

**Digging Deep For The Team**  
**The 2013 South African Youth Fly Fishing Championships**  
By Linda Gorlei



4th placed Matt Gorlei with a "sick " fish

As many know, the KZNFFA hosted the 2013 Youth Fly Fishing Championship last month in the Kamberg. It offered up three days of intense fishing in what turned out to be some very testing conditions for the fifty two visiting youngsters.

The event got underway in true style with a street parade and opening ceremony in Nottingham Road. This is customary for a World Championships run to the International Fips-Mouche rules that South African Fly Fishing adheres to, but a first for a South African championship. This was led by the current Youth Protea team who received a public dedication in honour of their recent Bronze medal at the World Championships in Ireland. Anglers, Officials & Community Marshals from the Tendela Fly Fishing project in the area made up the rest of the parade.

As fate would have it, the serious lack of rain and winter snow in the Kamberg forced organisers to remove the proposed river sectors and change format to an all Stillwater event. This was a bit of a disappointment to many of the anglers who thrive on the river discipline, and were looking forward to challenging the renowned Bushmans and Mooi rivers.

Fishing got underway in session one with some great catches being recorded on the three smaller lakes where the format was bank casting off rotating pegged beats. The rod pressure that this format of fishing creates has major impact, and the catch returns drop dramatically through the five sessions. Anglers had to really work hard to pick up fish in their final sessions. The two drift boat sectors on the massive expanse of Forest Lake proved a real challenge at the best of times where experienced anglers produced some good results of up to nine fish during their three hour session, though day two's fishing was seriously tested as high winds blew through the valley turning the lake into a watery mass of white horses. The barometric pressure plummeted in a matter of hours turning the fish off the bite and leaving anglers with a real contest on all sectors. This is where conditions favored the really proficient casters, and

the in-depth knowledge and technical skill of very experienced youngsters who cracked the code in the tough conditions. .



One of the Tendela team members before the front hit

With a scoring system based on anglers consistency on all the sectors through each of their



five sessions, this Nationals was a real test of experience with the top four individual placings going to our Youth Protea anglers, and the results were very close often separated by mere centimeters of fish length. 1<sup>st</sup> Luke Baker(WP), 2<sup>nd</sup> Nick Janse van Rensburg(Boland), 3<sup>rd</sup> Craig Richardson (Mpumalanga) followed by Matt Gorlei.

The undeniable strength of Boland Youth fly fishing was evident in the overall team placings with Boland A taking gold, Boland B Silver & Gauteng North Bronze. Our KZN team ,who fished one team member short and with some blanks to boot did well to finish 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 10 Provincial teams. Protea angler, Matt Gorlei, placed 4<sup>th</sup> Individually overall with local Nottingham Road angler from

Michaelhouse College, Roo Bechard and fly tying supremo Christian Calliontzis each producing note-worthy results in their groups and placing Individually in the top 20 of the final standings. In the final two sessions Christian cracked the code on his former fishing nemesis, the great Forest Lake, and landed his quarry to boost the team's score. Our two development anglers from Tendela also netted a few fish for the team, but unluckily recorded too many blanks.

To sit on the outside and read about scores and sizes and placings one actually misses the essence of what has grown to be a big family in fly fishing in South Africa. It's far bigger than centimeters on a scorecard when you see the interaction between these guys when they come off the water, most more than happy to share their tips, pass on a quip in a language only they understand... "that was a *sic* fish bru"...talk about the *bus* that snapped them off and how they *groveled* for that one fish to break the blank.

This year we said goodbye to a good few youngsters who now fall out of age group for competing at this level, but having been around this game for six years now I am struck by the respect, humility and maturity that many take with them. There will always be those that will be bigger than their scorecards, but they have no place in fly fishing, no matter what the arena. What a journey it's been with the Youth... as my good friend and co-ordinator for Youth fly fishing, Louis de Jager, would say... *grovel minions!*