

# 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.

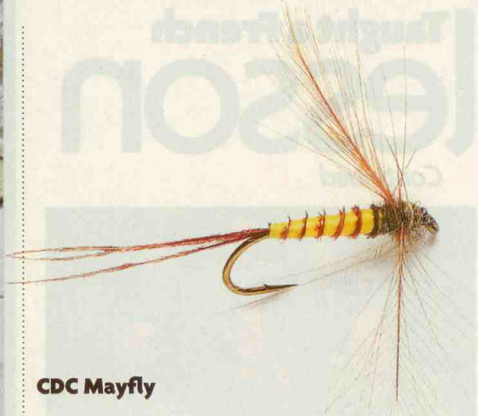
“I'm thrilled,” said Pascal. “On the final day I knew it was close between myself and Gareth Jones of Wales. But after taking 19 fish from the River Test on my final session, I knew I had a good chance of victory.”

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.”



### Winning French Flies



CDC Mayfly



Muddler



Mayfly



Black and White Buzzer



World Champion for the third time – Pascal Cognard.

### Winning flies

ANDREW tied some Black & White and Black & Red Flexi-floss Buzzers, and others with soft tying thread. Some had fluorescent orange T-shirt paint cheeks and the French developed them further to suit their needs. The Buzzers, or "les Chiros", were tied on carp hooks to sink faster if the fish were deep on bright days and on standard wet fly hooks if the trout were higher in the water.

On the reservoirs, especially Chew, the water remained clear and France used the transparency of Ashima 5lb fluorocarbon to fish their nymphs.

Non-fishing team captain, Jacque Boyko, tied the rest of the winning patterns: "The Buzzers caught well on the lakes and CDC style Mayfly imitations scored on the river," said Jacque. The mayfly hatched in numbers on the river especially during the afternoon. In addition to fishing Mayflies with the current, they twitched Muddler-style patterns across the surface to entice the fish up.

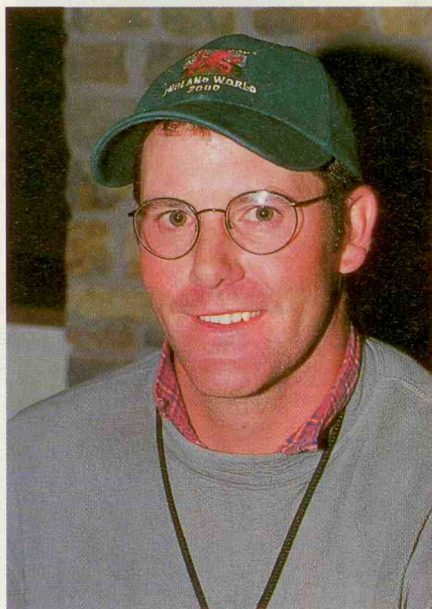
Good peg draws also played a part in the French victory. Anglers drawing pegs 11 to 14 on the Woodford Bank at Chew enjoyed brilliant sport, with most other bank areas producing little. And on the Test, those fishing the wider pools had more success than anglers drawing narrow stretches of water.

## Taught a French lesson

Continued



The silver medal-winning Welsh team and top 'Brit', Gareth Jones.



## Wales

"We beat  
England,  
we beat  
England"

— the entire Welsh team

ENGLAND had a sneaky feeling the Welsh would be there or thereabouts. How right they were. Beating England on their home waters is an achievement every Welshman relishes, and this young squad are no exception.

After finishing in lowly 14th at the end of the first day, the Welsh soared up the results sheet with breathtaking speed after each session, in what was undoubtedly the greatest recovery of the championships.

Next year the event will visit Wales and after this performance they are understandably confident.

Tenth individual Hywel Morgan said: "We're delighted to win here. We have a young team who are hungry for success so next year will be very interesting." Team coach, Edgar George from Cardigan, is naturally delighted for his squad: "Many of our team are regulars at Chew and Blagdon, so they were very much at home. I am extremely pleased for them."

## Successful tactics

THE WELSH used Tadpoles and mini lures fished on Di-3 lines during the hot, bright days of practice, but on Chew's official practice session cooler weather meant nymphs also fished well on slime lines. So it was a combination of nymphs and lures that catapulted the Welsh up to second place.

Third individual Gareth Jones had particular success with lures, although swapping between the two methods on his lake sessions. "I changed between nymphs and lures because it's good to alter tactics so the fish don't get used to just one approach," said Gareth.

After missing plenty of fish on his Blagdon morning boat session, Gareth found the brownies very obliging. "During a strong wind

the browns were on the move, and I took three in one drift on a small Black Muddler," said Gareth, who also found considerable success with the MacKay fly.

On his Chew bank session Gareth fished lures first, then nymphs and finally back to lures again. "I took six fish on a Peach Tadpole with a roly-poly retrieve," added the Bristol Water member.

While boat fishing from Chew, Gareth switched to slime lines and nymphs to take seven fish, securing second individual spot at the end of day two.

