

Jeremy in World team

DESPITE his declared intention of retiring from top-class matchfishing, current World Champion Jeremy Herrmann is in the England team who will defend their World Championship title in the Czech Republic from May 27 to June 3. The five-man team is: Jeremy Herrmann, John Pawson, John Lindsey, Oliver Edwards and Lester Booth. The reserve is Trevor Colclough. Captain and manager is Chris Ogborne.

The match will take place on a variety of river venues in Bohemia, ranging from chalkstream-style stretches to big, fast, deep waters. The quarry will be mainly rainbow and brown trout, and grayling.

Chris Ogborne has been confirmed as team manager and captain for the 1997 event in the USA.



Jeremy Herrmann lost his world crown but still managed an excellent sixth position.

Czech OUT

The Drennan Team England finished 7th in the year's World Fly Fishing Championships, held in the Czech Republic.

THIS YEAR'S championship took place exclusively on the Rivers Vltava and Olava. Five sectors were fished, varying enormously from the fast, rocky headwater of the Olava to the slower, deep potholed pools of the lower Vltava.

The 19 competing nations field a team of five anglers, divided by a random draw into five groups. These groups then compete over the five different venues, with placings being achieved in each. These placings decide both individual and team results - the lower the number of places the better.

This year's event provided a very healthy number of fish from every venue. In fact it is unique in the history of the World Championship that every single one of the 95 competitors caught a fish. Inevitably much rests with the draw, and some beats held more fish than others.

Firm favourites were the Eastern Europeans and it came as no surprise that the host nation of Czech Republic won. Great credit goes to France in second place, with Poland taking the bronze medals. Norway achieved their best ever result in the World Championships in fourth, edging Slovakia into fifth spot, followed by Italy, England, Spain, Belgium and Wales.

Fishing styles were fascinating both for their innovation and variety. We all learned a huge amount over

our two week stay in Bohemia, with variations in rolled nymph, dead drift nymph, and traditional down-and-across methods. The countryside and wildlife are simply fantastic - many anglers saw otters in their beats, with rare finches, warblers and woodpeckers as constant companions on the river banks.

Top British angler was last year's world champion Jeremy Herrmann. An excellent performance saw Jeremy finish in sixth place.

Team placings:
1 Czech Republic, 2 France, 3 Poland, 4 Norway, 5 Slovakia, 6 Italy, 7 England, 8 Spain, 9 Belgium, 10 Wales, 11 Canada, 12 Finland, 13 Germany, 14 Andorra, 15 Ireland, 16 Austria, 17 USA, 18 Holland, 19 Sweden.

NEXT MONTH: A FULL WORLD CHAMPS REPORT TOGETHER WITH THE WINNING FLY PATTERNS.

England

Chris Ogbourne (captain & manager), Lester Booth, Jeremy Herrman, Oliver Edwards, John Pawson, & Trevor Colclough (reserve).

- 1. Czech Republic
- 2. France
- 3. Poland
- 4. Norway
- 5. Slovakia
- 6. Italy
- 7. England
- 8. Spain
- 9. Belgium
- 10. Wales
- 11. Canada
- 12. Finland
- 13. Germany
- 14. Andorra
- 15. Ireland
- 16. Austria
- 17. USA
- 18. Holland
- 19. Sweden

Individuals:

- 1. Pierluigi Cochita (Italy)
- 6. Jeremy Herrman (England)

No Bohemian Rhapsody

Drennan Team England manager CHRIS OGBORNE found his team unable to match the river skills of home nation Czech Republic in the 16th World Fly Fishing Championship. Following a disappointing seventh placing Chris reflects on what went wrong, and what went right, during their Bohemian experience.

DRENNAN TEAM ENGLAND flew into Prague airport just as spring finally broke in 1996. Behind us were seven long months of British winter, yet here there was warmth, blue skies, and fresh greenery all around. We headed south towards Bohemia and the venues for the 16th World Fly Fishing Championships.

The journey was only 2½ hours, and with every mile the hills became higher, the valleys greener and the buildings more scarce. The scenery gradually changed from pleasant to spectacular until we pulled in at the little Pension Alpska Ruze in Vissa Brod, our home for the practice ahead of the Championships.

Vissa Brod is one of a number of little villages in the region, all with the obligatory tall-spined church and all looking like chocolate box images of Austria. This is hardly surprising as both the Austrian and German borders are but a few miles away and the Alpine influence is everywhere. Half an hour away were the mountain towns of Cesky Budejovice and Cesky Krumlov, the only towns of any size in the region, but to all intents and purposes we were very much out in the wilds of Bohemia.

THE RIVERS OF BOHEMIA
AS TEAM manager I had chosen Vissa Brod as our base as the hotel was literally a few hundred yards away from the River Vltava. The Championships were to be held here, on four different sections of the Vltava and one on the Otava river on the other side of the mountain. The match sections were very different in



Jeremy Herrmann and Lester Booth study the river.

character. Some were free-flowing while others 50 miles downstream had a more controlled flow. Our guide, Vit, who in the first day of acquaintance had become a firm friend, suggested an early start to the upper reaches of the Vltava, our first taste of the Czech rivers.

