

Words and pics: Jon Bones

# CATCH ON EVERY SES

Big-fish expert **LEWIS READ** slips a sizeable carp into his net as he demonstrates how you can enjoy success on day-ticket venues, even unfamiliar ones.

## ANGLER FILE



LEWIS  
READ

AGE: 39

NICKNAME: Harry Potter

UK PB: 47lb 12oz

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Lewis proves that you don't need ultra-complicated rigs and the latest baits as he lands a day-ticket twenty on his simple, yet effective, tactics.

# SION!



What a way to kick-start a session – a lovely, dark 18lb 8oz mirror.

**L**ewis Read has been carp fishing for longer than he'd care to admit and he's become extremely proficient at it – his impressive array of trophy shots is testament to that. He targets huge carp from ultra-tough waters and this bounty-hunting style of angling requires a certain mind-set, as well as a high level of commitment and skill.



With carp showing in one specific area of the lake, swim choice is elementary.

This is far removed from what most of us set out to achieve, with the aim usually being to get a bend in the rod and, if we're lucky, perhaps a new PB. Even so, every angler that spends their time targeting individual, big carp, including those at the pinnacle of our sport, has spent years on runs-type waters learning their craft, gaining a wealth of experience and knowledge that you can learn from. Consequently, we asked Lewis Read to visit a day-ticket water that any TC reader can go and fish, to explain how he ensures success from such venues.

Arriving at Thorney Weir in Berkshire, I find Lewis ensconced in a swim along the right-hand side of the

lake, just past one of the water's many small islands. He arrived yesterday, fishing through last night, and has a beaming smile as he gestures towards a landing net secured in the margins. Banking a 16lb mirror and a bream during the night, he has just landed another mirror. At 18lb 8oz it's a brilliant start to the day, which is already turning out to be a hot one, despite it being only 7am.

"With yesterday being a Sunday, every swim on the lake was taken when I arrived," explains Lewis as he releases his prize in the margins. ■

“One by one, anglers slowly vacated their swims as the afternoon wore on. I wandered the banks for three and a half hours, watching the water and speaking to the other anglers to determine what had been caught. Having only been here once before I was keen to glean any clues as to features, the going areas and so on to help me on my way.

“During this time I saw a number of carp show in a specific spot in the middle of the lake. Wandering around to the swim that was the shortest distance from this area I found it taken, but the angler was due to leave and wasn't actually fishing to the carp showing out in front of him. The fishery staff had very kindly reserved a swim for me, as a fail-safe to the venue being so busy that we couldn't get one. It would have been easy to drop in there, but the only signs of fish were in that one spot mentioned. My



Back you go – Lewis uses his weigh sling to safely return a day-ticket carp.

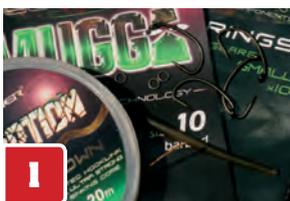
best option was to wait for the swim to become vacant and then fish to the activity, which is what I did.

“When I finally got my gear into the swim I cast a marker about 110 yards to the area where I'd seen at least a dozen carp show because I wanted to know what was out there. All of the fish were showing over a wide gravel



Despite getting caught up with another line, Lewis is able to safely land this impressive, 28lb 12oz common.

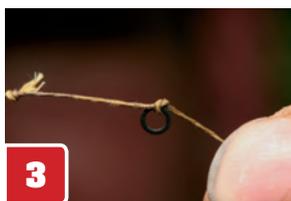
**STEP-BY-STEP** LEWIS' RIG FOR A DAY-TICKET TWENTY



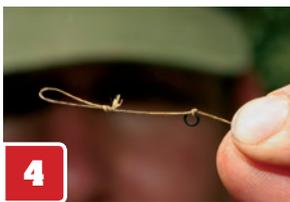
**1** Here are the components that you will need to construct this rig.



