

The One Fly

Chris Sandford





“What are you doing next Friday?” It was the 26th of April this year and Bob James rang me to ask if I would like to join the ‘Dream Team’ with him and Chris Tarrant and enter the ‘One Fly’.

The river Test ‘One Fly’ Competition is a great charity day organised by Simon Cooper of ‘Fishing Breaks’. Eleven teams, of three anglers each, try to catch as many trout as possible, with just one fly that they must keep on all day. Lose that fly, and you’re out! I have to say that I was most flattered to be invited. But it was exactly four days before the great event. “Who died?” I asked. Bob explained that a well-known celebrity fly fisher was languishing in some foreign location and was not likely to make it back.

“Who’s tying the flies?” I enquired.

“Well he was going to, so now it’s down to you!”

Terrific! Four days and counting! I knew the Test was still quite coloured so I decided that I would give the team a choice between bright and heavy and fairly traditional and heavy! But I would do my best to make all the flies indestructible. It’s amazing how much damage can be done to one fly in just one day’s fishing.

Breakfast at the Peat Spade in Longstock, on the day of the competition, was a hive of activity. Each competitor and guide was given a One Fly shirt, coffee and

an egg and bacon roll. When Chris Tarrant arrived he immediately gripped Bob in a headlock and gave the media the following quote. “It was a civil ceremony. We haven’t told many people and we’re very happy!”

Simon Cooper then addressed the multitude and we were all introduced to our guides for the day. Bob and I found a quiet corner and I presented him with choice of flies I’d tied. “Your three ‘indestructibles,’” I said.

He looked at them carefully and asked “Which one are you going to use?”

I pointed to a small, tungsten headed, flash back bug on a size 14 hook.

“Me too,” he said. “What’s it called?”

“No idea,” I replied, “I only thought of it yesterday!”

Bob’s guide inspected it closely and muttered, “Looks ****ing deadly to me!” So that, we decided, was its name. The ****ing Deadly!

Although you enter the competition as a team of three, you don’t actually fish together. So, until the end of the day, you have no idea how your team has scored.

One of the funniest moments related by Bob later in the day, was when the camera team covering the event filmed him landing three fine trout on my fly. When asked by the director what the fly was called Bob had a lapse of

memory and looked to his guide for help. Without missing a beat he said, "Oh yes . . . that one . . . it's 'The Ducking Feadly'!"

Chris Tarrant was on another part of the river battling with a few trees but doing well on one of the nymph patterns. Sadly he had to leave at 2 o'clock because of a previous engagement which left 'The Dream Team' with a bit of a nightmare when trying to accrue enough points to stand a chance of winning!

My day's fishing was on a rather cloudy carrier of the Test on the outskirts of the village of Mottisfont. My guide and I didn't actually see a fish all day, but there were some deep runs and I managed to hook nine and land six trout. My grate-

ful thanks to my guide Steve Harrison, who without complaint retrieved my fly from no less than three trees, one bush and two underwater snags!

The final scores were eagerly awaited back at the Peat Spade. The 'On Line TV' Team with a total of 1,705 points were the well-deserved winners. The overall individual winner with 915 points was Jeremy Croucher who fished a Pheasant Tail Hare's Ear to great effect.

The 'Dream Team', with two and a half participants, came a respectable seventh with 1,460 points!

For the second year running, Alistair Robjents of Robjents fine fishing emporium in Stockbridge

won the Dry Fly prize with the shop's most successful fly the 'Robjents's Daddy Long Legs'.

The most important winners of the 'One Fly' were The Soldiers, Sailors, Airman and Families Association who were presented with a cheque for £1,000 to help them through these difficult times.

It was a great day and Simon Cooper and his team deserve tumultuous applause for the smooth running of such a complex event. For details of next year's river Test 'One Fly' check out www.fishingbreaks.com and please pay special attention to their company line:

'Life is Short. Spend it Fishing.' ■

We would like to thank Guy Cragoe for the picture below and Fishing Breaks for the superb photograph of Mottisfont on the previous page. Other photos were taken by Chris Sandford, whose only remuneration was a lino cutting of Bonnie Prince Charlie in a mist, a brass rubbing of the Stag at Bay and a rub down with the Sporting Life.

