

Schlatter's experience using Synthetic Rope...

Synthetic Am-Steel Blue as a winch line

by Mike Crouse



HOLDING THE POINT OF THE SPLICE where they added a second 80-ft. length of Am-Steel Blue synthetic rope to an existing 80-ft. piece is Doug Schlatter. "It was easy," Schlatter explained. He's used a metal "fid" to pass the new section back through the middle of the existing section, making a clean, strong splice joining the two together. An added benefit to working with the synthetic cable: no jagers.

Always looking for a more efficient way, Schlatter Contracting has run the synthetic Am-Steel Blue as a winch line on the skidder the past several months, in addition to using it to rig and set their guylines on intermediate supports when they're tower logging.

To put it mildly, both company owner Doug Schlatter and his crew are enthusiastic with the results.

While they weren't running their Christy HD tower when we visited, they were running the Am-Steel Blue as the winch line on their Cat 508-line skidder. They'd started with the rope five months ago (or longer) with an 80-ft. piece of the synthetic line, and had just a few days before we arrived, long-spliced a second piece of Am-Steel Blue to give them 150-ft. total of line. "We were able to splice it right in the middle. It as easy enough we were able to do it (on site), and doubled the length."

"We long line these short slopes," said Schlatter, "rather than set up a yarder or try to get it some other way. It's both faster and more practical. We just tree length them out of here, pile them up, then bring the processor by and clean up the piles we make. These guys are pretty proficient at it. They do pretty well."

Some of the advantage of the synthetic rope was evident in the chokermen working from the skidder taking the line down the hill. "The real beauty of the rope is there's no stored energy in the rope," Schlatter explained. "With wire rope you've got stored energy and you get a cat's ass in the winch every time you pull off this much line (they were out over 100 ft. with 150-ft. of line total). So as you're winding it back in you consistently crush stands, which uses up winch line in a hurry. The (synthetic) rope's really light and strong. It's just a much better winch line."

He noted they've had other bonuses using it as well. "It's never stuck in the drum (whereas regular line gets buried there)...this never happens with the (synthetic) rope. It just comes right out."

Over the times they've used the synthetic winch line, Schlatter noted, "...we've never broke it. We had the skidder pull off the ground (and it's still held). It's working well."

From his point of view, he doesn't see the Am-Steel Blue for use as a skyline. "I don't want it for any running lines or even a skyline," Schlatter said. "Where I see an application for me is in lift tree guylines. We use it to hang the block in the lift trees. We have slings for that, and our brush strap to tie that skyline down to the tail hold is a rope."

He elaborated the particular significance of the synthetic line comes from its "...just easy and safe to carry. It speeds everything up. Instead of making five or six trips between lift trees to move all the gear, we're making it in one, sometimes two trips." The difference in weight (10:1) without sacrificing strength is a huge plus.

Schlatter noted the crew was very skeptical when first presented the Am-Steel Blue. "The first thing I sent out was a brush strap, and they all had smirky smiles on their faces. First thing they did was tie it off, pick up the skyline and just went ahead with the yarder. Their attempt was to break the rope so they could give it back to me in two pieces... but it didn't break. The 14-15-inch stump they were hanging on came flying out of the ground instead! It made believers out of them... and they have their confidence in the product."

The result of it, Schlatter repeated,

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Synthetic Rope

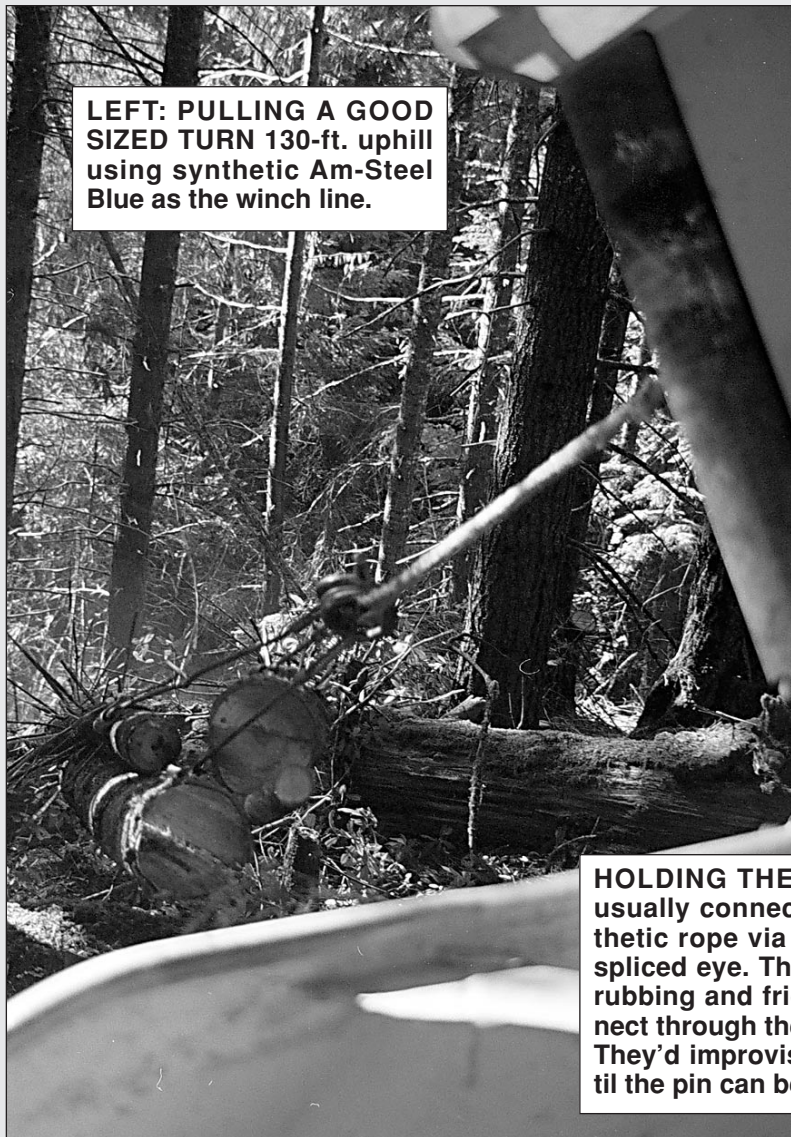
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“...now they have their confidence up that the rope won’t break. It’s strong or stronger than the wire rope we’re using, and just a whole lot easier to deal with.”

“I’ve found,” said Schlatter, “we have increased production and I feel a lot better about preventing people’s potentially being injured, from things like packing the weight. We’ve reduced the number of

trips for the hook tender by using a pack board. We can put everything on the pack board and make one trip, versus 5-6 trips with 60-70 lbs. being carried on each trip.”

He noted that currently the rope is fairly expensive, “...but I also feel that down the road we’re going to benefit greatly from having gotten into the rope. I’m really, really excited about it. I want to continue to pursue using it.”



LEFT: PULLING A GOOD SIZED TURN 130-ft. uphill using synthetic Am-Steel Blue as the winch line.



HOLDING THE LENGTH OF CHAIN, which usually connects to the Am-Steel Blue synthetic rope via a pin that holds the link to a spliced eye. The chain is used to absorb the rubbing and friction where the chokers connect through the “T” on the end of winch line. They’d improvised with this arrangement until the pin can be replaced the next day.