

Taught a French Lesson

“Beating England on their home waters is like the French football team winning in Brazil” – Said Yahiaoui, French Team Manager

Reports: RUSSELL HILL Photography: PETER GATHERCOLE



Left: Flying Frenchmen. The new World Champions.
Right: Hywel Morgan (far right) shows team-mates how to detect wind direction.

The winners

ALTHOUGH surviving on minimal sponsorship, the French are getting used to winning world championships. Their latest success the result of team spirit, endless encouragement and an Englishman called Andrew Green.

Andrew, a Walthamstow Booby specialist, lived with the French squad as their guide for a week before the event. He was able to recommend tackle and tactics for all the championship venues, especially Chew and Blagdon lakes. He suggested Buzzers as the best line of attack and to fish very slowly, while letting the wind move the line across in front of them.

The secret was to slow the retrieve down to almost static, allowing slack line to develop between the rod-tip and the water's surface, with the rod raised about two feet. Anglers knew they'd hooked a fish when the slack line straightened.

“In effect, it was very similar to watching a swing-tip while coarse fishing,” revealed Andrew, who claimed that many anglers keeping a tighter line to their flies actually missed takes due to fish feeling early resistance from the rod and dropping the fly.

Andrew maintained the slack line method produced violent takes, because the fish felt less resistance and swam off giving the angler plenty of time to react. During practice on the lakes the trout were ‘tapping’ the flies. To gain more confident hook-ups the French scaled down the hook size. After casting, they waited 20 seconds for the Buzzers to sink before commencing a slow retrieve.

IT WAS something of an irony that the Twentieth World Flyfishing Championship clashed with National Sandwich Week as England produced an unpalatable performance to slump to a disastrous 12th on their own waters.

France dominated the event. The Welsh celebrated a famous victory over their neighbours and championship hosts, finishing at a canter to take a silver medal.

France were simply brilliant. They landed 149 fish over the three days – 57 more than their nearest rivals and included the top two individual anglers among their ranks with Pascal Cognard and Jean Michel Lauret. Pascal is the first man to be crowned individual world champion three times.

“I'm thrilled,” said Pascal. “On the final day I knew it was close between myself and Gareth Jones of Wales. But after taking 19 fish from the River Test on my final session, I knew I had a good chance of victory.”

Pascal, from Venissieux, near Lyon won individual honours in the USA, 1997 and Norway, 1994. And instead of boasting about his third win, he now signs his name with three stars after it!

Wales also had two anglers in the top 10, with Brecon based Gareth Jones taking third. “I'm very pleased with third individual position,” said Gareth. “It's a shame we couldn't catch France in the team performance, but they were simply tremendous.”

