



ANGLER FACT FILE

Name: Sam

Meeuwissen

Age: 35

Hometown:

Twyford, near
Reading

Best bream:

14lb 1oz

Sponsor:

Gardner Tackle

Up close for deep-water bream

In the first instalment of a short series, top southern specialist Sam Meeuwissen explains how the rarely used float leger can give you an edge on deep-water venues.

Welcome to the first part of my three-part series, which will detail some of the edges I employ to ensure success during my stillwater sessions. Hopefully you will pick up an extra edge for yourself as these features unfold, to ensure your bobbins keep flying and your float keeps dipping this summer.

The key to getting the most out of any particular style of angling is to keep practising.

After fine-tuning various methods you can then combine the knowledge and technical advantages gained

from some of them in a multi-faceted attack on your intended venue. One such combination is the underused but still effective float-leger rig and is the tactic I intend to put to good use today on CEMEX Angling's world-famous Yateley complex in Hampshire.

Recent roach fishing outings have seen the rig I intend to use today evolve as I assembled and substituted various components, and tried several types of hook links and baits to keep the bites coming. However, today I intend to put it to good use after the venue's tench and bream in preparation for the real task ahead, which I will cover later in the series.

TELLTALE BUBBLES

Arriving at the car park around 7.30am, I realise that a schoolboy error has been committed – no bait bucket! A quick phone call to my wife followed by a 20-minute detour later, and I am in possession of my bait. It's just in time, as deputy editor Steve Martin is at the gate! It's still quite early and neither of us has to be

anywhere else today, so these are going to be a relaxing few hours by the waterside if nothing else.

The noise of the rush-hour traffic, although just the other side of the car park, might as well be light years away, replaced by the familiar sights, sounds and smells of vegetation, wildlife and water. We make our way slowly along the narrow pathways between the other waters on the complex and are soon standing by the side of the Pumphouse and Horseshoe lakes. This is my first sighting of the venue since I last walked round it a few years ago, way before the recent maintenance work. A proliferation of bubbles and slight sub-surface rolling convince me that the Pumphouse is the venue on which to set up my stall. This is the first time I have wet a line here, but wherever I fish I am confident in my tactics. Carefully placing my rucksack and rod holdall at the back of the swim, away from the edge to avoid any disturbance, the bubbling continues a few rod lengths from the bank as I begin to assemble my armoury.

MOULDING THE MIX



01 A smooth surface stops the mix from sticking.



02 Loosely overfill the mould slightly with the mix.



03 Press the feeder into the mould, weight side up.



04 Finally, gently pull the feeder from the mould.

FIRST THE FEED

The first job in hand is to sort out the groundbait. An equal mix of Van den Eynde Expo and white crumb is deposited into the bowl and mixed together dry. A liberal dose of Insect Juice, a lovely chocolate-smelling liquid, is also added before adding the water and giving it a good mixing.

There's no need for a riddle here, a rough and ready stirring then rubbing to a fine consistency is enough, before adding a few free samples and allowing it to soak in. The free offerings today are a few grains of sweetcorn, a smattering of hemp, a sprinkle of dead maggots and a few live ones with some casters for good measure. This allows me to use a range of hook-bait samples to see what the fish prefer to dine on.

Secreted in my rucksack I also

have some lovely fat redworms I plundered from my composter yesterday afternoon. These are definitely going on the hook today!

POLARIS FLOAT

Already set up in the sleeve, it is simply a matter of fitting the sections

of my 13ft heavy-duty float rod together and fishing. A beefy rod like this allows me to cast the feeders and bombs I employ while using either a Polaris float or fishing the float leger in general.

The rig is very simple and consists of a float, a flat-bed Method feeder and a short hook link with a size 18 fine-wire hook to 2.5lb line. It's fine enough to get a bite, but strong enough to give me good odds on landing anything. The hook link can vary greatly depending on what bait I am using and whether I suspect a degree of finesse is still required, despite the lump of metal and plastic with groundbait moulded around it just a couple of inches away.

My choice of main line is the new Gardner Hydroflo in 5lb breaking strain – a nice clear and supple line.

The Method feeder has been slightly modified in that I have used a Gardner Covert Buffer bead at the front end, pushed over the stiff internal tubing and into the hole at the front of the feeder. It is a snug fit and allows me to pull the eye of the size 12 Covert Mini Rig Swivel into the bead. The rear is finished off with a Gardner Covert Tail Rubber. These fit together well, but easily



SAM'S METHOD RECIPE



01 White breadcrumb and Expo are top bream and tench pullers.



02 These are mixed 50/50 with a little added water.



03 Insect Juice smells a little like chocolate. This is added next.



04 Sam adds corn, hemp and maggots (alive and dead) for bulk.



05 The result is a sweet-smelling, sticky mix that no fish can resist.



The long wait is over, as one of the venue's big slabs finally targets Sam's worm-and-maggot cocktail.

dismantle in the event of a breakage – safety is paramount. Construct your rigs with this in mind.

