



Win With Meat!

Luncheon meat is possibly the best-ever big-weight bait, but many anglers are confused about how to approach bagging venues with it. One man who certainly isn't is Frenzee-backed Andy Neal, who gives us a meat fishing masterclass!

You join me today at my favourite venue, Viaduct Fishery in Somerset, to discuss something that some people may find a little daunting. Going to matches where you know you will need a big weight to win can really throw people off line, such is the expectation of frantic action. What I want to uncover today are the mind-set and tactics you must employ when tackling such situations, because believe me it's NOT about how hard you can pull and how fast you can net fish! Quite the opposite in fact!

Here at Viaduct big weights are very common and quite often you will need over 200lb to win. When you travel to a venue looking to catch those sorts of weights it can be far too easy to become complacent and lose your rhythm before you even begin. Viaduct is a prime example of this, as although you know you may need a big weight the fish still need to be caught, and as they are of a big average size and get fished for quite a bit they are cute and won't simply give themselves up. I think people turn up with the wrong frame of mind, expecting it to be easy and for the fish to hang themselves.

When reality hits home they end up weighing in 60lb, with 200lb winning, and seem confused as to what happened. In reality they haven't applied enough thought to what they are trying to achieve, how they have fed, where they've fished, what baits they have used and how they've paced their match. All key points in successful match fishing!

With the pole becoming so dominant here these days, that's what I have

concentrated on today; although the famous Viaduct tactics of pellet wag and bomb still have their day, it's really the pole that offers so much if you get it right during the warmer months.

Gear for this sort of fishing has to be right and up to the job, and when targeting big weights of big fish I

strong given their wire gauge. I have yet to bend one!

Floats for this sort of fishing, and most summer fishing in general, are also very important. The Frenzee FP700, FP800, FP900 and FP950 are all patterns I have designed myself for a specific purpose, and they don't break!

I say this having found myself one day with a handful of doctored floats, making up several duplicate rigs for each one I had set up. Something had to be done as I was sick of smashing floats, having the line cut into the body under stress and knowing that if I did ever pull out of a fish then my float was dead! These patterns have been built to last and are inline as well as having spring eyes. The thick hollow tips

Early summer is a favourite time of mine as I can start to be more positive with my attack.

rarely use anything less than 0.18mm hooklengths. This is mainly because of the amount of abuse it takes throughout the course of a match.

Hooks have to be just as strong and there is no place for weak patterns. My favourite pattern is a Tubertini 175 and these mega-sharp hooks are unbelievably

allow me to read the bites properly and the paste patterns even have a stem that runs up through the body into the bristle for even more strength. Confidence is everything in fishing and these floats give me that confidence, as I know they won't let me down. These little things all add up and that means I can spend more time



The most important part of building big weights is the feeding. Andy feeds his peg as soon as a fish is hooked.



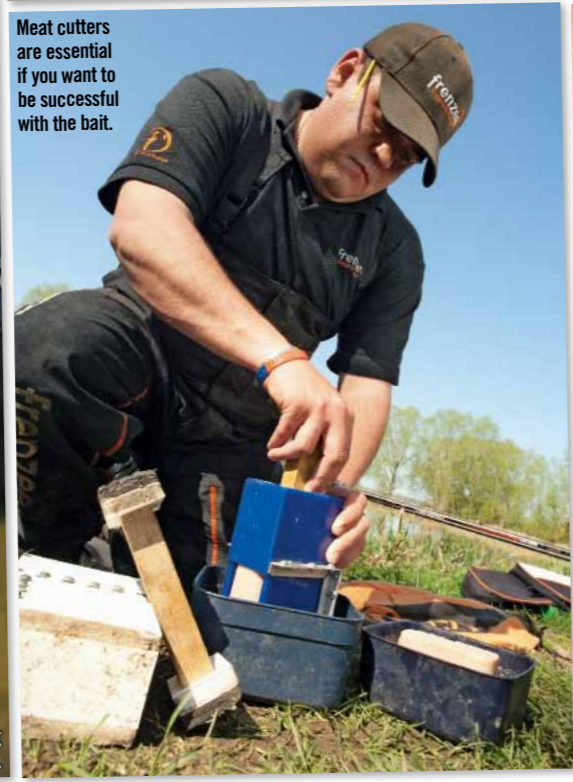
Regularly pinging three or four cubes on to a long pole line is a brilliant way to draw fish in.



