with flat gold tinsel. Make sure the dubbing you use is made for floating flies, not sinking nymphs.
Wings: Cut out two pieces of plastic from a food packet, shaping the wings so that you have a mixture of clear and yellow and, if possible, black plastic. Tie the

wings in on top of the body, splayed out but pointing back, like a delta wing.

Head: Tie a rough, bulky head of deer's fur, muddler style, and trim to shape, with a bullet shaped head and a few strands of fur left as straggling legs. Don't make the head too blunt, as it will be hard to cast.

You should have a look around the supermarket and see what you can find. Pasta packages are particularly useful for freshwater flies as they often have clear, yellow and red areas on them. Biscuit packages often have white areas and can be used for salt water patterns.

Be careful to choose packages that contain food immediately inside. What I mean is, a pasta package has the pasta immediately inside, so the plastic is high grade, and very waterproof. However a plastic bag of sweets may have sweets inside that are also individually wrapped, and as a result a lesser grade of plastic is often used on the outer package. Also be careful with fly head cements and varnishes, as some have a funny reaction and melt the plastic material.

Next month I'll tell you about how Patrick made me a duck plucker using the knobby black rubber attachments from one of those Panasonic electric massagers.

It worked like a bought one but the Japs wouldn't honour the warranty.

Kind Regards,
Harry

[End]

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