**2** Remove the coating from the end of some coated braid and tie an overhand loop.



**3** Thread on a small rig ring and secure this to the hook link with an overhand knot.



**4** The distance between hair loop and rig ring will depend on the hook-bait size.



**5** Pass your hook through the rig ring so that the ring sits on the shank just above the bend.



**6** Now tie the hook in place with a knotless knot (see page 210).



**7** Sandwich a piece of yellow rig foam between two small grains of maize.



**8** Thread the bait onto the hair and trap it in place with a boilie stop.



**9** Tie an overhand loop in the other end of the hook link (see page 210).



**10** Trim down an anti-tangle sleeve and thread this onto the hook link.



**11** Attach the rig to a quick-change swivel and cover the connection with the sleeve.



**12** Here's the finished setup, which accounted for two twenties on this trip.

bar that's only three feet deep on the top. However, there are areas of big, boulder-like gravel and areas of much finer pea gravel on the bar; the latter is what I have my baits positioned on. My rigs will lie over the finer gravel far better.



Bait quantity and how it's applied will depend on where you're fishing.



TOP TIP



PIN IT DOWN - PART 1

On pressured waters try using a fluorocarbon main line. This sinks like a brick and will keep your main line pinned on the bottom, out of harm's way. That is, so long as you couple it with a slack line. Lewis fishes his lines slack enough to have the bobbin on the ground.

The fish did stop showing after a few casts with a marker. I thought the disturbance may have caused them to move but thankfully they didn't. I think that dropping my rigs from a boat, and therefore minimising further disturbance, has helped."

Lewis goes on to explain that he ran two of his rods out to the top of the bar using his bait boat, dropping a mixture of maggots, hemp, maize and broken boilies over each. He then dropped a pint of the same mixture between the two rods to create a baited area, as opposed to two separate spots.

The maize is a visual food signal to get the carp's attention. Once they're interested the hemp, maggots and other bits will keep them grubbing around. The third rod was dropped

further down the bar, away from the bait, baited with a small PVA stick. All three bites thus far have come from the baited area; with fresh rigs and more bait being dropped on the same spots after each fish.

"I've brought a variety of baits, which is always a sensible option when you're unfamiliar with the lake. They're all baits that I have the utmost confidence in, especially the maggots. Bear in mind, though, that when using maggots in warm weather they will bury themselves in the lake bed, unlike in winter when they generally remain where they fall on the bottom. For this reason, I fish maggots in conjunction with other baits, such as hemp and



Lewis uses a select few rigs no matter which type of venue he's fishing. The key is having confidence in them.

maize, so that I know that there's bait that can be seen by the carp. They'll come across the maggots once they start feeding, and this will keep them rooting around for longer.

"The rigs and baits that I use generally stay the same, no matter which type of water I'm fishing, because I use what I have confidence in."

in. The main difference between targeting individual big carp and day-ticket-type carping is how many fish the lake holds. If I'm fishing a low-stock water then I will use less bait than on a well-stocked water, where I fish in a far more aggressive manner. On a big-fish venue I'll be fishing over a handful of bait on each rod, setting a trap for just one bite. On a water like this, however, I like to fish over a bed of bait. You're fishing with multiple bites in mind. There are plenty of hungry mouths out there to demolish a baited patch and compete for the food, which is the situation you're trying to create. That said, you should look to build the swim gradually. For example, put 1kg or so out and then top it up after each bite, so that your baiting correlates to the number of carp that you're catching."

Lewis is interrupted as the bobbin on his right-hand rod rises to the rod butt and line is gently peeled off the slack clutch. It feels like a decent fish as it kites across the lake as Lewis picks the rod up. Unfortunately, because two rods are fishing in close proximity

the fish picks up the middle rod, swimming straight through the line. Opening the bail arm on the middle rod allows Lewis to continue the fight and eventually a sizeable common is twisting and turning in the clear margins; it goes 28lb 12oz on the scales. With patches of bubbles occasionally breaking the surface over Lewis' bait, he's confident of more action too.