It's not enough to say that the river was pretty. It was stunningly beautiful, looking like a perfect cross between the lochen and the Wythe. There were long stony runs, deep clear pools, fast tree-lined sections never deeper than 18 inches, and every conceivable type of water in between. And all this was in the space of less than a mile of the river! The waters are extremely clean, though most have a peat tinge from the surrounding marshland and natural drainage. Pollution is much less of a problem than at home, and there is minimal agricultural run-off. In fact, a feature of the countryside is the absence of farming activity and one of the visions that will remain is of acre after acre of dandelion fields,

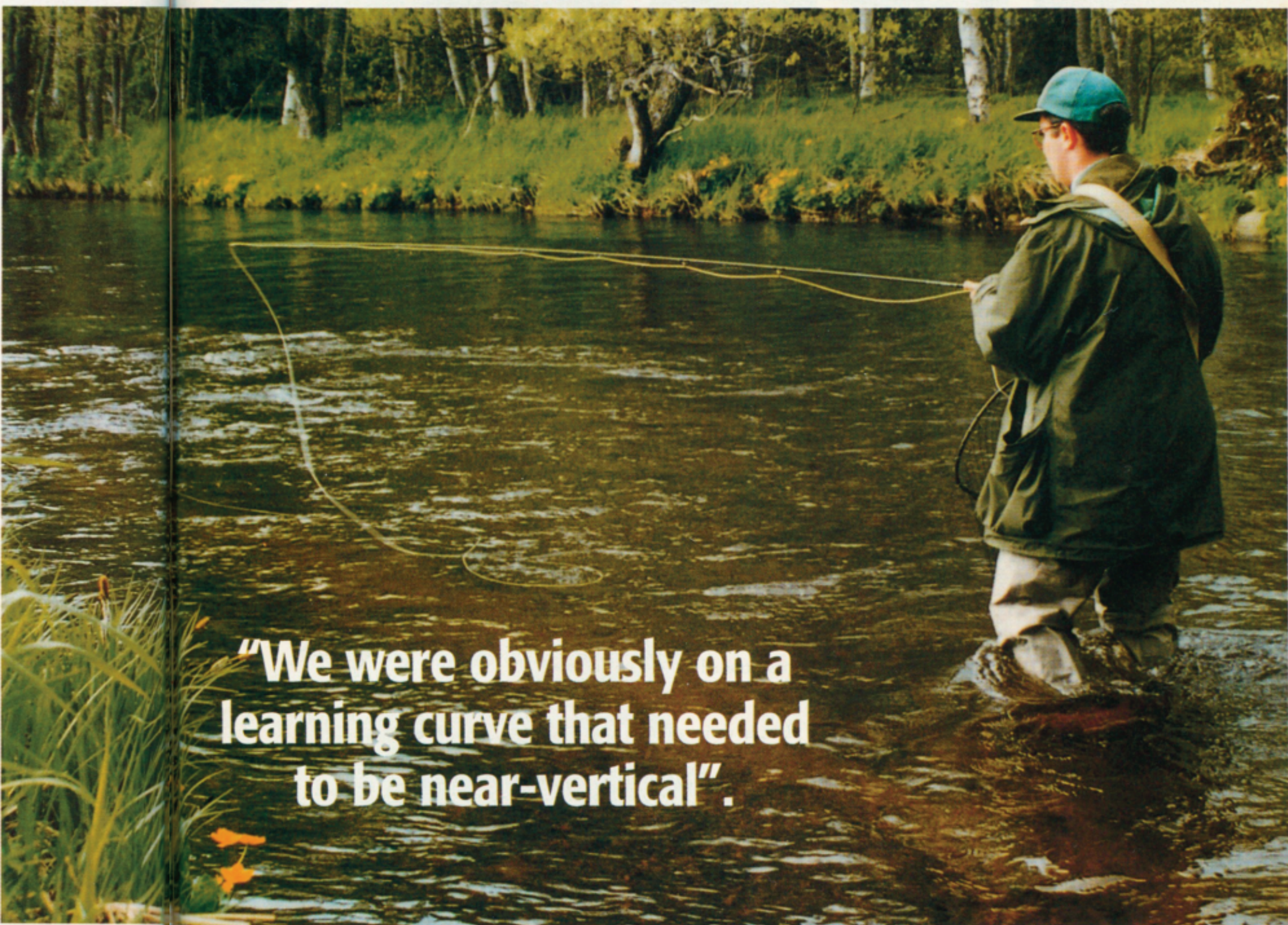
untouched by fertiliser or herbicides.

There is no such thing as private water in the Czech Republic. You pay your full licence, which is £50 for the week, and you can fish wherever you like. In this region alone there was mile after mile of picturesque fishing, ranging from the intimate chalkstream character of these upper reaches right through to wider, dreamy runs on the lower areas that were more like lower Welsh Dee.