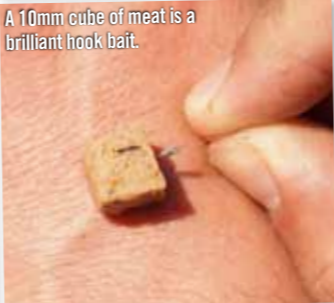
This 8mm meat withstands the attention of small fish.



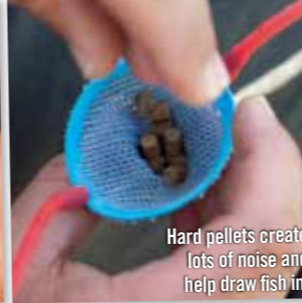
Big-potting meat and pellets is a great feeding approach.



Meat cutters are essential if you want to be successful with the bait.



A 10mm cube of meat is a brilliant hook bait.



Hard pellets create lots of noise and help draw fish in.



Andy pins his faith in 8mm and 10mm cubed meat.



Tubertini 175 hooks are perfect for meat fishing.



Viaduct is a great venue for big weights, but it isn't a case of bullying the fish in!

Be prepared for big fish down the edge.

concentrating on the fishing and feeding and not worrying about whether I need to get new rigs out.

Feeding and bait is the next key aspect. Spring and early summer is a favourite time of mine as it usually means I can start to be more positive with my attack. The only two baits I consider at this time of year are pellets and luncheon meat.

Meat will always be my number-one choice as I know that if the fish are eating it and are used to seeing it then they will be looking for it and can't resist it. Those of you who fish meat often will realise how positive the bites are and I'm sure they hunt every last bit down (a bit like waving a kebab in front of me after a few pints!). Pellets do still play a role, though, and quite often I will feed them in conjunction with meat.

With such a large head of silvers present it's important to think about what size meat will be most effective, and for me 8mm is the best size. I do think 10mm is okay and sometimes use it on the hook, but I tend to stick to 8mm as this way I don't miss out on some of the bigger skimmers and tench that play a part in the catches here. On a lot of pegs you may not compete with just carp, but if you catch

40lb of big skimmers then you can catapult yourself to a framing place quite easily. I don't even take my 6mm cutter to these pegs as there are so many small silvers that I will just get hammered and won't catch enough carp to compete.

As ever, feeding is the key factor and,

of bait here as it's rare to go straight on it. One tip is to have a little look on both lines after an hour or so as this may help you catch a fish or two and help gauge when you should go on it.

More importantly, it will help to see how your feed is reacting and whether or not

With bagging in mind it's all too easy to just start piling a lot of bait in without thinking.

as described earlier, with bagging in mind it's all too easy to just start piling a lot of bait in without thinking. This must be considered alongside what you're targeting and where you expect to catch. By this I mean the edge, short pole and long pole. The edge is for building until the last hour for maximum effectiveness. The longer you leave it the more confident the fish will be when you go there. The short line will be similar and won't kick into gear for a couple of hours.

Both of these swims are fed steadily from the off by hand to help build the swim – there is no point potting in loads

your peg is solid with silvers, as is often the case here. This is often a trigger for me to start upping the feed from, say, 15 cubes every few minutes to 30 or even 40 cubes. This is very important as it will tell me whether or not to expect it to really kick off as the frantic feeding of the silver fish will soon attract the carp and they will bully their way in. More feed also helps, as with less bait all you are doing is keeping the skimmers feeding and content in the peg with nothing left for the carp. The same applies to the edge. Keep having the odd drop in to gauge what is happening and how much bait there is left in your peg.

again it gives me clues as to how the rest of the match will progress. To kick this swim off I will usually feed a full pot of meat with a few pellets in at about 14.5 metres (I try and keep the short and long pole swims as far apart as possible so they don't interfere with each other, but at the same time still want a section behind me if the fish back off and I need to follow them). I drop the feed in from a big height to create a lot of noise to help attract any fish that may be in the area.

The first rig I pick up to go straight over this line is a shallow rig, as quite often it can catch early fish that have been swimming close by and have come in for a look. I usually fish my shallow rigs on a long line here as they don't like a pole waving over their heads. The difference is amazing, and this is a tactic that a lot of the regulars exploit and one that Andy Powers took the place apart on last year!

