NYLON SNAKEWHIP TUTORIAL

What we are making here is a 4 foot 12 plait nylon snakewhip, there are only two small differences if you would rather make a Bullwhip, but I will tell you about those at the end.

What you see in the picture is some 3.4mm ball chain (you can buy this on ebay) and some 650 paracord. (I buy mine from UBraidIt). First thing to do is decore the paracord, you can see in the picture where I have started to do this, it’s the white core coming out of the red.

Cut three lengths of ball chain, one at 32in, one at 22in and one at 12in…..

Tie a short piece of artificial sinew round the last ball on the chain, thread the other end through a #20 darning needle, and now you are ready to start feeding your chain into your cord to form your core.

Run a lighter over the end of your paracord till it starts to melt then force a fid into it to make a nice opening. If you don’t do this when you start to feed the ball chain in, the cord will fray and you will get in a real pickle.

Now push the needle up into the paracord and just shunt it along dragging it as you go, just be careful to go easy til you get a few inches in, after that it just glides on in.
Once you have pulled the chain fully into the core, bring the needle through, unthread it and with the sinew in your hand put a hitch round the last ball to hold it in place. At the other end cut the cord off around an inch after the ball chain finishes.

You can see here I am holding all three together and am about to bind them all together, again using artificial sinew.

You can see here the first two inches I have bound tight, after that just wrap your sinew round going diagonally downwards till you get to a spot a couple of inches before your shortest length of ball chain ends, then come back on yourself and go diagonally upwards. Do not try and do this bit tight or it will mis-shape your core and that will follow through each layer, all your doing is holding them together to make it easy to plait over.

DO NOT AT THIS STAGE BE TEMPTED TO USE TAPE.

The belly is an 8 plait so tie yourself 8 strings on above the end of your core as shown in the picture, you are going to take this belly to just a little over 3 foot, so you will want to cut your strings 6 foot long, this is a little too long but better to waste a little cord which is really cheap than get near the end and find you haven’t got enough.
There is no need for any fancy plaiting, herringbone or whip makers plait whichever you prefer to call it is plenty good enough, under two over two from both sides. If you look where my finger is pointing, that is the end of your shortest ball chain, when you reach this point drop from an 8 plait to a 6 plait, which is just under two over one both sides.

Here you can see where I have dropped from an 8 to a 6 plait, with the two strings that you have dropped into the core, cut one at 8 inches and one at 4 inches. What you are doing as you go is creating a taper, which you will be grateful for when you come to do the overlay.

Here you can see I have reached the end of the longest ball chain. This is where you drop to a 4 plait. Your longest chain was 32 inches and you want this core a little over 3 foot, so the two strings that you have dropped cut one at 3 inches and one at 6 inches.

Here you can see the belly plait finished, just tie it off with a bit of sinew (as you come down on the next
layer and reach this stage you will cut the sinew off) cut out two strings all together and the remaining two cut one at 2 inches and one at 4 inches.

Now its time to tape the whip, this will act a little like a bolster in a leather whip, adding slightly to the diameter and taper as well as stiffening the first part of the whip so it doesn’t throw like a noodle. I use electrical insulating tape, before you apply the tape make sure to give the core a really good roll, the first layer of tape bind it on really really tight and take it down around 6 inches. The second layer again tight and take it 10 inches so a good 4 inches past the end of the first layer. At this stage give it a good roll again. Then the last layer once again tight take down past the second layer to around 14 inches and roll.

It is not essential or technical to use three different coloured tapes, I just used three different colours so you could see the different layers being applied.

Now over the top of the taping we are again going to bind using artificial sinew, the difference this time is you need to bind tight.
If you’ve been careful and followed all the instructions to the letter you now have a really good core, nicely weighted and tapered that’s ready for the overlay.

I have found with experimentation that it’s best not to tape till this point because the 3 ball chains laid together are not round enough, all you’ll achieve if you try to tape before you plait is lumps and bumps, any whip maker will tell you, if it’s in the core it’ll follow through….don’t do it!