

SAMF Challenge 2022

Southbourne & Abbotsbury, Dorset

Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd April 2022

The match was hosted by the UK Armed Forces (UKAF) on the beaches of Southbourne, recently used for the PSUK shore national competition, and Abbotsbury on Chesil Beach. Unfortunately once again the Fire Service were unable to enter a team so 45 anglers were pegged over three zones. With the proposed venue of Cogden being unavailable for the day match Abbotsbury was chosen as the match stretch. As conditions were expected to be difficult top up for undersized fish of 1 point was agreed.

Luxury accommodation, fine wine and gourmet food met the teams preparing for the match at Bovington Camp. Or in reality rubber mattresses, no pillows and a takeaway pizza sorted out PSUK's finest athletes; however the team were ready for battle.

Day 1 was an evening match up to high water. There were a few fish coming in early on but sport picked up once darkness arrived. This was still a difficult match and peg draw was important. Baits of ragworm, mackerel and squid accounted for a variety of species and finding rays and better sized specimens was a good advantage.

Ian Ainsley had a good second place on day 1 for the Police team. Recording the scores showed Paul Hocking had been extremely unlucky scoring a high card of eight fish, more than most competitors, but most being only top ups.

Day 1 finished UKAF (102 points) SAMF (112 points) Police (147 points)

Day 2 and it was an early start for the drive to Abbotsbury. Frozen black lugworm had been agreed to replace the mackerel for what was expected to be a worm orientated venue. On arrival it was announced there was no squid

either which left very little in the way of variation in the hunt for the better fish. Warm morning and bright sunshine greeted the anglers for the start of the match fishing high water down. Most of the fish were recorded at distance.

Another PSUK second place for Iain Fryett led the way for day 2. Unfortunately it wasn't enough for us to make an impression.

The end of the match was rounded off with a pleasant hour catching up over a beer in the sun before the run back to camp and some smartening up for dinner! I am glad however I didn't have to witness Willy Groombridge running around naked looking for his towel haha!

Another SAMF professional performance saw them top the second day with 111 points. UKAF (143 points) and Police (157 points) both struggled to card enough scores to challenge the pros.

Final places were:

1. SAMF – 223 points
2. UKAF – 245 points
3. Police – 304 points

Top angler for the Police was Ian Ainsley in 3rd. Iain Fryett (13th) and Tom Lessels (18th) followed but thanks to all the team for their commitment and effort throughout.

The presentation dinner was held in the Sergeant's Mess and a smart bunch of lads turned out for curry and cheap beer. SAMF were deservedly presented with the trophy which is regularly in their hands. May I thank all those taking part in what was a very enjoyable weekend despite the results and the 'basic' accommodation. To quote Paul Gelman (I hope he doesn't mind)

“Despite the digs, food and presentation, our table was laughing all night, the banter was good and the craic was spot on. Looking at the

civvie and squaddie teams I thought, they are all fishermen having a meal together, whereas we're all good mates who enjoy a good time and go fishing"

Thanks to Maj Scott Booty and his team at UKAF for a well organised event. The 2023 event is due to be hosted by SAMF with an indication that it will be held around Kelling at a similar time of year subject of suitable accommodation being available.

The Fire Service have now missed a couple of these events or have had their team supported by spare SAMF members. Clearly adding SAMF to their ranks in the long term doesn't make it a level field and only having three teams does not make for the most competitive event. Once again the introduction of other services was discussed. It has been discussed with team leads to approach the Civil Service to see if this is an event they would be interested in joining.

Peter Morgan