



the previous strikes and consequent fish landed had resulted from accurate casts to structure: sandbank drop-offs, timber and rocky outcrops, etc. Making a short cast, my 1/0 black Clouser landed inches from the steep mudbank. Throwing two large mends upstream, I heard Darren curse as he snagged up. I turned to strip in quickly so we could motor upstream, but I could

so that we could un snag Darren's line. Both Darren and I shouted, in no uncertain terms, for him to cut the motors and leave us to drift onto the fish. Finally I settled on the bow of the boat for the ensuing battle. After the first telling run, the gap between me and the fish was quickly closed and the remainder of the fight was fought at relatively close quarters.

timing now was nothing less than cruel! The pressure of landing a massive fish combined with the potentially disastrous hippo situation created an atmosphere of urgency, and so the heat got turned on even higher! I managed to force the broad body of the fish upwards. Her head momentarily broke the surface as she turned and finned downwards in another



Above: Grant with a well-conditioned 19lb fish taken on the drift. Insert top right: Brian's bush piercing courtesy of Grant's overzealous casting. Ironically the weed guard had little effect. Pinching the barb and sliding the hook out in reverse is the easiest way to remove such a hook.

not have made more than a handful of strips when the beast hit me. I managed one strip-strike before the fish was on the reel and followed this up with a couple of short and sharp rod strikes as it gunned downstream. The ferocity of the hit and power of the first run left me in no doubt as to the size of the fish. During the commotion, the boat driver had somehow decided that it was time to drive upstream

With my drag cranked up tight, the big lady kept us busy, holding deep and making short, powerful runs each time we thought she would surrender.

With all our attention on the battle, we failed to notice a rapidly approaching pod of hippos. On numerous occasions hippos have disrupted a good drift when targeting tigers in Africa; however, the

powerful surge. The scene was repeated, this time with a chorus of hippo grunts reminding us how high the stakes in this battle had become. She came broadside to the boat and glided along the beam, the sight of her massive body sending a fresh surge of adrenaline through my already weary body. Darren was ready and tailed her on the first attempt. Her immense body was lifted into the boat, and simulta-