The feeder itself is the type that you use with a mould. Simply fill the mould with a bit of groundbait, press the feeder in, push down and gently lift the feeder back out. The result is a uniform and compact ball of feed. With a swift underarm flick I soon have it sitting complete with a worm-and-maggot cocktail among the bubbling and swirling, which has strangely decreased as a cold northeasterly wind whips along the bank. I'm certainly glad we are sitting at the back of it.

UNDERSTANDING THE TOW

All the maintenance and tree work CEMEX has done on these venues is definitely starting to pay off as a healthy chop builds up on the surface, giving these once dark and dingy tree-lined venues a breath of fresh air. This is no problem for the Polaris float, though, as it remains motionless in the water, refusing to move not only in the wind, but also because of a lack of bites.

The wind, however, sometimes affects the float when a particularly strong gust catches the line from tip

to float, gently lowering the float tip and pulling it slowly under the surface. It's not a problem, really, as I am predominantly fishing for a lift bite to indicate any fishy interest.

However, I remedy this minor niggle by sinking the line and dropping the rod tip to reduce the amount of line caught by the surface tow and breeze... and still the float sits proud yet undisturbed. A few loose grains of hemp are sent out with the catapult, along with a few maggots; not many but enough to keep a bit of bait moving through the water column. A couple of small hand-squeezes of groundbait are also deposited at regular intervals to keep the flavour trail fresh and moving about the lake thanks to the undertow, something that occurs when a good wind is on the water.

I have used the undertow to good effect in some of the large gravel pits I frequent, and from the boat have witnessed weed flattened to the lake bed, more like that in the flow of a river than at the bottom of a pit. With this knowledge of stillwater behaviour I am confident that a flavour trail is leaking from my bait and will undoubtedly attract a fish to the vicinity soon.

SAM'S FLOAT-LEGER RIG



The Polaris float works by using friction. The line passes through a unit underneath the float (the Frixon device) and, once it surfaces, the line is tightened to the weight, which traps the line and sets the float at the correct depth

5lb main line

The flat feeder is made into a semi-bolt rig by trapping a swivel in the buffer bead

A size 18 hook is tied to a 3in light hook link

Worm and maggot hook bait

TACKLE BITS



01 Small leads are excellent alternatives to the feeder.



02 A stiff float rod – like one for barbel – is an ideal tool.



03 Pumphouse bream are big, but 5lb line will take the strain.



04 A small swivel is locked semi-bolt-style with a buffer bead.

LIFT AND WIGGLE

The morning is slipping into early afternoon and I decide to wind in and have a walk about to check out some spots on the far bank, where I've seen some potential fishy activity over the past hour or so.

Finding a carp among the snag bushes in Horseshoe, I watch it for a minute before moving on. Carp are all right if you're carp fishing, but today it's bream or tench – either will do. On stopping to talk to the only other angler on the pond, he informs me that it is unusually slow, and that he enjoyed a mixed bag of fish the week before. The fact that fish are in here is enough for me, and buoys my confidence.

So I return and despatch the Polaris once more, hoping something might have moved in while the lines were out of the water. After a quick sprinkle of hemp and maggots with another fresh ball of groundbait for the fish, it's time once more to settle down and have a cuppa. Happy days!

As we chat, Steve and I rarely take our eyes off the float, than as I pour another cup of tea and Steve goes for a wander to stretch his legs – both classic bite-inducing tactics – the float lifts and does a little wiggle before I bury the hook with a swift, but firm upwards strike. The thump, thump of a sluggish but potentially large bream causes me no scary moments as it cruises towards my pan net. I almost reach for the larger, 42in net I have also set up, but manage to easily and safely land it.

On lifting the net, the size of the fish is apparent – it's a large male, covered in spawning tubercles. As it lays there on the unhooking mat I reach for the forceps, as the hook is in the side of its mouth, the faithful size 18 buried firmly up to the whipping.

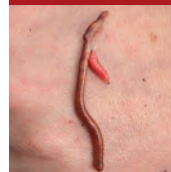
FEELS LIKE...

I don't want to cause it any stress as it's not my biggest bream, so I return it unweighed after a couple of trophy shots. I estimate it at around 8lb and, on what has become a tough day, it is a right result.

The feeder is reloaded and the worm-and-maggot cocktail is underarm flicked back on the spot with renewed vigour. Winding down to the orange tip, a new anticipation grips me as I wait for the next bite.

Pumphouse is one of those lakes where you have the feeling that something is about to happen. And with early evening approaching, the Polaris does its lift and waggle thing again, but this time I pull into nothing and the hook comes back devoid of worm. Oh well!

HOOK-BAIT TIP



Small redworms from your compost heap are the best natural bream bait going. Pair one with red maggots and you have a top cocktail.

At least I have caught – proof that my float-leger and Method-feeder combination works, on what for me has been yet another success on a new venue.

So, on a day where the other anglers on the venue were going home biteless, I was returning with the smell of bream slime in the van. It smelled like victory!

total coarse FISHING



Estimated at around 8lb, this bream was the only fish to come from a difficult day on Yateley's Pumphouse Lake.