

# SA team to participate in World Underwater Fishing Championships

THE South African Underwater Fishing team will participate in the 26th World Underwater Fishing Championships off the Island of Margarita on the East Coast of Venezuela from October 20-26, 2008.

The team qualified for the World Championships by scoring a credible ninth position at the European/Africa zone qualifier in Rota – Cadiz, Spain, competing against arguably the strongest teams in the world in very challenging conditions.

In Venezuela, the conditions are very similar to those on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and with three of the four-man team being Natalians, this will give South Africa a small advantage and possibly better its best result of seventh place.

The team members selected to represent South Africa are:

Gyula Plaganyi (Captain) – three previous World Championships and 2007 Zone Qualifier

Jaco Blignaut – seven times SA Champion and previous SA Team to Worlds

Alan (Moo) Fraser – First SA Colours

Mark Jackson – SA Colours Zone Qualifier 2007

Underwater fishing at an international level is one of the most extreme sports in the world. Free diving (without SCUBA) for six hours per day at depths of between 10 and 45 metres, sometimes in strong currents, with sharks and many other sea creatures to contend with, is not for the faint hearted.

The Europeans traditionally dominate these competitions due to the extensive sponsorship and endorsements that the divers receive. With the best equipment and support at their disposal, their teams consist of professional divers. Our chaps are at a massive disadvantage to start with as all of the divers have full-time jobs and, aside from commercial sponsorship, all expenses are self-funded.

For the first time in the history of South Africa's participation at Worlds, the SA divers have been able to raise sufficient sponsorship to arrive at the competition venue two months before the event to scout, study the local conditions and fish species, and familiarise themselves with the underwater topography. Local knowledge is critical at events such as this and the top teams in the world have the resources to hire the best local fishermen and spend months scouting.

Subtech has been a big supporter of underwater fishing over the years and has generously agreed to sponsor the costs for the scouting boat prior to the competition – this facilitating what will hopefully be an upset victory over the Europeans.



JACO Blignaut with a lovely Daga Salmon and "Poensie" taken off Scottburgh

Subtech is an international subsea support company specialising in civil marine construction and port expansion works.

The Underwater Fishermen of SA are extremely grateful to Subtech for its generous support and Subtech is hopeful that this will contribute to the best ever result for the South Africans.

"We wish the competitors good luck and safe diving," says Subtech.

**Should the public wish to contribute to the team's costs or send them any messages, please contact Brent Addison at [brenta@worldonline.co.za](mailto:brenta@worldonline.co.za) or 0823222750.**

*The South African Underwater Fishing team is proudly sponsored by*

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