

COMPETITION

SCOTLAND WELCOMES THE WORLD

No boycotts, no mud-slinging, no bribes – when will the World Fly Fishing Championship start learning from the Olympics?

Dr Neil McCarry doesn't need to go off the record when I ask if there were 'politics' involved in bringing the World Fly Fishing Championship to Scotland. International Organiser for the Scottish Anglers National Association, he soon puts me straight, indeed, when I wonder about parallels between lobbying for the pinnacle of competitive flyfishing and the Olympic shenanigans currently perturbing accountants south of the border.

"Oh good heavens, no," Dr McCarry laughs. "There's nothing underhand goes on: in fact, it's more like a family gathering when these things are decided."

By the time the governing body FIPS-Mouche met in Prague two years ago to resolve the venue for this year's Championship (Poland and Belgium had also expressed an interest) Scotland's bid had been made the old fashioned way. No advertising onslaught; no relentless PR campaign; the Scots had simply delivered a successful European Championship event on the Hebridean island of Islay in 2003.

Tested and proven, they were ready. The movers and shakers of FIPS-Mouche remembered and agreed that Scotland would host its first World Championships in 2009. Poland and Belgium now move to the head of the queue for a later championship, as did Scotland when New Zealand pipped it to the 2008 event.

So civilised. Are you watching, International Olympic Committee?

McCarry believes the idea of hosting the event was a bee in Scottish bonnets even before Islay. "I think the feeling was that Scotland nearly always competes in the World Championship, so why shouldn't we host one?" he suggests.

Now he and his colleagues on the organising committee await the arrival of up to 22 teams (registration closed after we went to press) and some 150 competitors and support staff in June.

A registration fee covers travel, food and accommodation during the event, with teams meeting their own travel costs to get to Scotland. Sponsored by distillers Glengoyne and the Daily

Record, the event is also funded by a grant from Event Scotland and Stirling Council.

"While we obviously don't want to make a loss, FIPS-Mouche don't want any Championship used as a profiteering exercise, either," Dr McCarry explains. "There's a gentleman's agreement that any profits that do arise are divided equally between FIPS-Mouche and SANA, to benefit youth programmes."

After the opening ceremony on June 5 and two practice days, the competition runs from 8-10 June, when anglers fish Carron Valley, Lake of Menteith, Loch Awe, Loch Leven and the River Tay.

It's believed to be the first time four lochs have featured in the same World Championship and it represents something of a public renaissance for Loch Leven, which was forced by economics to reduce its angling operation three years ago.

The Championship organisers have kept in touch with developments at the life water however and say they have "no qualms" over its inclusion.

More of a concern is the fact that the arrival of fishing tackle from all corners of the globe will make bio-security crucial, at a time when pests like *Gyrodactylus salaris* and didymo are in the news.

The Championship organisers have implemented a code of practice for competitors bringing tackle into and out of Scotland, although as the man overseeing this aspect of the Championship points out, the fact that bio-security is such a 'hot potato' these days should make his job easier.

"I think persuading anglers to take the necessary precautions would have been a harder task in years gone by," says former bio-medical scientist Sandy Forgan, "but nowadays everyone is aware of the risks and takes precautions."

While all the lochs will be boat-fished, spectators are welcome on the Tay to watch the river sector.

And when it's all over what do those behind the 29th World Fly Fishing Championship hope its long-term repercussions will be?

"We just want it to showcase how good our fishing is," says Neil McCarry. "For scenery and fish, all five venues should show off Scottish fishing at its best and the ideal legacy for us would be that this event encourages people to come back."

Loch Leven is one of four lochs to be fished.

www.worldflyfishingchampionships2009.com

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WORLD CHAMPS COME TO SCOTLAND

THE 2009 World Fly Fishing Championships will be held in Scotland, the first time the event has been held there.

Dr Nei McCarry, nternational Organiser of the Scottish Anglers National Association (SANA) who presented the successful bid said: "For the first time the World Fly Fishing Championsh p comes to Scotland and it will be the biggest such event ever held in our country The Championship

will highlight our superb fishing, set in magnificent scenery and will enable anglers from all over the globe to enjoy the unique fishing experiences which we have to offer"

The event is expected to welcome more than 25 countries over seven days of competition and will be broadcast through cable television, showcasing the fishing sites and surrounding landscapes of Stirling and Perthsh re to an international audience.

England

Ian Greenwood (Captain), Iain Barr, Howard Croston, John Horsey, Davey Parker, Simon Robinson & Baz Reece (Reserve).

1. England	230 placing pts
2. France	241 placing pts
3. Scotland	292 placing pts
4. Finland	299 placing pts
5. Wales	308 placing pts
6. Czech Republic	313 placing pts
7. Italy	321 placing pts
8. USA	332 placing pts
9. Canada	341 placing pts
10. Ireland	349 placing pts
11. Poland	368 placing pts
12. Australia	372 placing pts
13. Germany	377 placing pts
14. Norway	379 placing pts
15. Luxembourg	392 placing pts
16. Spain	399 placing pts
17. Belgium	399 placing pts
18. Holland	417 placing pts
19. Slovakia	421 placing pts
20. South Africa	427 placing pts
21. Portugal	468 placing pts
22. Croatia	474 placing pts
23. Japan	496 placing pts

Individuals:

1. Iain Barr (England)	13 fish	23 placing pts
2. Donald Thom (Canada)	11 fish	25 placing pts
3. Christian Jadouille (Belgium)	11 fish	31 placing pts
4. Yann Caleri (France)	19 fish	33 placing pts
5. Calum Crosbie (Scotland)	10 fish	37 placing pts
6. Artur Trzasko (Poland)	12 fish	41 placing pts
7. Martin Droz (Czech Republic)	12 fish	41 placing pts
8. Olli Toivonen (Finland)	11 fish	42 placing pts
9. Laurent Gagneux (France)	13 fish	43 placing pts
10. John Horsey (England)	9 fish	46 placing pts

17. Simon Robinson (England)
20. Davey Parker (England)
31. Howard Croston (England)

On top of the world

TROUT FISHERMAN'S IAIN BARR WINS THE TITLE HE'S ALWAYS WANTED, WORLD CHAMPION

IAIN Barr achieved a unique England double by winning individual and team gold at this year's World Championships in Scotland.