"There's no special tackle, bait or rigs involved in carp fishing," continues Lewis. "The gear that I use for specimen hunting is the same as I'm using today, it's just the application of it that can alter slightly. The only difference that I might entertain is scaling down my terminal tackle, dropping the breaking strain of the hooklength and size of hook if I'm after smaller carp in open water.

"On a session like this, where you're targeting an unfamiliar water, basic angling principles should always be your starting point. Go in gently with the bait to start with, look for signs of fish activity and fish to it and so on.

"With a target water you will have a good knowledge of the lake, its inhabitants, the swims, venue history and so on, but this is rarely the case on day-ticket waters, especially if you flit from one to another. There will be venue regulars and those that are already set up when you arrive can be an invaluable source of information, even if they simply point out an area where they've seen fish."

Every now and again flat spots appear on the surface close to where Lewis' rigs are positioned, more than likely caused by fish disturbing the bait. Even though his third rod is positioned just 20 yards or so up the bar with a small PVA bag, all of the bites have come from the baited patch. Lewis explains that he could



These are the three baits that Lewis tried on this session, with the maize and maggots accounting for all of the bites.

**TOP TIP**



**PIN IT DOWN - PART 2**

Mould small pieces of rig putty around your hook link to help keep it tight to the lake bed, where it's less likely to come into contact with a carp and spook it. You can also mould pieces of putty around your rig tubing for the same reason.



A stocky-looking carp puts up a good fight in the clear margins...



Launching the bait boat to take a rig and pint of freebies out to the shallow gravel bar where the carp are showing.

**TACTICS** WHICH BAITS TO TAKE WITH YOU ON YOUR NEXT SESSION



**1**

Maggots work on most waters and will keep the carp grubbing around in your swim for ages.



**2**

Always carry a few tubs of pop-ups. These are perfect for casting at showing fish.



**3**

Where allowed, Lewis rates hemp and maize highly as a feed. Maize is a good hook bait too.



**4**

Big carp love boilies and you can't go wrong with a kilo or two of good-quality freezer baits.

KEEPIN' IT REAL  
LEWIS READ

reposition it on the same spot as the other two, but three lines running into this rather tight area could be too many. Therefore, he opts to switch to a zig rig on this rod and casts it further along the gravel bar.

"If the situation were different and I hadn't caught, but the fish were still out in that area, then I'd be ringing the changes trying to find out what the fish are willing to feed on," says Lewis. "I'd try different hook baits and fishing away from the baited area. If the fish weren't still out there then I'd reel in and go and find them. Because it's a hot day I'd put money on there being carp at the top end of the lake among the snag bushes, so I'd start up there. On this type of water you want to be getting action, because you know that there are a lot of carp in front of you, and you should always be working towards getting more bites. On a low-stock, big-fish water you may only have a couple of carp in your swim and you don't have the numbers of carp in the lake to do this; you have to give your traps a chance to work. I can fish

on a target water and, so long as I know that I'm on fish, I can happily sit behind my rods waiting for a take for hours on end. This isn't the case on well-stocked waters."

The baited area produces the goods yet again as a maggot hook bait is picked up by another Thorney Weir inhabitant. The jittery take leads Lewis to suspect that a bream or tench is the culprit, and the lacklustre fight would back this up. Once guided into the margins, though, the hooked fish starts to plod around, stripping line from the reel every now and again – there is now no doubt that a carp is responsible.

Sliding the net cord under a sizeable mirror, Lewis emphasises that his success isn't down to anything more than location. The rigs and baits are simple, and ones that he has confidence in, but his efforts yesterday in locating his quarry and acting on what he saw has led to this success. With a scraper twenty, at 20lb 2oz, held up for the camera, photographed and returned, it's the ideal opportunity to leave Lewis as he packs away slowly, content with his success. **TC**



... with the culprit being this 20lb 2oz mirror.