

Spey-o-rama 2008

In the US alone there are more than twenty spey gatherings each year; places where those anglers interested in spey casting can meet and watch demonstrations, try the latest gear, get free instruction and meet fellow spey enthusiasts.

Indeed, there are so many of these events that many casters, manufacturers, reps and demonstrators have a hard time deciding which ones to support and attend. Many spey enthusiasts attend the nearest spey gathering to them and glean useful information, tips and instruction. There is no doubt that the big two on the spey calendar is the “Jimmy Green International Spey-o-rama” and the “Sandy River Spey Clave” and neither of these events should be missed by the enthusiastic spey caster.

The Jimmy Green International Spey-o-rama differs from all other spey gatherings because of the quality of the international casters that come to this event to compete and demonstrate. The casting competition is an event that should not be missed – by anyone who wants to see some of the best long distance spey casters in the world. Competitors from Japan, Scotland, England, Canada, Scandinavia and the US converge at this annual event to fight out for the title of “Jimmy Green Spey-o-rama International champion – a prestigious feather in the hat - considering the quality of casters that attend.



“The prizes, cups and trophies up for grabs at the 2008 Jimmy Green International Spey-o-rama.”

The 2008 Jimmy Green International Spey-o-rama took place over the weekend of April 19th and 20th at the Golden Gate Casting Club in San Francisco. Amongst the well known names and personalities that were there were; Ian Gordon, Nobuo Nodera, Tak Shimosawa, Kjell Ove Grimsmo, Stener Skogmo, Simon Hsieh, Doug Duncan, Tyler Kushnir, Hiroshi Okada, Mariusz Wroblewski, Mike Kinney, Mel Kreiger, Tim Rajeff, Steve Rajeff, Jeff Putnam, Gary Anderson, Donna O'Sullivan, George Revel, Frank Chen and myself were floating around talking casting and enjoying the camaraderie of the spey world.. There was also a very strong contingent from Japan who went to great time, expense and trouble to fly over for this event and huge and sincere thanks must be made to those from CND and the Japanese Casting Association for this incredible effort.



“Representatives from the Japanese Casting Association and CND show their passion for the game....”

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For the angler interested in trying out gear there were plenty of rods, reels and lines to check out; Beulah, Hardy, Sage, Redington, RIO, Echo, Airflo, Gary Anderson, Bob Meiser, CND and Loomis were all represented by staff and a great assortment of gear to play with.



The ever smiling Gary Anderson showing off his latest wares...

Noticeably absent and missed by all were the Carron team from Scotland and the Syrstad brothers from Norway – regular attendees of this event and always great company and phenomenal casters to watch. The thoughts and wishes of everyone were with James Chalmers and Knut Syrstad in particular and everyone at the event hopes that both teams will return in 2009.

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Friday the 18th April was mainly set aside for competition practice, allowing each competitor to get the feel of casting waist deep, changing angle more than 45 degrees and making left hand and right hand snake rolls and single speys – all things that make this event so unique in the world of competition spey casting. Early buzz suggested that Sacramento casters Doug Duncan and Simon Hseith would be fighting it out for first place.

Saturday was the main day to be there. The morning was for qualifying and 26 casters competed trying to get in the top 10 for the grand final on Sunday. By lunchtime on Saturday the qualifying round was over and 11 casters found themselves in the final (11 because there were two casters with identical qualifying distances, placing 10th and 10th). These casters were (in no particular order); Simon Hsieh, Doug Duncan, Stener Skogmo, Tyler Kushnir, Ian Gordon, Marius Wroblewski, Brian Styskal, Shinobu Inouye, Masanobu Hirabayashi, Junya Kitahara and, somehow, by some stroke of luck, me!

GOLDEN GATE ANGLING & CASTING CLUB
JUDGE'S SHEET
 GOLDEN GATE PARK, SAN FRANCISCO

Date _____ Weather _____

		DISTANCE	ACCURACY
No.	NAME		
1	SHINOBU INOUE		582
2	BRIAN STYSKAL		544
3	DOUG DUNCAN		530
4	JUNYA KITAHARA		526
5	MARIUS WROBLEWSKI		525
6	SIMON H		509
7	TYLER KUSHNIR		507
8	SAINOBU INOUE		503
9	MASANOBU HIRABAYASHI		491
10	IAN GORDON		491
11	STENER SKOGMO		489
12	GREG SKOGMO		482
13	HIROSHI YAZAKI		478
14	HIROSHI OKADA		472
15	TRANK LARSEN		470
16	TAK SHIROGAWA		470
17	KEN OKADA		467
18	HIROSHI OKADA		462
19	KENJI OKADA		454
20	NAOJI MI		452
21	YASU AKASHIMIZU		430
22	YUSU KITAHARA		372
23	MORIO HIRABAYASHI		348
24	ROMAN BOGALU		322
25	TIM WARRIVER		

“The results at the end of the qualifying round”
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"The happy eleven men's finalists...."