Eleven years as a *Trout Fisherman* writer, Iain had previously won almost every domestic title available. But nothing can compare with having his name etched

alongside fellow Englishmen Tony Pawson, Brian Leadbetter (twice world champion) and Jeremy Hermann.

Trout Fisherman caught up with Iain to find out exactly what the title World Champion means to him, while conveying his opinions about the much criticised selection process. ▶

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TF: How many years have you fished in the Worlds?

Iain Barr: I first broke into the World Team in 1998. We fished in Poland and got a team bronze. I have fished six further World Championships since.

TF: What does it mean to you to be crowned best in the world?

IB: It's an ambition I've had since I started competitive flyfishing when about 14 years old. The elation and feeling when Ian Greenwood, the team manager, came and told me I was the World Champion will stay with me forever! It's beyond a dream but it has come true and it still seems surreal. Fishing is a huge part of my life and to be crowned the best in the world at my chosen sport is just mind-boggling! It was also pleasing to win the title in Scotland as my parents are from there and they witnessed the moment. After all, it was my dad who taught me to fish all those years ago. From my first ever trout of 140g from Ringstead Grange in 1981 on a dry Sedge to the World Fly Fishing Champion in 2009, I have to keep pinching myself. Scotland is also where I won the Brown Bowl so the country has been kind to me.

It makes all my efforts in flyfishing worthwhile as I dedicate so much of my time and money to it but, although I had the individual success, the team and manager can claim their share of my individual glory too. My wife and family deserve arguably a larger share as much of my family time is sacrificed to flyfishing and I have young children of three years and seven months.

I aim to use my success to benefit others. I'm assisting the England Youth Fly Fishing Team and I will be passing on my tips to them and showing that all goals can be reached. The exact details of how I won will be printed in *Trout Fisherman* magazine in the coming months.

TF: How did this year's Worlds differ from previous champs?

IB: This year's World Championships consisted of four lake sessions and one river.

Normally it's four river sessions and one lake, which plays into the hands of the mainland European teams. I was extremely confident while approaching the trip and did say to fellow team members I was hoping for two medals. Loch-style fishing from a drifting boat, is what the English do best, so confidence was high. However, some of the lochs were extremely tough and a little luck would be needed just to avoid a blank.

We were able to practise on the venues last year so at least we knew where we were going on the lakes, although I didn't manage to fish Lake of Menteith. Ironically though,

Proud moment
Iain Barr displays the individual and team gold medals and the individual silver salver that will carry his name forever.

the best I managed on the lochs was a second, but I won the river session on the Tay. One team member drew a dreadful beat on the Tay but the rest of us caught keeping us in the top few as many were blanking due to the 'glorious' Scottish weather.

Teams were prohibited to fish the venues within 60 days leading up to the competition, which seemed a little odd when some venues down the likes of Rutland Water many times over and anglers are travelling half



We did just that by finishing sixth after the first day, but well within reach of the summit. The English are renowned for their light heartedness in the Championships, but this team was incredible. We were sitting second going into the last day and were celebrating a team member's birthday the night before with balloons, party hats and party poppers in the restaurant. Like many previous champs, fish were fairly scarce but that plays into the hands of the more experienced loch-style fisherman, so we were optimistic that England and the other home nations would figure in the top five.

TF: What ambitions do you now have in flyfishing?

IB: It was always an ambition to win the World title but I guess I'd like to win it just maybe once more. Go on then, maybe twice more! There are three titles I'd like to win having come second in them all so far. The English National Final after coming second on Grafham; The European Championship after coming second in Norway and, of course, to win the Troutmasters after coming second, also on Grafham. Maybe one day I'll manage the England team myself to the Gold Medal.

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“They picked the squad they believed would put England back on the map as the team to beat and they were proved right.”

TF: Will being World Champion mean more pressure to perform?

IB: I don't feel pressure going into any competition and being World Champion will make no difference. People may expect it but I am an ordinary fisherman just like everyone else. I have good days and I have bad days – it's consistency that matters.

TF: What did you win as World Champion?

IB: Of course, I won the individual gold medal, something I will treasure and pass to my little boy. I also won the silver salver individual World Champion trophy, which will carry my name on it forever. I keep this for a year. I also won more friends in the sport.

TF: Do you agree with the current selection process for the Worlds?

IB: This is a topic always up for debate. I hope the critics who wrote on the forums regarding the selection process for this year's team eat their 'humble pie'. Who would be a selector? No matter whom they choose there's always contention. In the flight of my career in 2000, I was dropped for the World Championships in England where I had just won the

European Open and the Bob Church Classic. They had their reasons and I accepted it but England went on to finish in their lowest position of ninth. This year's team was selected a year in advance and this sent shock waves across the fishing fraternity. The forums lead the way with the criticisms but the selectors in my book got it spot on. They picked the squad they believed would put England back on the map as the team to beat and they were proved

right. What people don't always understand is that it isn't always about results on paper. Some anglers could argue that they deserved a team place on paper, but this six-man squad had something special, adding anyone else would have upset the balance. Yes, you have to be able to fish but you need to adapt, cope with pressure, work solidly as a team and possess a burning desire and belief to win. You must be assertive, quick thinking and have something unique in fishing that you can't always put your finger on. ◻

Next month

An in-depth look into the tactics and tricks that won Iain gold.

