

**Q**I see your resident big-fish expert Alan Stagg has been having some amazing catches of bream recently. Is there any chance you could pick his brains about the rigs and tactics he's been using for this?

Darryl Jones  
Hometown: Reading  
Age: 42  
Favourite species: Roach

**A**You're right Darryl, Alan's been blitzing the bream and we're as interested as you as to how he's gone about it – so we asked the man himself.



**CFA EXPERT**  
Name: Alan Stagg  
Sponsors: Gardner  
PB bream: 17lb 6oz

# THE RIG THAT DID IT

Big-fish ace Alan Stagg divulges the tricks that caught one of the biggest bream braces of all time.

**ASK AN EXPERT**  
Your questions answered

**C**oarse Fishing Answers expert Alan Stagg is one of the best and most well-known big-fish anglers in the country. He's captured a number of monster fish over the years and has a PB list to make even the best of us green with envy. His latest capture, though, is one of his best, rocking the big-fish world with one of the biggest braces of bream ever landed in the UK.

The pair of fish together weighed in at a staggering 34lb 11oz. Separately on the scales they pulled the needle around to 17lb 6oz and 17lb 5oz, with Alan getting takes from the second fish within minutes of placing the first in a retaining sling to recover, leading

to one of the most incredible bream catch shots of all time.

After such a capture it's natural for anglers to want to know exactly how Alan applied his angling brain to the situation and fooled these slimy giants.

We spoke to the man himself to get the full lowdown on his winning rig and the other elements of his fishing style that put these bream on the bank.

## HANGING OFF THE BACK

Fishing three rods, Alan always places two baits in the baited area, but will also ensure the third rod is positioned out of it by up to a rod length. When targeting really big bream, he has found the larger specimens tend to hang back from the smaller fish as they go in to feed and has picked off a number of warier, bigger specimens using this trick.



## IN THE ZONE

For big bream Alan rates popped-up hook baits, but not popped up too far; instead he's looking for a balanced presentation. Anything over an inch off the bottom can lead to the Hoover-like mouth of a feeding bream missing your hook bait as it sucks at the freebies on the bottom. To make sure his hook bait is always in the target zone but still stands out, Alan fishes two pieces of Enterprise fake corn, one buoyant, one sinking, so they 'waft' just a couple of centimetres off the deck, held in place by the weight of the hook. He rates Gardner Tackle Covert size 8 Wide Gape Talon Tip hooks better than anything else for the job.



## SUPPLE LINK

For hook-link material Alan has bucked the trend of using coated braid, preferring instead uncoated in the form of Gardner Tackle's Trickster Heavy in 15lb, for two reasons.

First of all the suppleness of braid allows the line to lay better on the bottom, and second, not doing what everyone else is in angling also gives you an edge over the fish, which will probably be wary of the things the majority of other anglers are using.



## PINNED TO THE DECK

Alan's use of a leadcore leader acts to keep the line pinned down to the deck (in this case 25lb Gardner Tackle Plummet); important when a marauding bream shoal starts to feed and can cut down both the amount of line bites you get and spooked fish. But fishing to a gravel bar, as Alan does on his chosen water, it can also help with its abrasion-resistant qualities – the last thing you want is a weak spot in your last six feet of contact with the fish when you hook into a new PB.



## QUICK CHANGE

To attach his hook link to his lead, Alan employs a Gardner Tackle Q-Ring. This little addition has actually helped him put more fish on the bank due to the speed at which he can swap hook links when the fish are feeding.



## THE RIGHT LENGTH

When Alan first began his campaign on his chosen bream water he started by using a hooklength of around four or five inches. Although these were better for using with PVA bags of pellets he found he was missing a lot of takes, and the fish that he did land were only lightly hooked.

The problem was down to the short distance the hook link allowed the hook to travel into a bream's mouth before the fish felt the lead and bolted. Basically the fish knew something was up before it had time to swallow the bait.

The answer was a longer hook link, but not too long. Alan found around seven or eight inches to be optimum, putting the bait far enough into the fish's mouth before the bolt rig takes effect.

## BIG BREEM, BIG FEED

Alan targeted a large southern gravel pit to catch his brace and had to work hard for it. After seeing fish rolling and feeding at range he put the effort into find a gravel bar at 85 yards and set out a large bed of feed. Using a spod he deposited a large load of 4mm trout pellets, corn and crushed CC Moore Odyssey XXX boilies over a wide area to draw the fish in. His optimum size for a bed of feed is around 10 to 12 yards square, which he covers with up to 12 litres of particles.



## THE BOLT EFFECT

Fishing at range Alan uses powerful rods to cast his 3oz lead to where it needs to be, but that's not the only reason for the weight. When a fish takes the bait it will move and, when that hook link tightens, the full 3oz of lead will act on the hook to set it in the fish's mouth. The fish will then bolt and set the hook further.

To create this bolt-rig effect the lead needs to be held in place on the line and for this Alan employs a Gardner Covert Lead Clip and tail rubber. This keeps the lead in place on the line, but under pressure the lead will slide off the back of the clip. The strong rods he uses for this also allow him to fish effectively at range, even in strong sidewinds, without compromising accuracy.

Send your coarse fishing question to us at  
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