



Experts rule One-Fly

Fly Fishing Team USA takes title, Worldcast's Janssen earns guide honors.

By Michael Pearlman

For a change it wasn't the weather but water conditions that primarily challenged the 40 teams of anglers competing in the 17th annual Jackson Hole One-Fly.

With releases from Jackson Lake Dam more than double typical flows, competitors battled the highest water ever encountered in the event's history. Conditions made casting accuracy as critical as fly selection, as the event's most skillful anglers were rewarded with top honors.

Serving as an alternate for the American Museum of Flyfishing team, Worldcast Anglers guide Jim Hickey landed a 24-inch brown trout on the stretch of the Snake River between Deadman's Bar and Moose to take home the award for largest fish caught in the tournament.

"I was prospecting near some trees and thought it was a big cutthroat at first," Hickey said. "He did give me quite a fight."

The top amateur individual point scorer was Pennsylvanian Joe Codd of the Frontier Fly Fishers team. After a modest first day score of 111, Codd hit it big on Sunday, fishing the whitewater stretch of the Snake from West Table boat launch to Sheep Gulch. Using a customized Chernobyl Ant dry fly, Codd landed a 23-inch cutthroat, one of seven measurable fish he caught on the day. He finished Sunday with a whopping 597 points for a total of 708 to take the individual title.

"I didn't know I had had a strike until my fly disappeared," Codd admitted. "I renamed my fly the 'Blind Squirrel,' because even a blind squirrel can find a nut sometimes."

Codd credited Worldcast Anglers guide Mike Janssen for his success on Sunday. Janssen's clients benefited enormously from his knowledge of the tricky waters of the Snake River Canyon. With his boats combining for a two-day score of 1,510 points, Janssen was awarded top guide honors for the tournament.

"I've fished that stretch countless times over the years," Janssen said. "That's my water; that's my bread and butter."

Codd's point total on Sunday was the highest single-day score of the weekend. Roger Plooster of the Nebraska Fly Casters finished second in the individual competition with 678 points. Saturday's top individual score was recorded by Jackson attorney Peter Moyer, who tallied 469 points after deciding to go with a size-18 Rusty Spinner. Event founder Jack Dennis declared Moyer's fly selection to be, "the most gutsy call of the competition."

Running away with the team event was the talent-heavy Team USA. Captained by Walter Ungermann, who also captained the U.S. World Fly Fishing team in Spain this spring, Team USA ran away with the title on the strength of the individual performances of two team members. Keith Bean of Sevierville, Tenn., had the highest score of any professional angler in the One-Fly while teammate John Kelleher's 664 points was third-highest among amateurs. Team USA finished with a two-day total of 2,263 points while Frontier Fly Fishers was a distant second with 1,725 points.

As usual, stories of lost and recovered flies were shared with gusto at Sunday night's banquet. Dubois angler Thomas Radoumis of the Charlie Russell Riders team was nearly sidelined from Saturday's competition while fishing with guide Will Dornan on the stretch of the Snake from the Astoria boat launch to West Table.

"We got sucked into a big eddy and I didn't realize there was a rock wall right behind us," Radoumis recalled. "I went to cast and when I looked down I realized my fly was gone. Incredibly, I looked down and there's my fly floating in the muck. I couldn't believe my luck and neither could Will."

Teton Troutfitters guide Caldwell Johnston may have gone to the greatest lengths to salvage a competitor's fly. While floating the Wilson to South Park stretch of the Snake on Saturday, experienced angler Russ Lamb of the First Interstate Bank team snagged his fly in a log located in a five-foot deep, fast-moving section of water. After examining the area, Johnston realized the current was moving too fast for him to wade into the area from his current location.

After anchoring his boat, Johnston walked upstream about a tenth of a mile, stripped down to his shorts and was able to get a running start. With the current carrying him swiftly downriver, Johnston was forced to eddy out three times before swimming to the spot where Lamb's fly had disappeared. Miraculously, he found the fly floating nearby but found himself without a storage location for the valuable Goulds half-down hopper.

"I didn't have any pockets, so my mouth was the only place I had to put it," Johnston said. Fly in mouth, Johnston returned to his boat, and Lamb was back in the competition.

Event founder Jack Dennis was one of many people who questioned the Bureau of Reclamation decision to wait so long into the fall before reducing the releases from Jackson Lake.

"Why couldn't the water have been brought down to Palisades Reservoir months ago?" asked Dennis. "We all have some rights here. Isn't there a better way to move this water?"

Radoumis agreed, adding he was disappointed with the quality of the Snake fishing compared to the waters he regularly fishes outside Dubois.

"If they could straighten out the problem with the water the week before the competition, it would really even things out for everyone," he said.