Little could have prepared us for that first day, not just in terms of the beauty of the river system which was fantastic, but also in the way that the locals fish them. Vit was happy to demonstrate his methods and I can speak for the whole team when I say that it was a total revelation. I'd fished Continental rolled nymph before, in fact I use it all the time on the Welsh Dee, but it was nothing like this. I'd used heavy slings and sedge patterns before, but again, not in the way that Vit was doing. I gathered the team at lunch time and we all watched Vit catch five grayling in as many minutes - from water that we had all previously fished!

A LEARNING CURVE

WE were obviously on a learning curve that needed to be near-vertical if we were to have a chance against the locals. Jeremy Herrmann, not normally short on confidence, looked at me and said 'Help Chris, this guy's better than me - a hell of a lot better!' For Jerry to stop fishing is a major event. For him to stop fishing and watch someone else for over an hour gives some idea of just how impressed we were at Vit's skills.



ABOVE: Jeremy Herrmann works a beat during the championship.

Oliver Edwards was equally impressed by the contents of Vit's fly box. Most of the patterns were either shrimp based, or directly relating to *Hydropsyche* sedge pupae. But Vit had them in a variety of subtle colour shades for the varying sectors of the river, and also in a huge range of weights to enable him to precisely judge and control the depth at which they fished.

The local style, and the reason why the Czechs had such a run-away victory in the Championships, is based on total commitment to watercraft. Most of us can 'read' a river fairly well and can identify the obvious holding areas. But nobody



LEFT: The wild brownies were beautiful fish.



BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY?
continued

can look beneath the surface like the Czechs. Nobody can sense when fish will be holding in fast water rather than slacks, and nobody can judge fly weighting to keep their artificials within inches of the river bed without snagging. Their 'sub surface vision' is phenomenal, and they were plainly in a different league to the other 18 nations.

Over the week we actually became fairly comfortable with this style of fishing, yet in reality none of us would dare to say that we had mastered it. Vit was extremely complimentary of our progress, and in truth there were days when we could keep pace with him on some sections.

On dry fly, which featured strongly in the afternoons as clouds of olives hatched, we were possibly ahead even of the locals. Both grayling and trout were keen to rise and on occasion you would have a dozen or more fish to cover as they came to the surface almost in a frenzy. But on these rivers Otava and Vltava, home territory to the Czech team, they were invincible.

FISH BEHAVIOUR

AMAZINGLY, fish could hold in the very fastest of currents and in locations that would never hold fish in British waters. They would rise in the very centre of the whitest water, and almost seemed to slum the more obvious holding deeps or pools. They were also very hard to spook and all of us took fish right from under our feet on many occasions, or from water that we had just waded through with abandon.

Dry fly and conventional nymph tactics were both to play their part in the match itself but it was the continental style that decided the true outcome. The Czechs fish teams of three flies, often with the heaviest one in the middle to control the depth. The varying of the weight is crucial as it controls the way in which all three flies fish on the cast.

Occasionally, and in extremes of fast water, they will fish a 'sacrificial nymph' to gain depth, but for the most part it's all about judgement of the balance of the cast, relating it to the depth being fished and the strength of the flow. The three flies are only a few feet apart, yet they all swim independently and fish in perfect harmony.

On the lower reaches of the river there are many whiteflats, similar in appearance to grayling but without the dorsal fin, and also many chub and dace. These would rise freely to the fly, particularly in the afternoons when even a sparse hatch would trig-

ger trout activity.

The River Vltava below the hydro complex was very different in character but no less prolific. Due to flood conditions we had no chance to practise on this kind of water and so the match days, with a controlled river flow from the hydro, were very new to us all. On any of these sections you could find rising fish, as well as recently stocked rainbows in the many pools and runs. In the three hour match periods it was quite possible to fish dry, nymph, and wet fly all in the space of an hour! Such are the skills at this level of competition.

In general the fish are small, but available in great numbers. Typically, a competitor would need to catch upwards of 20 fish in a three hour section to be in the higher orders. The best fish of the Championship was only in the 40cm region, and the average size was probably around 25 cms. Even so, they give a very good account of themselves in the fast water - even a 20cm grayling can be a real handful when you're fishing in white water. With barbless hooks (the whole Championship is catch and release) the greatest difficulty was keeping them on the line and everyone had woeful tales of lost fish.

CZECH SUPREMACY

IN THE FINAL analysis, every angler at the Championships had nothing but respect for the Czech team. They had mastered their rivers in every way, and each of them possessed an affinity with the water that went way beyond watercraft. The French and the Poles, both very strong river fishing nations, took silver and bronze medals respectively. Much credit also goes to the Norwegians in fourth place, in their view their best ever achievement in a World Championship. Five teams, England and Wales included, had been in contention for the bronze medals right up until the final gun.

In the event we finished seventh out of the nineteen teams, which in this company is a more than creditable performance. Full marks to Jeremy Herrmann who came an individual sixth, and also to Ollie Edwards in 20th spot.

But none of this takes any credit away from the Czechs - they were in a class of their own. As a team, and to a man, England salutes you.

TYPICAL CZECH PATTERNS



"Vit's flies came in a variety of subtle colour shades. Most of the patterns are shrimp based".

ENGLISH DRY FLIES THAT WORKED



BLUE WINGED OLIVE

SILHOUETTE ADAMS

FISHING DETAILS
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