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How I won the world

TROUT FISHERMAN GETS EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT INTO HOW NEW WORLD CHAMPION IAIN BARR APPROACHED EACH SESSION. **PART 1: LOCH LEVEN**

LEVEN hosted one of the five sessions and has been kind to me as I won the Brown Bowl here in the Home International in 2003.

I base my approach on the information gathered in last year's practice and my general wild brown trout experience. I'm lucky to be drawn with Donald Forbes from the Scottish team. I plan to fish the Sluices then drop down to Calveston Strip, but Donald has other ideas and I let him go where he wants because this is his home water.

Donald's friends had fished the

“Donald's friends had fished the loch, receiving plenty of hits but without landing many. Are we to follow that trend?”

loch, receiving plenty of hits but without landing many. Are we to follow that trend? I glance at my partner's set-up; he has a fast sinking line teamed with a couple of Humungus lures with something in the middle. My set-up is a Humungus on the point with two wet flies on droppers, a Claret Snatcher and Doobry, which were successful last year. I choose the Airflo Expert 40+ Di-7 line, whereas my partner has the standard Di-7. I select my 10-foot Multi Loop rod, ▶



A clear drift

All wild brown trout can be timid and if disturbed can 'switch off' for several hours. Constant boats drifting over them will cause them to send them for cover. Also, with very few fish getting caught, you don't want to be second or third in the pecking order for an easily feeding fish. A clear drift ahead of you ensures you're not fishing over disturbed fish and these will continue to feed. Use similar tactics when competing on the reservoirs for rainbows.

which is powerful yet light enough to switch to lighter tackle for nymphs or dries if needed. You can't afford to be swapping rods during the three-hour sessions.

When fishing for wild browns you must have a clear strip of water in front with no boats obscuring your intended drift. Too many drifts over feeding fish will put them off.

It's important to get tactics right early. Within the first 10 minutes we both have firm takes but no connection.

These are surprisingly aggressive takes so I instantly

raise my rod tip several feet from the surface to absorb any further 'smash and grab' raids! Having the rod tip low and pointing down the line is fine when takes are subtle, but often leads to missed fish when takes are aggressive.

I count my partner's line down and vary mine from his so we're at different depths. After a few hundred yards we both hit several fish but fail to connect. I use a combination of Knappek, Hanak and debarbed Kamasan B75 hooks and it seems I'm missing takes on all three.

After 90 minutes we swap sides of the boat, so I'm at the stern, allowing me a better angle across the wind when casting.

This helps achieve better hook-ups because (while moving upwind) fish take the fly from an angle as opposed to from directly behind. With the latter, you strike directly away from it, potentially pulling the hook out of its mouth.

But, when pulling flies back across the wind and the fish takes, as you strike you pull into the 'scissor' area of the mouth,

A rod for all eventualities

On places like Loch Leven you need a rod that can play fish up to 6lb-plus as well as having the ability to hook and land, without bouncing off. A 60c fish. For Iain, the Multi Loop has these qualities.

creating a better hook-up.

Most of my takes come at 10 seconds down on the Di-7 with a fast retrieve. I try the slower retrieve with longer slow pulls, so the line sinks deeper, but takes dry up. I receive takes early in the retrieve and then

Hard going
Leven's brown trout are famous the world over, but provided a tough session for the World Championship competitors.



“I've tried rod position, angle of cast, various retrieves... and a change in the number of flies. Surely I'll connect with a fish and land it?”

fish follow nearer the boat, with little interest in between. This, and seeing the odd fish rise, tells me the trout aren't deep.

I change to the slower sinking Di-5 line, while my partner sticks to the Di-7. The Di-5 keeps my flies in the 'feeding depth' for a full 40 yards, offering more chance of success.

Given that we've had about eight follows, I also remove the

middle dropper and keep my two flies 14 feet apart. Although these fish have very little pressure, they are wild and seeing two or three flies at any one time may spook them.

The Di-5 also means I can slow the retrieve down while keeping the flies high in the water. Although not landed, I manage to get the rod into two fish, only to lose them during the fight. This often happens, especially with wild browns, which fight strong and leap a lot!

At least the Di-5 is better than the Di-7, which had hits with no real connection.

With the flies remaining quite high in the water and the belly of the Di-7 beneath the flies, this curve often results in takes with no genuine hook-ups.

There's less than an hour left. I still get follows despite a longer 'hang' to hopefully induce a take from deeper down and to avoid the inevitable swirl as I lift the flies to re-cast. I have several more takes, which come higher in the water but still no firm lock-up. I reckon that many hits are from fish unable to swallow

a large Humungus lure. So I drop fly size to a size 12 Claret Snatcher and a size 12 Black and Silver Lure with a red tag.

I've tried rod position, angle of cast, various retrieves, change of flies and a change in the number of flies. Surely I'll connect with a fish and land it?

With just 10 minutes to go I hook a trout as the fly lands on the water. So the fish are high. But it's hooked at 40 yards – a long way to bring a fish back on a barbless hook! The fish falls off! I'm sure I've squandered my last chance but must stay focussed to the end.

Our controller signals two minutes left. I make my penultimate cast.

