

Newell Reels: The History of Newell Reels



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Newell Reel History at a Glance

Disclaimer... LOL ... I'm not an expert. If I'm uncertain of a "fact", I state so in the sentence. Also, I'm sure that I've probably left out some information. One must understand that in post P series Newell's there were minor mods being made on a continual basis. Also, I'm not as "schooled" on the C or S series reels. My apologies up front for any inaccuracies. Enjoy.....

Carl's main business has never been in fishing products. His main business was injection molding. He started his fishing product line as a hobby since he used to be quite a fishing enthusiast.

AFTERMARKET PRODUCTS FOR PENN REELS

Before Carl began to produce reels, he made aftermarket products for Penn reels. These included bushing cups as well as anodized aluminum bases, posts and spools. These were sold separately or in kits. In addition, he produced kits that included side-plates (with SS bearing cups) to fit the 500 Jigmasters. This was called the 300-C. It came in '99 size as well as the 500 (338) size. I believe you could also get them in kits for the 322 and 344 sizes. These aftermarket parts made the Penn's lighter and stronger.

BLACKIE SERIES (approximately mid 70's thru early 80's)

These were the first reels manufactured by Carl. They're referred to as the Blackie series since there were no stainless steel (SS) rings around the side-plates. The highlights of this series included:

- Aluminum reel bases, spools, posts, star and handle. The spools had a metal hub for the metal clicker. The posts had holes bored into them to decrease weight. The handles were all solid aluminum.
- SS parts included: jack handle, main gear, pinion gear, dog, clicker set, bearing cups, bridge assembly, bridge sleeve.
- Gear ratios - 4:1 and 5:1
- Unitized bridge assembly....i.e. no flying dog springs
- Main Gear/Bridge Sleeve - The bottom of the main gear was recessed so as to be able to accommodate a 4th fiber washer. This fiber washer made contact with a fixed SS washer on the bottom of the bridge sleeve. Therefore, this was a 4-stack drag system with Jigmaster size washers.
- Model Numbering System - There was no letter to designate this series...i.e.) 220-F
In addition to the F designation, there may have been a T designation also, I'm not sure. F designated 5:1 and an M designated the reel as 4:1 All model numbers as well as the "Newell" and "ball bearing" logos were inserts.
- Models: 220-F, 229-F, 235-F, 322-F, 332-F, 338-F, 338-J (or FJ), 344-F, 344-J (or FJ). The J stood for jigging. These "J" models came with a ss top bar.
- Pros - High quality, light aluminum components, high quality ss parts, great free-spool, quality control was excellent. I believe the fiber washers were high quality also.
- Cons – Side-plates often cracked in areas around screws if tightened too much. Side-plates could also chip due to material rigidity. There were no SS rings. High maintenance was required to keep corrosion away.

P SERIES (approximately early 80's thru mid to late 80's)

This was the next generation of reels made by Carl in his Glendale plant. The highlights included:

- Aluminum reel bases, spools, posts, star and handle. The star, though still aluminum, was slightly different and the aluminum handles now had holes bored into them. The side-plates were redesigned to be thinner and not as rigid as the Blackies.
- SS parts were the same as the Blackies. In addition, Carl added SS rings to the new side-plates.
- Gear Ratios - Same as the Blackies.
- Unitized bridge assembly - slightly different than the Blackies.
- Main gear/Bridge sleeve - Pretty much the same as the Blackies. I believe the circlip on the top of the bridge sleeve was different. Mains were either SS or brass. Also, some main gears came with a brass (I believe) insert. This helped with heat dissipation.
- Model Numbering System - The P was the letter designation in front of the model number - i.e. P220-F. In addition to the F, I believe there was also an M and T designation after the model numbers. The models came in 5:1 and 4:1 gear ratios. All logos on the plates were still inserts.
- Models - Same as the Blackies except for the P designation. Also, the 400 models were introduced - P440, P447 and P454.
- Pros: Same as Blackies. The side-plates were vastly improved.
- Cons: High maintenance to maintain corrosion resistance.

G SERIES (approximately late 80's to early 90's)

The 3rd generation of Newell's was made with a new idea in mind. Namely, to make the most corrosion resistant reels made. Graphite composition was to become Carl's new obsession. Beginning especially with the G series, minor changes were made to production reels without changing series.

- Graphite bases, spools, posts, handle and star.
- Changes/Variations - Early G's had an all graphite base with a brass foot drilled into the base, otherwise they were all graphite. The graphite spools retained the metal hub. The posts had logo inserts. Early G handles retained the P series aluminum handle, followed by an all graphite handle (red line) with the N logo insert in the knob, followed by an all graphite handle (red line) and no knob insert. Screw fittings for the knob were not recessed. The G322's only had P series aluminum spools. Carl never made a graphite spool for the 322 models.
- SS parts - Early G's retained the SS jack handle, followed by a new graphite topped jack handle. The early G's retained the SS clicker set, followed by an all graphite set. I believe the

very early G's also retained the P main gear. Therefore, it could accommodate a 4th washer. Later on, the main gear was no longer recessed on the bottom. Therefore, this was now a 3-stack system. The bridge sleeves were now brass without the fixed SS washer on the bottom for the 4th washer. The SS bearing cups were unchanged.

- Gear Ratios - No changes.

- Unitized bridge assembly - Pretty much the same as the P's I believe. There may have been minor changes where the G and P assembly's were not interchangeable.

- Main Gear/Bridge Sleeve - See SS parts section.

- Model Numbering System - The letter G was the model designation in front of the model number....i.e. G220-F.

