

A JOINT REVIEW OF THE ABU CARDINAL 57:

PART II

By

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Alan Hawk, a British engineer and fishing enthusiast, has previously done a proper review of this vintage fishing reel. Therefore, I strongly suggest to read this review on Wayne's website before going to my review (click history on the main page followed by the reviews

section). Hopefully my experience with this ABU spinning reel can make a contribution to Alan's original review. This is my impression...

Cosmetically, I personally like the black and gold colour scheme of this reel and its boxy design. It reminds you of a 'John Player Special' cigarette box of that era!



Even today on contemporary reels, I prefer a black fishing reel over any other colour, because it creates some sort of quality retro look for me. A couple of years ago, silver was the 'new look', but fortunately it did not last... Maybe because normal wear- and- tear was easily visible on the paintwork or the fashion trend was over. I probably will never know.

Let's get back to the review. The main complaint raised is the spool flange that collapses under tightly wound nylon, especially on the older spools that have been exposed to the sun's ultra violet rays. Although I agree with this fact, I think another factor also contributes to the spools failing: **modern fishing line**. When the original spool was designed for the Cardinal 57 (in fact on the entire range: 52, 54 and 55) during the late 1970's, the type of nylon available back then did not have as much stretch as today's monofilament or advanced copolymer lines. Now take a weak plastic spool that have become brittle due to sun light, add modern high stretch lines, and you get a popped spool, guaranteed! Most of the readers will probably remember Maxima fishing line that was manufactured in West Germany during that era?



This quality line is still available today and produced in Germany. If you use this type of low stretch nylon line, your spools may last longer.

Sometimes I use a pair of ABU Cardinal 55 reels for carp fishing in order to get that ABU feeling from the past... Unfortunately, I have lost a couple of spools on them when using modern nylon. But when I turned to Maxima, my spools started to last. No I am not saying your spool problems are over, but it will probably make your life a little easier until you find a permanent solution in the form of custom made aluminium spools. Interestingly, I still use Maxima to make my carp traces! The abrasion resistance of this 'vintage' line is out of this world.

In Alan Hawk's original review, he showed a small hole that was probably drilled in the spool by a previous owner. Although he did not explicitly say it, I believe the intended function is to act as a line clip. When reading this review many years back, I could not shake the feeling that I have seen this sort of "idea" in the past... After thinking long and hard, I remembered! Mitchell reels of France had the same sort of line clip feature on some of their reels, but was factory produced and not homemade:



Now we probably know who “put nasty ideas in the heads of some people who aren’t exactly the most innovative!” to quote Alan Hawk.

Moving on to the handle assembly and its attachment set up to the main drive gear. I fully agree with the original review’s conclusion. However, I have seen another type of attachment on the 57 reel that I believe is a little better, although not perfect:



Now I would like to comment on the date this particular range were produced. According to Daniel Skupien, the Cardinal 54, 55 and 57 were produced from 1978 to 1982. The smallest

sibling in the range was only produced in 1982. However, I have two ABU Cardinal 55's that were produced in 1977!



I believe this was some of the first ones produced. (Interestingly, these early ones have this alternative type of handle attachment as previously discussed). Is there any reader that has an earlier produced version? I would like to hear from you.

Lastly, we focus on the drag system of the reel. Alan was disappointed with the Cardinal 57's drag performance. Putting the material aside used to produce these Teflon drag washers, I believe drag pressure could have been greatly increased by adding a coiled spring:



Most front and rear drag reels of that era already had this type of drag spring to increase drag pressure. With a change made to the original design of the 57, drag pressure could have been increased to acceptable levels by adding this vital part.

In conclusion, the main problem with this range was the material used to produce the spool and the handle assembly. I firmly believe that cost involved was the main motivating factor to create a low cost spool instead of a more expensive proper one piece aluminium spool.

This trend of producing reels with plastic spools, but with aluminium bodies and rotors continued during the 1980's. The Abu Cardinal 700 range have plastic spools (except for the 757 and 759 models each with an aluminium spool) as well as the cheaper 600 range. In fact, most other manufacturers (Silstar, Daiwa and Shimano etc.) used the same 'design' to produce the majority of their reels during that era. However, this trend changed during the 1990's when reel bodies and rotors were now made of plastic while the spools of die cast aluminium. This latter trend is still followed today in the fishing industry, except for higher end models or flagship reels that are made of the best materials available without considering cost involved. Also, why two different types of handle assemblies were used remains a mystery...

The ABU Cardinal 50's range were the last spinning reels from the classic era, "built by ABU Sweden", and still remains very popular amongst fishermen and collectors alike.