It's perfect – across the wind, through a wind lane but just 20 yards long, keeping the flies high in the water and closer to the boat should I hook a fish. Fearing a blank, my line tightens and I'm willing the fish not to fall off. Again it takes early on the retrieve, but I've only 20 yards to bring it back. I'd slowed my retrieve to very long medium fast pulls and it seems like I've a better hook hold.

After only 20 seconds the fish is in the boat! I always play fish hard because the longer it's in the water the better chance it has of staying there. A stunning Loch Leven brown of 38.7cm needles in the measuring tray, and I'm grateful. Two fish won the session but an individual fish of 67cm was caught! ◻

My one fish takes sixth position and I'm grateful. Two fish won the session but an individual fish of 67cm was caught! ◻

Black & Silver
Lure with red tag

Iain Barr
Doobry

Claret
Snatcher

Humungus

Clan Chief

Next month

With the first session done it's time to head for session two. I'll reveal my tactics for Carron Valley.

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How I won the world

TROUT FISHERMAN GETS EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT INTO HOW NEW WORLD CHAMPION IAIN BARR APPROACHED EACH SESSION. **PART 2: CARRON VALLEY**

THE second session saw me heading for Carron Valley where it was unexpectedly won with just six fish in the first morning session. I'm thinking this will be the session where I'll need over 20 fish to win. On the short bus journey to the venue from Loch Leven, John Horsey confirms some detail about Carron. He'd caught just two fish, which means this was going to be tough.

I need to change my mindset. Gone are the figures of 20-plus fish, I'm now targeting just three

to five to keep me in the top places. The six fish winning the morning session were caught by the Italian angler fishing near the starting point, but as my session starts, most anglers head for the far end of the loch some 30 minutes away.

Nearly all the fleet head for the top end with the exception of just three boats. I wonder if I've made the right decision as the boats disappear into the distance. Normally I'd follow the majority and at least be competing directly with them in the same area. And I'd be confident of coming out on top,

but I'm sat almost alone at the other end of the lake. I've made my decision and I'll stick with it. I make my first cast. Again I've gone against the grain and selected flies more likely to catch rainbows than brown trout. When the browns are 'playing' you can typically catch over 30 in three hours but the numbers from the first session prove they aren't feeding.

I start on a Di-3 with a Carron Cat on the top dropper, nicknamed after I caught over 20 fish on it in a practice session here last year, a Black Straggie Dabber in the middle and a

White and Yellow UV Dancer on the point. The Dancer has been catching leading up to the championships so it has to go on.

I feel confident because I'm targeting rainbows. The Carron Cat and UV Dancer stand out in the peat-stained water with the drab wet fly only visible as I lift off. For me, the white and yellow stand out much better than the drab colours in the peat water and this is why I chose two coloured flies.

GET FLYES NOTICED Bright flies stand out in peaty water



The hotspot Just like the Italian competitor who won the morning session, Iain chose to fish near the boat dock starting point.

I needed to change my mindset. Gone are the figures of 20-plus fish, I'm now targeting just three to five."

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Carron rainbows

Trout Fisherman readers may recall our story on Carron's decision to add rainbows to their stock of browns. It was a tough decision but necessary to keep the venue as a viable business.



Rainbows helped Iain at Carron.

TRY IT AGAIN

If a fish follows when lifting off, cover it again.

A fish moves and I cover it at distance with my Airflo 40-plus Di-3. As I start to pull the flies a trout follows right to the boat.

The fish swirls around the fly and never looks like taking it. I lift the fly out and cast it back. The fish looks bewildered as to where the fly has gone, but as soon as it lands back on the water it grabs hold, only for me to lose it while reaching for the net. I make my next cast.

Several casts later, within seconds of the fly hitting the surface the line tightens. This suggests the fish are very high in the water and maybe reacting to the 'plop' noise as the fly lands. This fish is also lost and I'm getting 'twichy' with 30 minutes gone and no fish in the boat. My Spanish partner also looks a fish as his fly hits the water, and loses it. This is valuable information.

I carefully watch the two boats near me who've caught nothing and moved. I see boats swapping from either side

of the lake at the far end, so I know there's nothing prolific happening there. This analysis provides valuable information. Two boats even start heading back to the starting area curious as to what we're doing.

I move to Seagull Island and fish the channel between the bank and the island where I'd heard three fish were caught in the last 10 minutes of the morning session.

This is an ideal spot because we have effectively two banks where the fish could lie. The stocked rainbows tend to hug the shoreline for security and browns loiter here to pick off terrestrials that fall to the water.

Within a few minutes I hook a fish in no more than three foot

of water as soon as the fly lands. It took the Carron Cat on the top dropper. I land my first fish and immediately take the fly off.

I'm convinced the fish are reacting to the fly hitting the water so I change the top dropper to another White and Yellow UV Dancer. The reaction is immediate as I take another rainbow. I position the boat so I can cast along the bank, parallel to it. Many anglers are casting directly at the bank and pulling their flies out of the killing zone. My boat position means my flies are retrieved along the shoreline about five or six yards off the bank for the full length of the cast and hence

keeping my flies in the zone. My Spanish partner becomes wise to this and after the 90-minute mark, he swaps me to the other end of the boat. But this allows me to cast towards the edge of the island where he had failed to reach. Remember to fan cast in intense scenarios so no two casts follow the same path.

He changes fly to something like mine and catches a nice brown and a rainbow in quick time. Both come within seconds of the fly hitting the water. By now, boats are passing and controllers wave fingers at them indicating how many fish have been caught and our boat is right up there

with about 45 minutes ago. This unintended information is extremely valuable.

