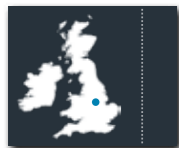


# SEARCH THE DEPTHS



**Steve Barraclough** has built an enviable reputation for catching big mixed nets from deep commercial fisheries. We asked the Frenzee-backed star to tell us how.

I love fishing deep venues where you have plenty of open water in front of you. Unlike more confined swims, you have the ability to pull fish into your catching zone by feeding. These are the kind of waters where anglers who adopt a positive approach are generally rewarded. The challenge is to draw fish into your peg and keep them there!

## WHEN FISH DO COME INTO THE AREA YOU WILL KNOW ABOUT IT.

I have brought the cameras to Daiwa Hallcroft Coarse Fishery near Retford in Nottinghamshire, a venue where I have an exemplary record – if I do say so myself! I have won the last eight matches that I have fished here leading up to this feature being shot, which is a good indicator of how important feeding and presentation is on big, open-water venues – not simply drawing well! As long as the lake is fairly consistent in terms of depths, as it is here, you will generally find that you can

catch a good net of fish from anywhere.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

My approach generally revolves around feeding just one line. This is almost always placed at 13 metres, a comfortable distance that I can feed to with ease via catapult, and isn't too difficult to hold in the strong winds that you often find

yourself battling with on big, exposed venues such as this.

If I do feed another swim, it is usually just down the edge or on the short pole at the bottom of the slope. But I never drop in for any more than a couple of minutes.

The great thing about being so single-minded is that it allows you to read what is happening on your main line extremely accurately, and when fish do come in to the area you will know about it and hopefully be able to catch them. Because this is the only line »



Fish like this are constantly wising up, so a number of rigs may be needed to fool them.

## VENUE FILE

### DAIWA HALLCROFT FISHERY

**Location:** Hallcroft Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 7RA

**Day tickets:** £6; concessions £4

**Contact:** 01777 10448

**Website:** www.hallcroffishery.co.uk

**Bottom rig – depth: 5ft; float: 0.5g FP200; shooting: bulk of No8s and two No11 droppers**

**Deep shallow rig – depth: 3½ft; float: 0.2g FP800; shooting: bulk of No10s 18in from hook and two No11 droppers**

**Normal shallow rig – depth: 2ft; float: 0.2g FP400; shooting: bulk of No10s at half depth**

**Very shallow rig – depth: 12in; float: 0.15g FP400; shooting: bulk of No10s immediately under the float**

**Dobbing rig – depth: 6in; float: 0.3g FP200; shooting: bulk of No8s immediately under the float**

**Line on all rigs is 0.17mm to 6in 0.13mm hooklengths and size 16 PR 434 hooks. Elastic is generally either grey Hydro or Preston 13h and lighter 11h.**

## ANGLER FILE

### STEVE BARRACLOUGH

**Age:** 26

**Lives:** Tickhill

**Sponsors:** Frenzee, Baif-Tech

**Pole:** Frenzee Precision Range P1 666

Five rigs for five depths.

that you are feeding with any degree of regularity, you can also be confident that if the fish are going to show up anywhere in your peg, then it is going to be here!

### GET ON THE MEAT!

With me hoping to catch fish at all depths, it is important that my bait sinks slowly. It is also good to fish something that appeals to as many target species as possible. With Hallcroft being stuffed with skimmers and carp, luncheon meat ticks all the right boxes for me!

I use a meat cutter to form 6mm cubes. I have experimented with bigger and smaller sizes and have come to

### YOU CAN ONLY REALLY MASTER THE ART OF FEEDING BY LEARNING TO READ THE WATER.

the conclusion that not only can you fire 6mm cubes out extremely accurately, they are also big enough to avoid the attentions of a lot of nuisance fish, but small enough to fit comfortably inside the mouth of a skimmer.

I have also put a lot of thought into how I hook the meat. I simply pull the bend of the hook through one of the corners so that the vast majority of the shank is hidden. This way, when I strike the hook only has to pull through a small corner of the meat and into the fish.

### RIGS

Because of the way I intend to fish it is important to have at least five rigs set up at different depths to allow me to fully explore the water.

There is normally about seven feet of water here, which leads me to set up one rig to fish at full depth, one around three and a half feet deep, one at two feet, one at a foot and another with a really long line between pole tip and float about six inches deep.

A lot of anglers make me laugh because they say that it is too much work to set up

as many rigs and top kits as I do but, as with everything in fishing, you get out what you put in. Besides, as you may only catch a couple of fish on the majority of your rigs every session, they can often be reused time and again anyway. You will usually find that at some point in the day you catch a fish or two on all the rigs, though, so it is well worth taking the time.