On day three he travelled to the River Test for his final two sessions. In the morning he hooked eight fish but only landed three. He used a Stimulator dry fly pulled downstream faster than the current. He then rounded off his campaign with two more trout on Mayfly during the afternoon.

## Team effort

GARETH was more pleased for the team's success rather than his own and singled out Carl Jones as the man who made the difference between bronze and silver.

"Carl is mainly a river angler who graduated from the Welsh youth. He drew a difficult peg on his Chew Valley bank session, peg one at the top of Nunnerly in the trees, but managed to catch a fish where many had blanked," said Gareth.

Hywel Morgan produced an amazing display from the boat at Chew on the final day. Taking seven fish at Heron's Green Bay he easily won the session and vital points for Wales. Using a floating line he fished a purple lure on the point with crisp packet Buzzers and Hare's Ear on the droppers.



## Australia come third

“The change in the weather just before match day was a decisive factor”

– Tim Urbanc, Australian competitor.

LAST YEAR'S champions Australia produced a consistent performance to finish third overall.

Team manager Elizabeth Nicholls said: “Two of our anglers, Peter Hayes and Andy Scott, fell sick on the last day of competition but soldiered on to keep us in the hunt for a medal.”

Australia, like the French, were aware that slow nymphing was the method to try as fish started to feed.

Tim Urbanc said: “During practise we caught fish all over the lakes on all manner of methods. But the fish fed more in shallower water when the match started so we tried slim Buzzers, Superglue Buzzers, small Pheasant Tail Nymphs and that most famous of nymphs for Chew and Blagdon, the Daiwl Bach.”

Ross Stewart was Australia's top rod in 12th place, with Peter Hayes one place behind, despite his illness.

## Miserable England

“If we can't do well at home, there's something wrong”

– John Lindsey, Team Manager, commenting before the event

SO WHY did the hot pre-match favourites hugely under-perform at home, when everyone expected them to win? It was John Horsey's debut as captain: “In my view this was one of the most ‘peggy’ world championships ever. You really had to get a lucky draw at Chew and on the River Test. I drew a really narrow stretch of water on the river and struggled. Having said that, the French taught us a lesson in slow nymph fishing,” said John.

England's Baz Reece and Martyn Adams blanked on the reservoirs during day one, placing England way down the team list. After that they just couldn't catch up due to the pressure upon them. England's initial tactics were wrong. They began by pulling lures on the lakes while most other teams were slow nymphing. “We felt the pressure after a bad start and just couldn't slow our fishing down enough,” added John, who put in an impressive effort on the final day to boost his team up to 12th and himself to 19th overall.

Four times Home International Brown Bowl winner Chris Howitt would figure in anyone's team, but he failed to deliver.

“It was a series of disasters,” said Chris. “A swan ruined my peg on the river and some of the other team members received bad draws.”

Team manager John Lindsey said: This is a

Hywel Morgan hangs on to another fish during his blistering boat session on Chew.



John Horsey doing his best to fly the flag for the host nation.

great disappointment, especially after the sheer effort of preparation we put in during April and May.”

John Horsey regained some pride with a strong performance late on to finish as top English rod for the second year running. You can read his personal report on page 44.

## Results

● Team and individual weights were decided on points rather than weight.

**Teams:** 1 France, 149 fish; 2 Wales, 92 fish; 3 Australia, 78 fish; 4 Italy, 93 fish; 5 Norway, 68 fish; 6 Czech Republic, 78 fish; 7 Canada, 69 fish; 8 Belgium, 83 fish; 9 New Zealand, 65 fish; 10 Scotland, 66 fish; 11 Poland, 68 fish; 12 England, 66 fish; 13 Finland, 66 fish; 14 Germany, 55 fish; 15 USA, 61 fish; 16 Slovakia, 68 fish; 17 Ireland, 60 fish; 18 Spain, 68 fish; 19 Netherlands, 47 fish; 20 Bosnia, 33 fish.

**Individuals:** 1 Pascal Cognard, FRA, 48 fish; 2 Jean Michel Lauret, FRA, 23 fish; 3 Gareth Jones, WAL, 23 fish; 4 Edgardo Dona, ITA, 27 fish; 5 Erik Eikre, NOR, 20 fish; 6 Angelo Ferrari, ITA, 26 fish; 7 Jean Luc Estublier, FRA, 28 fish; 8 David Bishop, CAN, 22 fish; 9 Peter Bienek, SLO, 25 fish; 10 Hywel Morgan, WAL, 24 fish; 11 Kazimierz Szymala, POL, 18 fish; 12 Ross Stewart, AUS, 20 fish; 13 Peter Hayes, AUS, 20 fish; 14 Dave McLellan, NZ, 22 fish; 15 Andrew Scott, AUS, 16 fish; 16 Maurice Willis, IRL, 21 fish; 17 Janne Pirkkalainen, FIN, 17 fish; 18 Jay Buchner, USA, 19 fish; 19 John Horsey, ENG, 18 fish; 20 Alain Biront, BEL, 18 fish.