It tells me the rest of the lake isn't producing so we don't have to move and waste time. It also suggests that we're using the right tactics. The Spaniard indicates to me that he wants to move to the bottom of the lake but my very best gesturing and pointing convinces him that this isn't a good idea.

We agree to work the same area for the final 45 minutes, which brings rewards. The water's very shallow yet the fish are here. I'm convinced the fish come to the extreme shallows for several reasons. This is where the food is. Cormorants can't dive beneath them to start their attack, so the fish feel safe.

Boats were not allowed to motor between the island and the bank so the fish remain undisturbed. We watch many boats drift towards us only to turn back when the bottom of the lake comes into view at about three feet. This suits us because it's where the fish are. I hook into a very lively



For rainbows: The White and Yellow UV Dancer on the point.



For browns: A Katie McLaren on a dropper.



For browns: Iain's middle dropper was a Black Straggie Dabber.

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Sticking close to the shores was crucial, because all our fish and offers were within 10 yards of the bank..."

rainbow on the Dancer point fly and lose it under the boat after getting it back from 30 yards! This fish takes on a very fast retrieve, arguably too fast for the colour of the water. But, with a fast retrieve in cloudy water, fish have only a split second to make their minds up. This is against the rule for cloudy water – but try it, it works!

I remain alert because the fish come so quick after the flies enter the water. So many anglers cast out and wait a few seconds with slack line and don't hold onto it. Over a season about 15% of my fish take at this point so it's important to be ready less moment the fly lands.

With fish taking shortly after the flies landing, I focus on fan

casts and the first few seconds of the retrieve. I then increase my retrieve to a fast pull. I make a full cast and within a few pulls everything tightens and a sprightly blue trout leaps clear of the water. That's four fish and second place.

All three-hour sessions are over so quickly. I feel I've made the right decisions. The choice of two Dancers was wise, as no fish came to the wet fly in the middle.

More importantly, I was right to stay clear of the fleet. It sometimes pays off. Sticking close to the shores was crucial, because all our fish and offers were within 10 yards of the bank. We didn't have to find the depths of the fish as they had nowhere to go apart from the lakebed. ●



For rainbows: The Carron Cat went on Iain's top dropper.

Next month How Iain Barr tackled the River Tay.

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How I won the world

PART 3: "TREAT THE RIVER LIKE A CHESSBOARD": That's how Iain Barr took five River Tay browns on his way to becoming World Champion 2009

DESPITE being an experienced stillwater angler, I'm confident I can turn my skills to the river when required. In my 12 years of competing at international level I've fished alongside the world's best river anglers. I've learnt a lot in these years having taken second and ninth individual in the last two European Championships dominated by rivers. Incidentally, I actually qualified for England's river team before the loch-style team, back in 1997.

The River Tay was the only section where teams were allowed practice sessions immediately before the finals, albeit not on the competition sectors. The England team found it extremely tough and averaged less than one fish a

man for most of our three-hour practice sessions. In two full days' practice I managed just three fish!

I like river sessions as many decisions are made for you. You have what you have, in my case about 80 yards of river beat. I room-shared with Simon Robinson, a pure river expert and bled him dry for tactical information.

The session is about to start. With bright warm sunshine I'm confident that dries will play a part. Before the hatches start I'll try small nymphs fished in a pair. As a plan B we had the Humungus approach on a sinking line.

As I sit on the bus I've worked out that one fish will keep me in the top few. I set out to avoid the blank. England had hosted a blank and one fish in our first two sessions.

I arrive at my beat knowing an Italian and Belgian angler had taken three fish each. This can work two ways. It gives confidence that there are fish in your beat but it can also mean they've already been caught.

Before starting your assault, carefully study every inch of your river beat. There are two obvious fish lies, which my controller claims produced six fish for the previous anglers. You need to look for underwater features as well as the obvious such as overhanging trees or large boulders. Look for bubble lanes, which give away the ladder trail for the fly life on the beat. On popular rivers, look for areas of water harder to reach as these are often left by other anglers.

I set up three rods consisting of double nymph, single dry fly and single Humungus on a Di-3 sinking line. These combinations will cover any scenario I'm likely to face in my three hours.



The Balloon Caddis took Iain's fifth and final trout.

There's no sign of any fly

life so I start with the double nymph. The set-up consists of two size 17 Olive Goldhead nymphs about two foot apart. I use a French leader-style set-up, roughly 14-feet of tapered leader down to about 4lb with two obvious fish lies, which my controller claims produced six fish for the previous anglers. You need to look for underwater features as well as the obvious such as overhanging trees or large boulders. Look for bubble lanes, which give away the ladder trail for the fly life on the beat. On popular rivers, look for areas of water harder to reach as these are often left by other anglers.

