

My Fishing

By Todd Tanner

Watching your son grow into a self-assured young angler over the course of a single day can be a treat you'll never forget.

My dad never took me fishing when I was young. He let me tag along when he hunted pheasants and woodcock, or when he headed into the woods for whitetails, but since he wasn't an angler himself, he really couldn't teach me much about the sport. I actually learned more from friends, and from all the hook and bullet magazines I read as a kid.



Tim Linehan, 2013 Orvis Guide of the Year, shows Kian Tanner how to play and land a nice Missouri River rainbow.



As you might imagine, things are a little different for my 8-year-old son Kian. While I try not to push him toward fly fishing – it’s far better if he comes to it on his own – I’m happy to take him whenever he gets the itch. So when spring rolled around and Kian wanted to go fishing, I called Tim Linehan and made plans to float the Missouri River near Craig, Montana. It seemed like the perfect time for Kian’s first real angling adventure.

Tim, as many of you already know, is one of the finest guides and outfitters on the planet. He’s won all three major Orvis awards – “Guide of the Year,” “Conservationist of the Year” and “Outfitter of the Year” – and he started a long run as host of Trout Unlimited

Television after being named Montana Guide of the Year.

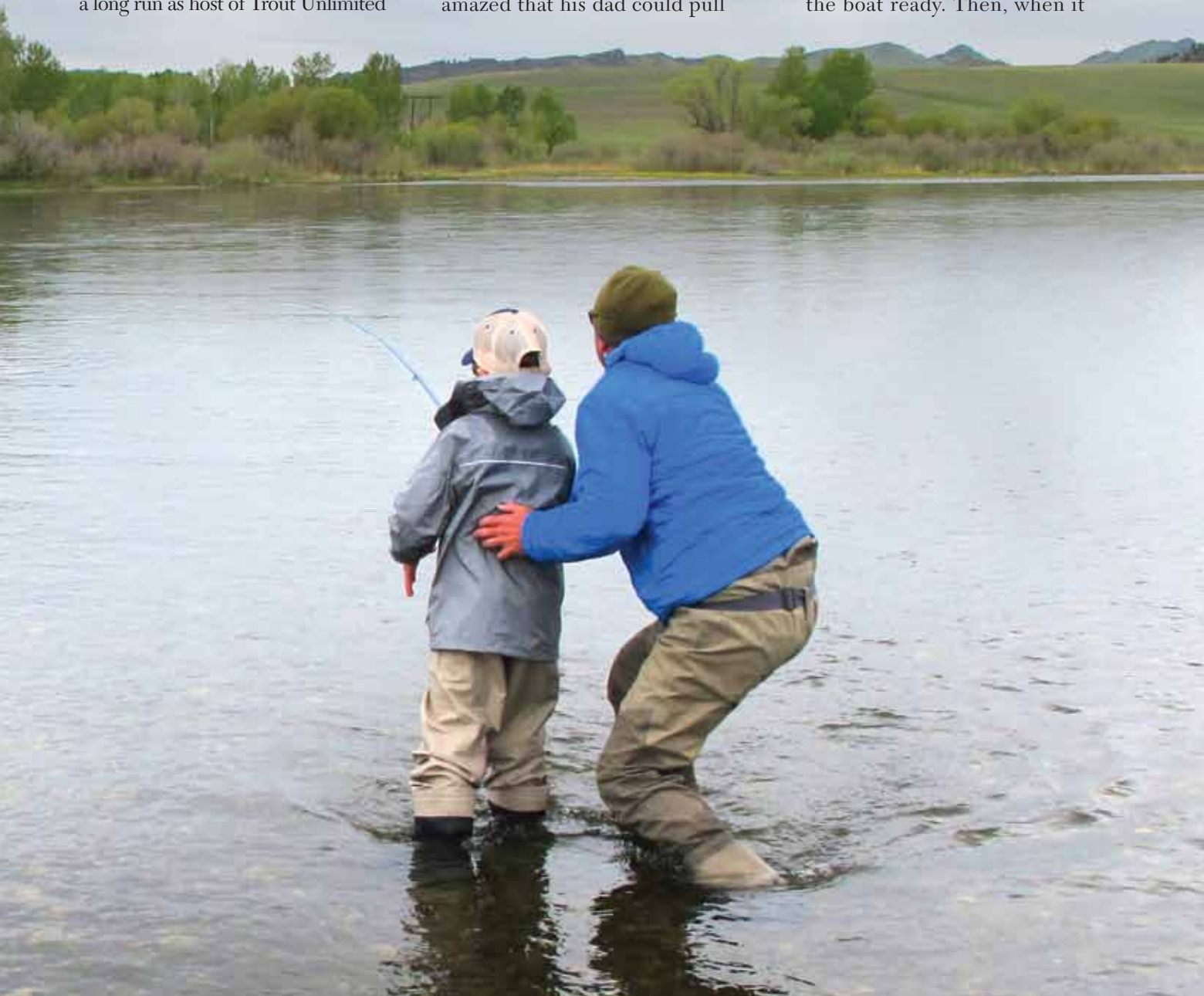
Tim and I have been friends for a long, long time, and I honestly don’t know anyone who’s as patient, or as talented, when it comes to teaching kids (or for that matter, adults) how to fly fish.