Saturday afternoon was for demonstrations, product testing, free lessons and clinics, general chit chat and a little whisky tasting! (What's a spey gathering without single malt?).

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Lunch on Saturday was provided by the generous folk at The California Fly Shop and a very impressive number of onlookers and spey enthusiasts enjoyed the lunch. Everywhere you looked there were crowds of people watching, casting, rigging up gear, talking, having lessons, and asking questions.



"A good crowd turned out to watch and participate at this year's spey-o-rama"

The weather was dry and sunny, but a crazy wind whipped the trees around the pond as if they were stalks of corn. The wind made qualifying difficult, gusting from left to right to behind and making it hard for competitors to get a feel for the conditions. Nevertheless, the worst of the wind held off until the afternoon and evening – it could have been worse!

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For those that hung around on Saturday evening a veritable treat was in store. A big pig roast was laid on for supper and a wonderful display of dancing from Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga and other South Pacific islands was enjoyed by all.



“Part of the evening’s entertainment was a display of dancing from Hawaii, Tonga and other South Pacific Islands”

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Sunday dawned calm and breathless and proceedings started at 8am with the ladies Spey casting competition. Five ladies competed and; Donna O'Sullivan, Whitney Gould, Olga Koran, Kristin Torda and Takako Inouye from Japan made use of the calm conditions to throw some great casts. The overall winner was Takako Inouye - wife of fellow competitor Shinobu Inouye and member of the Japanese Casting Association - who scored 408 points (feet). Second place was Donna 'Sullivan with 374 points and third was Olga Koran with 350 points. The longest ladies spey cast was 106 feet by Takako Inouye (which she did twice!) – pretty impressive for anyone standing waist deep in water!



"The Top 3 ladies, from left to right; Donna O'Sullivan, Takako Inouye and Olga Koran."

After the ladies competition finished the final of the men's began with a draw for the order in which casters would compete. Fortunately for the event the wind stayed down and was a non-factor so everyone competed on an even basis. The large crowd was treated to some spectacular casting and some huge casts. The longest of which, Simon Hsieh's 160 footer drifted agonizingly out of bounds by 6 inches and didn't count. The impressive Simon was unfazed and immediately boomed out a cast of 153 feet that stayed in bounds. It equaled my longest cast of the final and we tied for first place. Simon Hsieh deservedly received the trophy for the longest cast with his second longest cast of 150 feet – such casting and consistency is extraordinary!



"Simon Hsieh, overall winner and with the joint longest cast of 153 feet."

The event concluded shortly before lunch and an anxious crowd waited on the grass in front of the club house to hear the final results. Unsurprisingly Simon Hsieh was overall champion with a total of 560 feet. Doug Duncan was second with 540 feet and I tied for third with Brian Styskal with 538 feet. The third place trophy was decided by the addition of the second longest casts of the two of us and in this I luckily edged Brian by a couple of feet to claim the trophy and the bottle of single malt!



“The Top 3 men, from left to right; Doug Duncan, Simon Hsieh and Simon Gawesworth”.

Once the results were announced the presentations took place and Simon Hsieh joy at winning was demonstrated by his mad charge around the grass shaking and spraying everyone in champagne!

Lunch was sponsored by Sage and RIO and after lunch the crowds stayed around to watch demonstrations by Ian Gordon, Stener Skogmo, Mike Kinney and Nobuo Nodera and to try out all the great rods and lines available.

Overall this was one of the best spey gatherings I have ever attended and the fun, enthusiasm, awesome casting distances and demonstrations provided a memorable weekend for demonstrators, industry reps, manufacturers, club members, exhibitors and member of the spey casting public alike. This event gets better and better – watch out for it in 2009 and mark your calendars early. If you want to see the very best in spey casting, make a point of being there!!!

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