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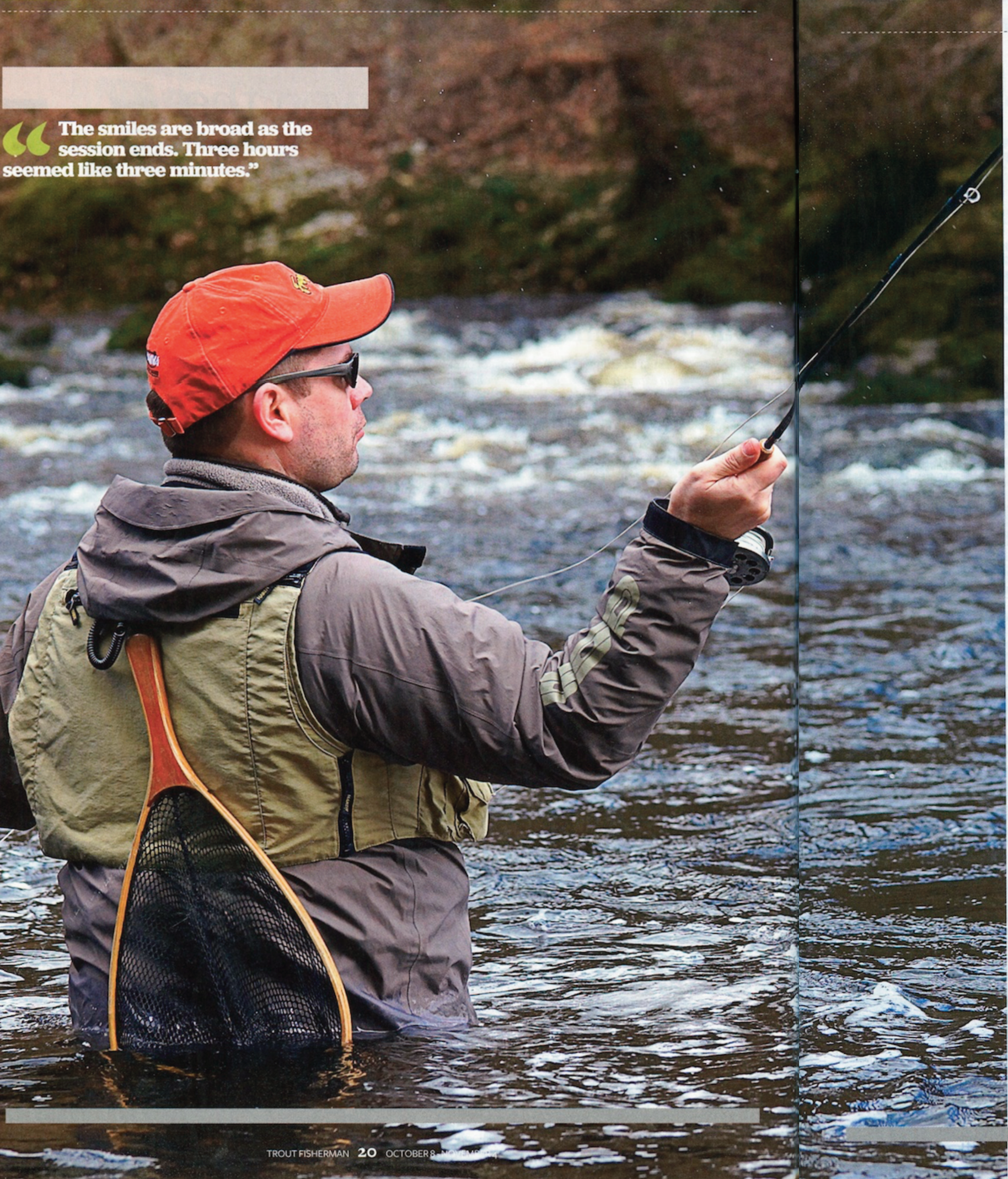
There's no sign of any fly

As I sit on the bus I've worked out that one fish will keep me in the top few. I set out to avoid the blank."



The size 11 Olive Goldhead used on Iain's double nymph approach.

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The smiles are broad as the session ends. Three hours seemed like three minutes."

soft tip ensures that any fish that take the fly as I lower it down and work it downstream are less likely to 'bounce' off on the take. After all, I'm fishing to avoid the blank and I don't want to miss any takes I get.

I've planned my approach and, although the water doesn't look too 'fishy', I cast into every inch before putting my feet into that particular piece of water. I imagine the water in front of me to be like a chessboard and in my mind I separate it into grids. My fly goes into every square at least three times before casting to the next. This way, every piece of water gets covered.

With just eight minutes on the clock, I lower the double nymph behind a small boulder and the two-tone section sharply disappears. The fine rod tip bends as the fish fights.

I land a wild brown trout of 25.4cm to the delight of my controller. With adrenalin flying round my body I move back so not to spook the fish and take a third on the very next cast! I miss one more fish then this section goes very quiet.

Being careful not to pulverise it, I edge out and head upstream. I work what looks the best part of the beat for 45 minutes without an offer. I 'grid' a short section of fast deep riffle and try all three methods with no joy.

Feeling satisfied with my three fish, I head back to the productive section. In case fish have moved back to the lies I had previously caught at, I keep a low profile and work my way back in. While standing in a fast knee-depth torrent I spot a fish of about 1.5lb head-and-tail in the washing machine-like water. I have to make sure I'm correctly positioned before

making the right cast to the fish. In the past I didn't consider my position and this cost me plenty of fish in my early years.

There are some obvious snags where this fish is lying, and this is arguably why it has taken station here. I work out that if I hooked it I would steer it down and across avoiding two large weeded-up boulders... or so I think.

I lower the nymphs in and immediately I'm into the fish. Despite my analysis of the beat it takes me across the stream and into a sunken branch I hadn't spotted. The dropper becomes snagged and it's decision time. It's important to keep a tight line. I wade up to chest height to get to the fish and, with the rod held aloft in my left hand, I sink my right arm through the branch to release the dropper only for the fish to storm downstream – amazingly it remains hooked!

Many river fish are lost in rapid water so I steer it to a deep pocket behind a boulder. I succeed but have to negotiate my dropper fly as it heads towards the boulder. The fish settles in the pocket, allowing me to get downstream of it before guiding it to the net.

This was arguably one of my most tactical fights from a river fish, and I only just won. The most beautiful wild River Tay



A Humungus lure on sinking line was Iain's last resort. It wasn't required.

brown trout of 39cm is carefully released for another angler to experience. It's important to ascertain the location of a fish, but you must also work out the best position to make your cast and consider how you are going to land it, should you hook it.