As a general rule, you will catch skimmers on your deeper shallow rig, and carp either on the bottom, or your 1ft or 6in-deep rig. The reason for the long line on my shallowest rig is that I can swing it out past the pole tip, which can often account for some really big fish that are sat

at the back of your feed area.

There are some huge fish in Hallcroft, so robust tackle is a must. I'm a big fan of the new Frenzee Ver-tex line, which is extremely supple but also has a bit of stretch, giving me extra confidence when playing big fish. Main lines are always 0.17mm to a 6in 0.13mm hooklength.

To give my bait the most natural fall possible, the shotting pattern on my two deeper rigs consists of a bulk halfway down and two No11 shot spread out beneath this. My 2ft-deep rig simply has the shot bulked halfway down the length of the rig, while the two shallowest rigs have all the shot bulked under the float.

While I'm on the subject, I like to use four float patterns for the five depths of water. My deck rig is a Frenzee FP200, a strong and very stable pattern with a hollow bristle that sits well in the water. My deeper shallow rig takes in a 0.3g FP800, which is a slightly shorter float that is also very stable and strong. The three shallowest rigs all feature balsa-topped dibbers, with the deeper one featuring an FP400, and the two shallowest ones

housing a rounder 0.2g FP200. These are very short floats that won't spook any fish that are cruising right under the surface.

Hook choice is a Preston 434. These are medium-wired hooks that are light enough not to affect the fall of the bait too much, but heavy enough to land big carp with confidence. Importantly, the fact that the wire is not too thick also means that it cuts through the meat on the strike very effectively.

When it comes to elastic, it is obviously important to strike a balance between using something that is strong enough to land a carp, but also light enough to stop you from bumping off skimmers. To my mind, hollow elastic used in conjunction with a pulled kit is the best for this kind of fishing. I use Preston's 13h or grey Hydro for fishing on the bottom and on my really shallow rigs where I generally encounter carp. On my deeper shallow rig, I use 11h because you tend to catch more skimmers than carp here, but if you do hook a carp you will still land it if you take your time.

### FEEDING

This is the most difficult aspect of my approach to explain because you can only really master the art of feeding by learning to read the water. I always start my session by introducing a 250ml pot of meat. I then go straight over the top of where I have fed with my 2ft-deep rig. This may seem a strange ploy, given that I have just introduced a volume of bait on the bottom, but you invariably find that you catch one or two quick carp by doing this. My theory is that carp are drawn into your peg by the bait but are scared to eat it because they associate big pots of bait with danger. Instead, they sit

The deeper the rig, the longer and more stable the float you can get away with.



Hallcroft's carp are extremely hard fighters!



Plumrose meat through a 6mm meat cutter - perfect!



stamp of fish in the lake, it doesn't take long to put a big weight together.

I must stress again the importance of being disciplined because it is only by constantly loose feeding in one area that you will pull sufficient fish in to catch quickly when they do decide to feed.

### THE SESSION

I enjoyed a couple of early carp before things quietened off, as expected. I took a couple of good-sized skimmers from my deeper shallow rig, and a double-figure carp came on my 1ft-deep rig after about an hour.

An hour later and I hadn't caught another fish. However, I wasn't too bothered because long, quiet spells are not uncommon with this kind of fishing. Around two and a half hours into the session, I switched to my 2½ft-deep rig and caught two 5lb carp in successive put-ins. No more followed so I went on my slightly deeper rig and caught another skimmer. I had a couple of line bites after doing this, which prompted me to move back up in the water.

I never really looked back from this point and a further 10 carp to 10lb came to the net through the remainder of the four-hour session, all from this same depth. As predicted, it was about finding the depth that the fish were happiest to feed at and then catching them! **POLE**

above it but when they notice your chunk of meat falling through the water they simply cannot resist!

After this, I look to feed around 10 pieces of meat every minute or so by catapult for the first hour of the match. On a really good day, you may find that you can catch from the start but the early part of the match will usually see you catching very little, or even sitting biteless. It is crucial to keep the faith during this spell because, effectively, you are building your peg. The most important thing is to keep feeding because it is only by keeping a column of bait going through the water that you will pull fish into your peg when they do decide to feed.

If you are not getting bites, or just the occasional one, it is important to keep rotating between depths. I tend to change every 10 or 15 minutes. If you do get a fish, by all means try that depth again but I certainly wouldn't sit for any longer than 15 minutes at a given depth if I wasn't getting bites.

At some point you will find a depth and time where the fish want to feed. Once you have found this key area you will often carry on catching for quite some time, and often fairly quickly.

It can take three or four hours before this happens, but when it does, given the average

Meat has a habit of picking out the bigger fish in the peg.