Kian was stoked when he found out we were heading to the Missouri River, and doubly so when he learned we were going to fish with Tim. In addition to running his outfitting business, Tim has been making guest appearances on the hit TV show *Mountain Men*, which is the one program Kian watches on a regular basis.

“Are we really going to fish with Tim?” Kian asked, seriously amazed that his dad could pull

it off. When I told him yes, he could hardly contain himself. His only disappointment was that his favorite “mountain man,” Tom Oar, wasn’t going to join us. (While he doesn’t remember it, Kian spent the first six months of his life just down the road from the Linehans and the Oars in Montana’s remote Yaak valley.)

When the big day finally arrived, I woke Kian early and we made the three-hour drive down to the Missouri. We met Tim at the boat launch and I didn’t even have to make introductions. In less than 30 seconds Tim and Kian were best buddies, and before I could say a word, Tim had Kian loading gear and getting the boat ready. Then, when it



was finally time to drop the drift boat in the river, Tim told Kian he could sit in the rower's seat while he made a couple of circles around the empty parking lot.

I'm not sure why, but the first time an 8-year-old boy gets to ride someplace really exceptional – the driver's seat of a big John Deere tractor, or the back of his old man's pickup truck, or the rower's seat of a drift boat – he swells up with pride to the point where it seems like he might burst from the sheer awesomeness of the experience. It's almost as if he's been handed the keys to a brand new world, and now, unexpectedly, life is exactly the way it should be; the way he's always imagined it would be if only he were a few years older.

After a couple of trips around the parking lot, Tim backed the boat down the ramp into the river, and I stood by and watched as my son sat there smiling like a conquering hero; like a mini Alexander The

Great. As much as Kian and I wanted to fish, I could have loaded him up and driven home at that point and the trip would have been a complete success. Did I mention that Tim has a way with kids? Because he truly does . . .

And that's how our entire day went. Tim, intuitive and perceptive, took the reins with Kian while I sat back and watched. Oh, I took a few photos and did a little fishing of my own, but mostly I just soaked in the experience. My boy, who I love dearly, and who means the world to me, was completely alive – focused and thoughtful, but laughing and having fun – and for the first time I can remember, I actually lived vicariously through someone else. I don't know that I'll ever do it again – I'm not in the habit of outsourcing my life or my fishing – but to sit there and watch Kian grow into a self-assured young angler over the

course of a single day was a treat I'll never forget.

If you have a young son or daughter, or perhaps a grandson or granddaughter, that you'd like to introduce to fly fishing, I hope you're fortunate enough to spend a day or two on the water with someone like Tim. We had the time of our lives – and that's not something you can put a price on.

Author's Note: If you're looking for children's fishing gear, the Orvis Kid's Endura Stockingfoot Waders, the Redington Crosswater Youth Wading Boots and the Patagonia Torrentshell Rain Jacket all worked extremely well for Kian. He stayed dry and comfortable, which is vital when your little guy or gal is going to spend the whole day on the water. If you'd like to learn more about Tim Linehan, visit his Linehan Outfitting Company website – www.FishMontana.com or call (406) 295-4872.



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