No more fish are taken here so I move slowly out. I deliberately leave a large section of water, which looks inviting for the dry fly even though I haven't seen any fish move there. I am 'prospect' by casting my fly rapidly over about 30 yards of dry fly water in my last 15 minutes of the match.

My set-up consists of a 10-foot tapered leader down to a 5lb, this allows me precise casting as I make the imaginary grid over the water in front of me.

It's important that I stay alert as the takes in practice were lightning-fast. I fish a Balloon Caddis, a relatively large dry fly. When fish aren't rising, you have to offer them something worth rising off the bottom for. Within a few minutes a brown trout engulfs the fly and my fifth fish is landed. The smiles are broad as the session ends – three hours seemed like three minutes. ●

TF Quickbite tips... When fish aren't rising, you have to offer them something worth rising for.

Next month Session 4: How Iain tackled Scotland's mighty Loch Awe

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How I won the world

PART 4: "I JUST HAD TO AVOID THE BLANK"

World Champion Iain Barr needed just one small brownie from Loch Awe...when the pressure was on

THE fourth session took me to arguably the hardest of the five venues. Loch Awe is some 25 miles long and is a very daunting but extremely beautiful place to fish. We had just one weekend's practise where I caught only five fish in two days' fishing. However, this practise was to pay huge dividends during my world championship session.

All previous English rods fishing their sessions had caught no fish between them on this massive loch. Although getting no positive direct information from them they were able to tell me where fish had been caught, which in a team event is just as useful.

Knowing that I was now topping the individual stakes and England had climbed to second place behind France added a little more pressure, but you've got to be confident. Eyes are set on the local expert Donald Forbes who fishes here regularly and I feel assured when he heads in the same direction as me.

Wild brown trout can be aggressive so I fish a small Humungus on the point with two traditional wet flies to appeal to their more natural tastes. I fish them on a fast slime line allowing me to retrieve them at speed near the surface or slower so they drop to about six feet deep.

I use the experience gained in

Loch Awe
Scotland's mighty loch proved to be the toughest session of the championships.

TF Quickbite tips...
Wild browns are aggressive – short and wet fly combination can be productive.



Norway, 2007 where England and I took silver team and individual medals respectively fishing for predominantly wild brown trout. I place my Zulu wet fly just four feet from the Humungus, which was tied with a tungsten bead to create a good 'plop' as it hits the water. This attracts the fish and more often than not they take the wet fly up from the lure.

We head for the top end of the loch with my crazy boat partner from Australia, Max. Two mad men together so it's sure to be a fun session if nothing else!

Our starting position is near an incoming river. This brings fresh water and, more

“It is critical to keep an eye on your competitors as you can gather so much information.”

importantly, a steady food supply to the waiting fish.

This was a popular starting point with other competitors in previous sessions but many of the boats drop short on to an adjacent point, including local favourite Donald Forbes. Do they know something we don't?

It is critical to keep an eye on your competitors as you can gather so much information.

Within 10 minutes of our first drift across the slow flowing river mouth, mad Max hits in to a magnificent wild brownie of nearly 40cm. It puts up a tremendous fight before nestling in his net. A few 'high fives' and there's an air of excitement that's soon dampened with an hour of no more action.

The boats are now spread

water, offering that food supply wild trout require. The bay is calm with a pin ripple and it's important that we don't take the boat in too fast. Even at this high level of competition I'm still amazed at some of the boating skills of anglers who have perfect presentation when fishing but have unwittingly disturbed their drift by their questionable engine skills.

A wide arc, a slow drift in and we position the boat perfectly off the shore where we can work the running ledges off the shoreline. I've taken the lures and wet flies off in favour of a much more subtle approach. I choose my midge-tip line, finer 6lb Frog Hair fluorocarbon with a dry Bibio Hopper on the top dropper and two Cruncher nymphs behind. Again, this came from an archive in Australia, 1999 when I'd fished lures all morning only for my partner to take me in to a shallow bay and fish a dry fly and nymph combination, catching a superb wild brown trout.

This set up allows various options. I can fish the Bibio Hopper – a great fly for wild brown trout. A sizeable dry fly often pulls up the most stubborn of fish. It also makes a great indicator should a fish grab the nymph without me feeling it at hand. I also use the dry to control the speed of retrieve for the nymphs, as I'm able to watch the dry fly speed, which the nymphs will be following of course.

but a few are still fishing the adjacent point. We do several drifts here without joy and no fish caught by our competitors. With a little less than an hour left we have to do something different. Fortunately Max lets me take full control of the session due to my vast loch-style experience. We head for Barbecue Bay, a name I'd given to a bay near the famous Islands when I caught there last year after a team barbecue overlooking the spot. It offers a steady depth gradient and the perfect cruising shelf for wild brown trout. There's a natural tree line allowing insects to fall in to the

“The clock shows 35 minutes of fishing time remaining. I stay focussed knowing that I may get just one more chance...and it comes.”

Iain's Bibio Hopper on the top dropper combined with the Cruncher nymphs.

A plain Cruncher nymph occupied one of the droppers.

The Olive Cruncher proved crucial, taking Iain's only fish of the session.

A Zulu wet fly on a dropper combined with the lure on the point.

