

TACTICS | OLD-SCHOOL MEAT VERSUS POPULAR PELLETS AS DAVE

FISHES A SWOLLEN WYE FOR BARBEL

IT'S TIME TO GET ON THE SMELLY BAIT...

Boosted meat still rules when rivers run high and coloured



DAVE HARRELL
UK'S NO1 RIVER ANGLER

Every river in the country has been high since the June 16 kick-off, and that's no bad thing! The extra height and colour has resulted in some great catches so far, and I can't remember a better start.

It was brilliant to see the match record go twice in one weekend, with bream weights of 86lb and 88lb on the Warks Avon at Evesham.

Norfolk's River Yare got off to a flyer, with big weights of bream and roach, while the Briston Avon, Trent, and Severn all produced the goods too.

My favourite venue, the Wye, was 6ft up and chugging through when I arrived last weekend and that meant only one thing as far as I was concerned - smelly baits for barbel!

THE PLAN

My bait bag was filled with smelly offerings which included Bait-Tech halibut-flavoured meat, ground halibut pellet groundbait and some pre-drilled 8mm-16mm halibut pellets in original and red colour.

The plan was to introduce groundbait and pellets on two lines via a big open-end Nisa feeder that needed a 4oz lead strapped to the side to hold the bottom.

The closer-in line, a couple of rodlenghts out, would be a meat hookbait line, while I'd also fish a line just this side of the middle with pellet hookbaits, doubling my chances.

Pellets have taken such a hold that the luncheon meat, lobworms and meatballs I once used a lot when the rivers were high have taken a back seat, but I was curious to see whether I could make my tin of halibut-flavoured meat work.

Like meatballs, this halibut meat is quite soft, so you can't cast far with it. I thread either one big piece or three smaller ones on to a big hook and up the line.

Hooks were the Drennan Barbel Super Specialist, in size 6 for the meat and size 12 for the hair-rigged pellet

rig. This was tied to accommodate a single 12mm pellet. Hooklengths for both rigs were 10lb.

SLOW START

I began by introducing six big feederfuls of groundbait and pellets on my pellet line, then fed the close-in line with two loads of the same.

By setting up with a quick-change link swivel I could then switch between the feeder and a straight lead. These leads are flattened to help them to hold the bottom better than a round pattern, and for high river conditions I carry them in sizes from 2oz up to 6oz.

I started off on three pieces of meat on the close-in line and had no bites at all for the first hour, then a savage bang on the rod top resulted in me missing what I expected would be the first fish of the day on the strike. Instead, I connected with nothing and suspected it was probably a chub snaffling the free offerings.

SWITCHING LINES

I decided to concentrate mainly on the straight lead for the close-in line, feeding every 30 minutes or so with the big feeder for one or two casts.

A switch to the more distant line with hair-rigged pellet on the hook saw me wait a further half-an-hour for the first proper barbel bite of the day, which was unmissable.



Face to face with a power-packed River Wye barbel.



First barbel from mid-river - and this 8lb fish scrapped!

There was no need to strike - the fish had hooked itself and the rod would have ended up in the river if I hadn't picked it up!

The solid resistance at the hook end confirmed that I'd hooked a decent barbel, and after a good battle the first fish of the day, an 8lb fish, was mine.

My girlfriend, Becky, saw this as an opportunity to take over the rod and proceeded to land two small barbel in quick succession from the same line.

My turn again, and I decided to try the close-in line with a big chunk of meat and a 3oz flat lead.

I didn't have to wait long for another bite as 15 minutes later the rod-tip flew around and my biggest fish of the day, a near-10lb fish, was the result.

Becky then had a similar specimen

and a smaller fish on the meat from the same spot a few minutes later before bites there dried up.

I introduced more feed via the feeder, but despite several more goes there, no more fish were interested.

The session came to an end with two 6lb fish on the pellet line, so it had turned out to be a good afternoon in the end, with us taking a number of fish from both lines.

For me, the session proved one thing for sure - a big meat hookbait is hard to beat, and our two biggest barbel both came to the smelly baits.

It might seem a bit old-school these days but there's no doubt you've got to make sure you have some meat with you next time you're faced with a high and coloured river!

MAKE THE BAIT



1 Cut a tin of halibut-flavoured luncheon meat into strips, each about an inch wide.



2 Break off rough cubes from the strips. This gives a large surface area for flavour to leak off from.



3 Fish one big piece of meat or three smaller cubes - if one drops off, fish still have something to go at!

MORE DETAILS

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 go to: www.daveharrellangling.com Have you got a question for our resident river expert? Email Dave at info@daveharrellangling.com



Becky had a near double-figure barbel on the day.