After 10 minutes or so of flicking a rig around and pinging an odd bit of meat I reach for my deck rig as the fish should have settled on the feed by now. All the time I'm pinging the odd cube of meat over the top to help build the swim. As the swim develops it will tell you whether to go back shallow or stay on the deck, all the time priming your short lines.

All of this will help you plan your assault for later in the match, and how you start is the next question – long pole or pellet wag and bomb? Usually I start on the long pole as

The key is to pick off the odd fish throughout the day while you prime your bagging lines for later on.

One thing to take note of is how your long pole line is fishing. If you're catching really well you may not need to come off it at all, and this usually gives you a licence to really start to attack your two shorter lines even more. This way you know that if you drop in short or in the edge then the float needs to bury pretty much instantly or it is a waste of time as you will be missing out on fish long. If it does bury, however, it's time to get your head down as the positive attack will mean there will be lots of fish present.

The next aspect of the feeding to look at is how much you top up with, as getting this right will lead to hooking fish a lot quicker. On the short pole and/or edge lines, if possible I always like to fish within throwing distance as this enables me

to feed while playing a fish. I tend to hook a fish and feed as it swims out of the swim. Therefore in an ideal world I will drop in again and there will be another waiting for me. How much feed will depend on the day – sometimes a few cubes are enough and at other times two or three handfuls are

needed. It's down to you to sort this out on the day as every day is different. The key is to try and pick off the odd fish throughout the day while you prime your bagging lines for later on. One thing to note is that at no point have I mentioned trying to

Andy likes catching big carp.





A smooth, unhurried playing style is the key to big weights.

bully the fish or pulling hard to try and get them in quickly. This is pointless, because all you need to do is make every fish count – that is the key. The more you rush the more you will lose and a lost fish doesn't weigh anything! Take your time and make sure they go in the net. I sat next to Jon Arthur on this year's Fish 'O' Mania qualifier and at no point did he rush or look rushed, he just took his time with every fish and made them count. On the day they happened to be on the large side, and 250lb later... a golden ticket! Well done, mate, great performance!

Putting big bags of fish together isn't about how much bait you can feed and how fast you can scoop! It's all about using your time properly and feeding accordingly; as match anglers we fish at the worst times of the day for fish. This is why the last couple of hours are often best as the fish decide to feed more. All you need to do is take your time, keep yourself ticking over throughout the day and try and exploit the key feeding times by building your swims in readiness for this. Then just take advantage!

TODAY'S SESSION!

I've sat on Peg 116 on Campbell Lake today, and with the sun shining things looked promising. Having the lake to myself it was safe to say I was a bit giddy when I got there and was guilty myself of doing exactly what I have described earlier. Having had a strong word with myself I soon calmed down and set about trying to relieve the lake of its contents.



Get your feeding right and you will soon be catching huge weights.

Bait was 8mm cubes of meat with some 6mm pellets in case I needed to create some noise and attract fish to the area. Pellets are mainly for fishing shallow as the rattle they make can often bring a quicker response than meat. I cubed up four tins to start with and also my favourite Bait-Tech N-Tice Polony for the hook. It's a really strong, pungent meat that will often bring quicker bites as the fish home in on the strong smells.

I kicked the swim off with a large potful of meat with a few pellets at 14.5 metres and threw some samples onto the 5m line and a big handful down the edge. As described I started on my shallow long-line rig and was soon rewarded with a

5lb carp. No more bites followed and an odd bubble started to appear so I then reached for my deck rig. A bite and a lost fish straightaway, then nothing! All of the time I was pinging meat over the top but this wasn't working. Another half a pot of bait and a bite straightaway told me that not only did they want feed but, as I was sat on my own on the lake, I was going to have to be ultra-positive if I was to reap the rewards.

After catching a few tench, bream and the odd carp long it was time to pick up the short line for a look. Having had to be so aggressive on the long line I'd really started to attack my short lines and had doubled the amount I was initially feeding. This had obviously been the way to go today as I was quickly into carp. What was noticeable was that if I cut the feed amount even slightly the tench and bream were back in, but upping it with a double handful every fish soon saw me playing carp again.

A look in the edge soon proved to be the way forward as more carp followed, interestingly only when feeding a lot of bait. Why was this? Quite clearly because I was on my own on the lake! With others around me it would have been a different story, but the key point that stood out was I managed to work out how to make the float bury as soon as I laid the rig in – a key aspect to big-weight fishing!

Think less about the time it takes to get them in and more about your feeding and you too will soon be competing on the big-weight scene!