

TACTICS | JUST WHEN DAVE EXPECTED FIVE HOURS ON A STICK FLOAT, THOSE TRENT BARBEL HAD OTHER IDEAS

GAMBLE PAYS OFF FOR TRENT BARBEL



DAVE HARRELL
UK'S NOT RIVER ANGLER

It's strange how a feature can totally change direction sometimes. This week I was going to tell you all about how I went to Burton-upon-Trent to fish a competition there and bagged-up on roach. Instead, I drew a noted barbel peg and ended up catching two real brutes, one just over 10lb and one just under!

A few waggler-caught roach boosted my catch to 21-4-0, so you can imagine how disappointed I was when I got back to the match HQ to find that I'd been beaten into second place by just one ounce!

Stuart Palsler had taken 21-5-0 of roach with a stick float and maggot approach, and I was left cursing myself for not fishing for roach for the whole of the last half of the match.

I could easily have beaten Stu's catch, but it's always easy after the event to make the right decisions, isn't it? Imagine if I'd roach-fished after the two barbel, ended up with 25lb and still got beaten. Then I'd have been wondering if I could have caught another barbel.

Before I get on to the match itself, it's worth giving you an insight into this excellent venue, as it's a place that's well worth a visit if you enjoy float fishing.

COORS AC

Fishing rights on the Burton sections are controlled by Coors Angling Club. There are several popular river sections in and around Burton and all are highlighted on the club's website (www.coors-angling-club.co.uk). Membership is only £35 a year, which is great value, in my opinion.

The club secretary is Tony Vandome and he's an excellent organiser of competitions who has been working hard with River Trent match legend

Wayne Swinscoe over the past four years to create some very popular events including the three-day festival, which takes place next week.

The single most important benefit from the likes of Tony and Wayne working together is that their matches are pegged correctly, with plenty of room given to every angler, and this is vital if we are to move forward with new events. Gone are the days when you could cram loads of anglers in on 15 yard pegs, and once organisers realise that anglers need a minimum of 30, and preferably 40, metres then we have a chance of providing good sport, good catches and match venues to go back to on a regular basis.

Roach tend to be the main quarry, but dace are appearing in most catches now, and there are also some quality chub to go for in some sections. Add to this the ever-increasing numbers of perch. Oh, and barbel of course, which brings me nicely back to my match.

EVESHAM RIG ON THE TRENT

I drew Peg 4 on the downstream section at Shardlow and initially thought it was a few pegs upstream from where it was. There are no permanent pegs at Shardlow so the length was pegged out on the morning of the match, leaving everyone who drew there, guessing where they might be.

When I got to my peg I knew instantly that I had a chance of success because I'd seen someone weigh a big barbel from here



Less than two hours gone and Dave's first bite soon sees a double-figure barbel come to the net.

The standard bait tray for Trent match anglers now includes pellets alongside maggots, casters and hemp.

last season. A fallen willow tree on the far bank had added to the dense willow cover that was already there, and if ever there was a case for a picture with a row of xxx's and 'barbel live here' marked on it, this was the one.

I set up the same rod and rig that I'd used at Evesham to win the Shakespeare Championship just a

week earlier, but instead of the open-end feeder, this time I went for a large Kamasan Blackcap blockend. The river was carrying extra water and a lot of pace, and I was surprised to find that I needed 4oz to hold the bottom right over.

With 10lb mainline and an 8lb hair rig hooklength and size 12 hook, this was a proper 'take-no-prisoners' rig that I felt needed to be anchored in the right spot, with the hooklength allowed to drift right under the submerged branches.

Hair-rig hookbait was my favourite double 8mm Bait-Tech Super Halibut pellets, with 4mm versions of the same in the feeder.

For the first half-an-hour I introduced feed every five minutes or so, but after this I left the feeder in for longer 10-minute spells. Upstream of me on peg 3 was Richie Reynolds, an angler I rate really highly on all sorts of river situations and he had decided to start on the waggler, while at the same time, feed a line directly in front at 14.5 metres with hemp and tares. An hour

passed by and although Richie had picked up a few small roach, I couldn't see any major reason to change what I was doing. It's a confidence thing, I guess, but I've been catching so many big barbel recently that I was certain I was going to get at least another one here.

One-and-a-half hours passed and Richie switched to his pole line. Secretly, I was hoping it didn't work, as I didn't have the approach covered at all in my game plan! Thankfully, despite a few decent roach on hemp, he couldn't get it to work and was now looking upstream himself as Jeff Garrish on Peg 2 was catching quite well on stick float and maggot.

FINALLY A BITE

With one hour and forty minutes gone, the bite that I'd been waiting patiently for finally came. It was a vicious one too, and as I picked the rod up there was no mistaking what was on the other end!

The clutch confirmed that this was a seriously big fish, and with a strong current to contend with it was a case of

carefully playing it back across the river and not rushing anything.

As the barbel went into the landing net I estimated it at around 10lb. I was now well and truly in the race and the gamble was paying off.

The excitement level went up another notch when I hooked into another big fish on my very next cast. I remember thinking that if this one was the same size, I might actually have enough to win after just two hours. After what happened at Evesham the week before, I was also beginning to think that maybe it was time to have a go on the lottery!

I carefully eased the fish back across the river but then felt it stop. I applied a little more pressure and it felt as though the fish or the feeder was stuck in a weed bed. I slackened off slightly then applied pressure again, in the same way as I've done hundreds of times before on the Wye and Severn to get fish free of a snag.

The fish came out of whatever it was stuck in and I was back in business until a couple of seconds later when the line went slack and the fish

escaped. I went from elation to feeling gutted in an instant as I'd probably just lost another 10lb!

Thankfully, another one took a liking to my double pellet offering on the two-hour mark and this one stayed on! I was now on around 18lb, I thought, and after no more bites were forthcoming I decided a switch to the waggler was in order. A run of small roach soon joined the two barbel in the net, but with an hour to go I decided to try for one more barbel.

A couple of little nudges which might have been line bites, kept me on the feeder right up to the whistle. One more small roach would have given me victory, but that's how it goes sometimes, and after my one-barbel victory at Evesham I can't grumble too much, can I?

I'm hoping that next week's three-day festival will see me draw on some good roach pegs. Surely I can't draw another big-barbel swim, can I? You'll be the first to know.

MORE DETAILS
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PROFILE

Dave Harrell is recognised as one of the county's best-ever river anglers and has devoted his life to learning different skills on running water. He has fished for England at World and European level and now owns his own tackle company, Dave Harrell Angling. For details of the product range log on to the website at: www.daveharrellangling.com
He is also available for one-to-one and group coaching sessions on the River Wye throughout the river season. For more details contact Dave at: info@daveharrellangling.com



The first barbel weighed around 10lb, the second, which Dave estimated as around the same size, escaped.