

CASTING CORNER



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Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships

Have you heard the story of the Englishman, Scotchman, Canadian, New Zealander and Aussie? Well.... these were the anglers that I met while volunteering as a controller on the South Esk River for the recent Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships. Watching them fish I took note of what it was that made these anglers among the best in their respective countries.

Obviously, I was interested in their casting and it became apparent that they could all place the fly exactly where they wanted it on the river. Using mends and reach casts they managed long drag-free drifts in all the best lies. They rarely caught the bushes and reeds which engulfed that section of the river. This, coupled with their good line control, meant they spent more time with their fly on the water – and we all know that is where the trout live.

Next I noted the gear they used. They all had a number of rods rigged to suit the conditions and their style of fishing. The usual brand names were there but nowhere did I see a *One* or *Zenith*, or *Helios* or *Boron* or *NRX*. The rods were well used and the anglers swapped between rods without missing a beat. Competent anglers such as these were able to cast any rod and had learnt to find a rod that suited their style of fishing and not get hung up on having the latest and greatest.

Another interesting observation I made was that at least two of the teams had spent some time with Peter Hayes brushing up on their casting skills. These anglers were among the best in the world but they could still see the value of seeking professional instruction. Casting is at the centre of Flyfishing and if you want to be successful you must ensure your casting skills are as good as they can be. I found myself watching these anglers casting and admiring the effortless way they covered the water and for once not thinking about making suggestions for how they could improve.

Inevitably I found myself wondering if I could ever be a competition angler. The New Zealander caught the most fish on my beat and on a good day I could probably match his tally of 6 fish. What I couldn't do is catch that many fish in 3 hours under pressure on a cold windy afternoon with not a rise to be seen. Competition angling brings together the skills of casting, experience and knowledge built from a lifetime of fishing, a competitive nature and just a little bit of luck. I fall short in most of these areas so competitive angling holds no lure for me.

To finish the story of the Englishman, Scotchman, Canadian, New Zealander and Aussie let me tell you about how each session ended. The Canadian gave me a bottle of Maple Syrup and a team badge, the Englishman gave me an English team badge, The New Zealander gave me some flies and an invitation to stay at his bach (shack) if I go to New Zealand again, the Scotchman gave me his business card and the Aussie borrowed my forceps and forgot to return them. Make of that what you will.