I fish an Olive Cruncher and a plain Cruncher at six foot intervals behind the dry, making my first cast towards the tree line. There's the odd Mayfly about with no fish showing but just seeing natural food gives me confidence fish will be present. Last year the bay was full of fish but it has dropped some 10 feet or so since then. The clock shows about 35 minutes of fishing time remaining. I stay focussed knowing that I may get just one more chance...and it comes. The Hopper sits proudly on the surface before disappearing. I lift my rod into a fish that jumps about six foot out the water! It's only small and as I lift it into the net it falls into the bottom of the boat. It had taken the size 12 Olive Cruncher six foot from the dry fly. My controller laughs and seems bewildered when I ask for the measuring tray. He's convinced it won't reach the mandatory 20cm length. I have fished World and European

EASY DOES IT
Motor the boat slowly into bays!

The Humungus was Iain's first point fly.

Next month
Session 5: How did Iain perform in his final session on Scotland's Lake of Menteith?



How I won the world

PART 5: THE LAKE OF MENTEITH. "THE MOST IMPORTANT 3-HOURS' FISHING OF MY WHOLE LIFE"

World Champ Iain Barr on the intensity of his final session



The Cormorant is the only fly that stayed on Iain's leader throughout the session.

"See-Saw" method
With fish moving between 1ft and 4ft depths, Iain used a goldhead lure on top dropper with Booby on point. Read text for more on the "See-Saw" method.

TF Quickbite tips...
On occasions it pays to put the heaviest fly on the top dropper instead of the point.

THIS is the session I'm looking forward to most. I've never cast a fly into Menteith before so this is going to be a tough test.

On a high from my previous session and knowing Davie Parker took first place the session before me on this venue, I'm quietly confident I'll catch. England had mixed fortunes on this water, Howard Croston fished magnificently to match

Davie Parker's position with a first place in the first session of the competition but others didn't fare so well.

After my seventh place in the previous session I'm not sure I still hold top spot and I don't want to know. But news filters through that I'm still in pole position. This adds spice to what will now be my most important three hours of fishing ever. Not only that, the England

“I'm gobsmacked to see pleasure anglers anchored and drifting in a World final.”

team avoided a blank in session four which leaves us sitting just two points behind the French. Primarily this is a team event so the team and individual medals are at stake on a venue I've never fished! The method is to fish a Goldhead Black Humungus type lure on the top dropper with a Cormorant in the middle and small-eyed Cat Booby on the point, all fished on a midge-tip line.

I call this the 'See-Saw' method because the top dropper gets dragged deep and the Booby remains almost buoyant. In most situations the heaviest fly should go on the point, but the water's very murky with a maximum of two foot visibility. The fish drop to about four foot when sunny and in the top foot when cloudy. Trout want the fly slow so to fish the goldhead on the point with a slow retrieve will mean it drops beneath the required



depth. However, when placed on the top dropper the fly line holds the fly up higher in the water.

We could fish a general lure without a bead but, with the fish being so high and the water so cloudy, the goldhead causes a 'plop' which attracts the fish to the general direction of the fly and increases the chances of the flies being seen.

When the boats head out, I stay with the main fleet. But I'm 'gobsmacked' to see pleasure anglers anchored and drifting through the main area which is relatively small, in a major World flyfishing championships! Despite manoeuvring around these I lock into a fish first cast only for it to fall off. I then fish for 30 minutes without any other offers and the Black Humungus has to come off. Despite it being a method that has worked, I'm not comfortable with it and I must do what I feel is right. I take the brave decision to change. I go for two JC Straggles with a Cormorant in the middle, still

on the midge-tip line. I feel anxious as a few fish are getting caught but they're eluding me. I watch the Welsh and Spanish angler pulling Blobs on a slime line taking three fish in less than five minutes between them. This is totally against what has been working, so I speed up my retrieve and immediately my line locks up. I net this fish and the nerves calm down. I had been fishing slowly and was convinced that, despite keeping my flies in the top two feet, they were still too deep. I watch the Welsh angler take a fish and I see the boil as he strikes. This tells me the fish are inches down and my slow retrieve was sinking beneath them.

I change tactics to a shorter cast and quicker retrieve, but all to no avail. It's crunch time. One hour to go and I only have one fish. I stay in contact with those around me and sneaky hand signs indicate that one fish, although not disastrous, isn't exactly setting the standards.

I decide to head to the other end of the lake. I have this area to myself and on my first cast I land a pike-ravished rainbow. With its guts hanging outside, the fish is carefully returned.

My optimism grows but no more offers follow and with 20 minutes left we return to our starting point. Catches of one or two fish seem to be the trend.

ASSESS DEPTH
Fish 'building' once hooked, are shallow.

I return to the harbour somewhat disappointed, thinking lightning has struck twice. In Norway, 2007 I led the field going in to the last session only to finish second. Today's two fish earn sixth place and I have to beat the Polish angler on my session who is in contention and, more importantly, I must beat the French angler from the team perspective.

The first hour after the whole competition has finished is something very special when you are in contention. My mobile phone doesn't stop ringing as team members call to pass on their results. The French had blanked on two

sessions and England had one blank. Nothing is official but the French manager approaches and congratulates me saying we have beaten them.

At 9pm the results are posted. Ian Greenwood, England team manager, slips away and despite being a young mid 60-year-old, he comes bounding back to the restaurant to tell me the good news - I am the new World Fly Fishing Champion.

That moment will never leave me. My team-mates leap on me and lift me up as we dance celebrating both the team and individual success.

This team was special, unique, right from the management to the reserve. It had a backbone of sheer determination, winning mental attitude and a hunger I have never seen before.

The whole team finished in the top 31 positions, which is incredible. Despite a couple of tough sessions, John Horsey showed his class by finishing 10th in the World with Simon Robinson and Davie Parker finishing in the top 20. I was proud to be in this team. ●