

21 YEARS OF DRENNAN ENGLAND

TACKLE BOSS REFLECTS ON HIS SPONSORSHIP



Peter Drennan – his famous tackle company has sponsored the England squad for the past 21 years.

ON MAY 12, 1993, Angling Times ran a story that was to radically change the face of international match fishing.

The headline read: 'England clinch new sponsorship deal' and went on to announce details of a new sponsorship package for the national team from Oxford tackle manufacturer Drennan. Described as a 'six-figure deal', the sponsorship would be the start of a relationship which has seen England become the undisputed number-one match



KEVIN WILMOT
Deputy editor

fisher team in the world. With little time for the new sponsorship to take effect, the first World Championships fished by Drennan England saw the team finish a disappointing ninth in the searing heat of Portugal's River Sorria. The following year, 1994, was Drennan's first full one as team sponsor. Now things were different and England – and Bob Nudd – triumphed at Nottingham's Holme Pierrepont. Since then, England have won the World Championships no fewer than eight times. During that period, the national team has changed personnel many times and former manager Dick Clegg has handed over the reins to Mark Downes and Mark Addy. But one thing has remained constant – the support of Drennan International.

As Drennan England prepare for their 22nd World Championships later this year in Croatia, Drennan boss Peter Drennan spoke candidly to deputy editor Kevin Wilmot about his time as sponsor of the best match fishing team in the world.

Kevin Wilmot Drennan has now been sponsoring the England Team for more than 20 years. You must have seen a lot of changes in that time.

Peter Drennan I think the biggest change has been in the standard of international match fishing itself. Twenty years ago, once you got below the top four or five teams, the standard dropped off pretty quickly. Even 10 years ago, England's main rivals were still just Italy and France, but in the last decade, a significant number of Eastern European countries have come right up to speed. So the World Championships are a much more open event now.

KW Is that why, by their own very high standards, England have had some relatively poor results?

PD It is partly that, because there is no doubt that competition is now much stronger and fiercer. However, with the World Championships organisers' understandable efforts to take the event into as many countries as possible, England have encountered some very peculiar venues, and some totally alien species. Beyond this, there is, as always, the luck of the draw, and inevitably some of these foreign venues have been very 'peggy'.

In the Czech Republic in 2012, several of the team had horrible draws and only Sean Ashby had two good 'uns and as it was a small-fish venue, he won individual gold. Collectively, the team could not compensate for those bad draws, and only came in sixth. Under the circumstances that's still pretty impressive, but I know they'd have wanted to be on the podium.

KW What are your thoughts about former manager Dick Clegg and the current bosses Mark Downes and Mark Addy?

PD The first thing to say is that England might always have had some of the very best anglers, but

we won nothing much until Dick Clegg took hold of it and revolutionised things. Mark Downes and Mark Addy had, of course, been assisting Dick for some years, and took over seamlessly.

I had serious doubts about two bosses working in equality, and thought there were bound to be difficulties, but the two Marks seem to work perfectly well.

If anything, their task has become more difficult, because of all those emerging Eastern Bloc teams. So preparation has become more intense, and quality bank runners are now much more important, but the basic approach seems very much the same.

KW What's been the best World Championships during your sponsorship and why?

PD That's easy. It was Paris in 2001. The Seine wasn't a great venue, but it was truly a great location, right in the centre of the city. France – the old enemy – had a big advantage, and definitely thought they were on a winner. But England beat them into second place, and received their trophy on the Trocadero with the Eiffel Tower as the backdrop – magic stuff.



Celebrating on the Paris Trocadero in 2001

KW Any memories that still make you laugh?

PD Plenty – it has been a long and happy association. I can remember standing at a bar with Alan Scotthorne after he had won another individual gold, and one of the Irish lads came up to congratulate him and buy him a drink. Alan thanked him, but gesturing to me, explained that the team had an open bar, courtesy of

Mr Drennan. The Irish lad was truly stunned, came out with a string of expletives and said from the heart: "That's the sort of sponsor Ireland needs, you can forget everything else!"

KW Any disappointments along the way?

PD Not really, except perhaps that Steve Gardner hasn't picked up an individual gold because he deserves one. He is, of course, an out-and-out team player, and has been an ever-present inspiration during our 20-plus years. He is the kind of man who would put a solid team performance before any personal ambition.

KW All the management and team members past and present reckon Drennan has been a really good sponsor. Has it all been worth it?

PD Immodestly, I believe we are good sponsors, because we don't interfere and there are no daft demands that they all fish with Drennan hooks or anything like that. Will Raison is free to use his Daiwa kit, Steve Gardener can fish his Milo gear... they can use whatever they are used to. We certainly wouldn't want to impose any conditions which might compromise their performance. Commercially, the benefits to Drennan are debatable but we are proud to be involved and strangely enough, the association seems to gain most for our company abroad where the team is revered and recognised as the best.

KW What of the future of Drennan Team England?

PD Put Drennan England on a fair venue, give them a half reasonable draw, and they will beat



Peter Drennan is often seen on the bank at World Championships, blending in with the crowds.

anybody! In Poland in 2013, the team met exactly those conditions, and they won with ease.

Over the five sections on Day 1 they clocked up four firsts and a third, for a total of just seven points. This is against 36 nations, choosing their best

internationals – that's an incredibly dominant performance. England deserve their number-one status, and with their array of talent and the support of an undemanding sponsor in the background, I am sure their continued success is guaranteed.

Six of the best according to Peter Drennan

KW Could you pick an all-time best Team England six?

PD I am not really qualified to do so. You would have to ask Dick Clegg, Mark Downes or Mark Addy. Obviously, there are some stand-out performers – anyone could see that Kev Ashurst was very special, and Bob Nudd had that intangible quality – he was simply a big-event winner.

But match fishing doesn't stand still – it is constantly progressing, so I think today's team would take some beating. You can see Will Raison and Des Shipp are great anglers, Alan Scotthorne has won individual gold five times, and new addition Steve Hemingray is also exceptional, so it is an extremely strong squad.



Kevin Ashurst – very special



Bob Nudd – for the biggest events



Will Raison – a great angler



Des Shipp – hugely talented



Alan Scotthorne – five World wins



Steve Hemingray – exceptional

A rare picture of Peter Drennan flanked by the England team: "We don't interfere."