- Model Numbers - Same as the P's except for the G designation

- Pros - Same as P's, high quality parts and quality control were excellent. Weight was reduced due to the graphite components. The reel was much more corrosion resistant, had better free-spool, more natural bait presentation due to the lighter spool.

- Cons - Some graphite breakage

"NO LETTER" SERIES (approximately early 90's through mid 90's)

4th generation Newell reels. There weren't many changes in this series from the G series except for one very important factor...quality control. While this was still a fairly decent series when it came to quality components, the quality control begins to fall apart about this time.

- Graphite bases, posts, spools, stars and handle.

- Changes/Variations - The graphite bases remained pretty much the same, with no SS foot yet. The posts no longer had the "Newell" logo insert. Instead, they were now engraved with white lettering. The spools, while remaining graphite, no longer retained the metal hub, instead, it was changed into graphite. The handle now had a white line instead of red. The side-plates no longer had logo inserts. They were now engraved with white lettering.

- SS Parts - The jack handle retained the graphite top. The clicker set was plastic. This was the last series to retain the SS bearing cups.

- New Models - 500 and 600 series....533, 540, 546, 550....631, 636, 641 and 646.

- Gear Ratios - 200/300/400 series came in 3.6:1 and 5:1. The 533 came in 4.6:1 and 5.5:1. The 540 came in 3.2:1, 4.6:1 and 5.5:1. The 546/550 models came in 3.2:1 and 4.6:1. The 600 series came in either 3:1 or 4.2:1. There was also a short run of 322-5 and 322-3.6 size reels made.

Some were designated as 322-5 (or 3.6) while others were designated as "300". These were the numbers engraved onto the side-plates. Old P series aluminum spools were used. Some spools spread due to incorrect mastic mixing at the factory. Most spools, however were leftover P series spools and they were fine.

- Unitized bridge assembly - No major changes.
- Main gear/Bridge sleeve - 200/300/400 main/pinion gears retained the same 3-stack jigmaster size drag system. The 500 models used a larger main/pinion gear that had 4/0 size drag washers, actually a bit larger. The 500's used a 3-stack system. The 600's used the same size drag washers as the 500's but the main gear accommodated a 5-stack drag system.
- Model Numbering System - The "no letter" series didn't have a letter in front of the model numbers. Also, instead of an F, M or T to designate the gear ratio, the actual gear ratio number would follow the model number. I.e.) 220-5
- Model Numbers - No pre/post letter designations. 500 and 600 models were added to this "no letter series (see New Models).
- Pros: Pretty much the same corrosion resistance as the G's. One more metal part was removed from the models, namely, the metal spool hub. Again, Newell's goal is to produce the most corrosion resistant reels.
- Cons: Graphite breakage continues, especially the 550 model bases and all model handles.

"C" SERIES (approximately mid 90's thru late 90's)

5th generation models are introduced. Quality control is still a major concern. In addition, SS components are now a major issue. Inferior SS is now corroding while sitting in the retail outlets. Bearings are also a weak point. This series is widely considered to be the weakest of all series.

- Graphite bases, posts, spools, stars and handles.
- Changes/Variations – An SS foot is added onto the graphite base to help stop cracking issues. The handles, while retaining the white line, now have a recessed screw on the knob. The former models had the screws actually protruding from the knob hole, thus causing rubbing against an anglers' hands.
- SS Parts - The last remaining external parts, namely the bearing cups, are now replaced with an adjustable left plastic cup and a fixed right cup. The right cup can no longer be taken off. Instead, the right plate must be disassembled to reach the right bearing.
- New Models - None. There was another short run of 322-5 (or 3.6) reels made. The side-plates were designated as "300". Some of these 322 aluminum spools spread because there was one bad batch of mastic made at the factory. Most spools were taken from leftover P series spools so they were fine.
- Gear Ratios - No changes.
- Unitized bridge assembly - No changes.
- Main gear/Bridge sleeve - No changes.
- Model Numbering System - The C preceded the model number in this series. The exception

was the 300 (322) models.

- **Model Numbers** - No additional models were added to this series. I believe that toward the end of this series (late 90's), the 400 models were discontinued. However, this may have happened during the next generation.
- **Pros** - The SS bearing cups were now replaced with plastic ones, therefore bringing Carl one more step closer to the corrosion resistant pinnacle.
- **Cons** - Major SS corrosion problems ensue along with other quality control issues. Graphite breakage continues, along with the plastic bearing cups.

"S" SERIES (approximately late 90's to present)

- Graphite bases, posts, spool, stars and handles.
- **Changes/Variations** - The reel base screws now "go thru" the base. An adjustable left SS bearing cup is available at an additional charge. Also, during this time period, an aftermarket aluminum handle is made in the 400 size. This size will also fit well on the 500/600 models. Make sure you add some Loctite to the screw and do NOT let the Loctite touch the plastic areas.
- **SS Parts** - no changes.
- **New Models** – None
- **Gear ratios** - no changes.
- **Unitized bridge assembly** - Changes made, I believe, for the new screws. Plates were also modified.
- **Main gear/Bridge sleeve** - no changes.
- **Model Numbering System** - An "S" now preceded the model number.
- **Model Numbers** - As stated in the C series section, the 400 models may have been discontinued during this time. It may not have affected certain regional markets (i.e. Hawaii).
- **Pros** - Again, from Carl's standpoint, the reel has become as corrosion resistant as possible.
- **Cons** - Quality, Quality, Quality.....lack of quality parts and quality control.

Currently, there are a limited number of "new" P series reels. I haven't seen any so I really can't comment. I believe Carl made the aluminum parts out of 6061 aluminum stock this time around. I've heard the aluminum parts are better. I've heard negative comments about the holes on the posts. The mains are a 3 stack system, not 4 like the original P's.