

## THE BOMB SAVES THE DAY

by Chris Shelton

An article in a recent British fly fishing magazine inspired me to tie what has to be one of the ugliest flies I've ever tied, namely the Bomb. According to the article, the Bomb can prove to be so successful when the fish are to all intents and purposes "off", that many anglers try to keep it a secret.

Just to fill you in, the Bomb is tied on a normal-shank wet fly hook with a short fluorescent green floss or wool tail and spun with Caribou or deer hair along the entire length of the shank. This is in turn trimmed into an oval shape. The body is wound from the tail with a long cock hackle and tied off with a whip finish at the eye.

My first outing with the Bomb proved to be quite an experience.

It was a cool morning at Jonkershoek Forestry Dam with clear blue skies. The dam was fairly low and everything looked just right. My companion, Rolf and I took up position in our favourite spot where we proceeded to fish our Damsel nymphs and other olive patterns which normally work so well in the dam. We caught and released two fish each in the first hour before the sun hit the water after which the fishing went stone dead. We decided to rest the spot for an hour and grab a cup of coffee.

A friend of ours out in a float tube managed to land another fish in the same channel we had been fishing, so without further ado the two of us hurried back to the water thinking that the fish were at last coming on. We were mistaken and returned to the car for some refreshments after another three fishless hours where we were joined by other equally unsuccessful anglers. No one had touched a fish. One of the regulars, Barry, commented that there was usually a lunchtime rise in the dam, so after a substantial break we all returned to the water with renewed enthusiasm.

By this time we started noticing a haze build-up in the sky and the temperature started dropping slightly. Another three hours passed with not one of us so much as having a knock. The wind started picking up quite a bit and clouds started forming overhead. A couple of anglers started pulling out. Rolf moved off to another spot. It was then, out of sheer desperation that I remembered the Bomb.

I apprehensively attached the monstrous fly to the end of my tippet and put some split shot about two foot above the fly, just on top of the blood-knot. My line was a shooting head fast sinker. I watched as the buoyant fly was dragged under the surface by the heavy line and waited for it to sink. The line must have just touched bottom when I felt a tug and I was into a fish. I had to kill the fish as it had swallowed the fly very deeply in the throat. I immediately cast to the same spot and promptly hooked and landed another 650 gram trout. Once again it was deeply hooked. For the third time I cast to the same spot. This time I waited for the line to sink right to the bottom as before and started a very slow figure of eight retrieve right on the bottom. not long and blow me down, I was into another lively trout. This all happened in the space of half an hour.

Rolf and Barry, by now green with envy, started changing to Muddlers which is about as close as they could get to resembling the Bomb. No joy. Barry changed to a Booby which is fished in a



*The Bomb (left) and a foam-head streamer*

similar manner to the Bomb. Once again no luck. I continued to get one or two more bumps and at the same time we noticed some surface activity. Barry immediately changed to a dry line and was rewarded with a lovely 500 grammer taken right on the surface. So now we had the two extremes, deep down and up on the surface. What I think happened is that the commotion caused by the first trout must have stirred up the bottom, thereby starting a feeding frenzy. Nevertheless, the Bomb saved the day.

When I got home I re-read the article on the Bomb and found it to be true to the word. To quote some extracts. "It should be fished on a fast sinking line and a very short leader. It is fished either static or with a very slow retrieve. Anything but the most sluggish figure-of-eight retrieves is too fast. The natural buoyancy of the deer hair ensures that the Bomb hangs just above the lake bottom, deadly when the trout are working deep looking for small invertebrates. The fish will often completely swallow the fly, so, not a pattern for the catch-and-release enthusiast."

**Editor's Note:** With many trout in the Kleinplasië dam being escapees from Danie Brink's fish cages, the cynic will say that Chris Shelton's Bomb was taken because of its resemblance to another form of trout food known to scientists as *Pelletus Vulgaris*. It could easily however have been taken for a crab or snail. The concept of a buoyant fly on a sinking line was popularised by British angler, Gordon Fraser, with his "Booby" series of flies. I had a similar experience at Lakenvlei last year. I started fishing from a float tube about ten thirty with other anglers having had no luck since early morning. I was using a white marabou streamer with a buoyant head made of two pieces of weather stripping foam, impaled adhesive side to adhesive side onto the hook and superglued in position at the eye of the fly. This was greased with silicone and fished on a sinking line and a sinking Sue Burgess braided leader. I caught two fish in quick succession and finished the day with five fish, most weighing about a kilo. As this was only the second time I had ever fished Lakenvlei I attribute my success, when very few other fish were caught, entirely to the buoyant fly sinking line technique.