

HOW TO... TARGET THE MID-WATER CRUISERS

KAI RICHARDS shows why you have to put your faith in zig rigs to target big carp in early spring...



"I like to recast my zig rigs every couple of hours"

MANY anglers simply can't get their heads around zig rigs.

The thought of mounting a small piece of foam or a cut-down pop-up on to an unwieldy, extravagantly long hooklink and then struggling to cast it out puts them well outside their comfort zone.

Yet every single spring the tactic results in a ridiculous number of huge carp hitting the bank, carp for whom it's still too early to show an interest in big beds of baits and brightly-coloured boilies.

The biggest 'zig-caught carp' of the spring so far has fallen to Kai Richards, who showed anglers who omit zig fishing from their tactical arsenal what they are missing out on when he banked a superb 40lb 8oz common using the approach.

The 18-year-old used a 12ft-long zig rig in 16ft of water to tempt his new pb common from the New Forest Water Park, and here he tells Carpfeed

how the catch unfolded and why the tactic should be an integral part of every carper's spring attack.

LEFT: Kai landed this superb 40lb-plus common at the end of February on a 12ft zig in 16ft of water.

ABOVE RIGHT: A spod mix of crumbled boilies and maggots complemented Kai's customised hookbait perfectly.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The terminal tackle bits and bobs Kai puts his faith in.

THE CLOUD EFFECT

As well as introducing a strong scent trail, crumbled boilies also create a vertical cloud of visible attraction, drawing the fish in.

HOOKBAIT SAMPLES

With maggots being used to add movement and attraction to his customised hookbait, Kai also includes them in his spod mix.

LEAP OF FAITH

"At this time of year the fish aren't anywhere near ready for a big feed up and are only just becoming properly mobile again after the winter," said Kai.

"I normally spend the days flicking zigs around, recasting about every two hours, towards any showing fish. Come evening, I'll then normally revert back to fishing bottom baits during the hours of darkness, at any rate on two of my three rods.

"However, on my last trip, and after no action during the night, I reeled in and went round to speak to my mate who had just banked one on a zig at first light, so I determined to not only fish them all day, but to leave them in place during the night too. I figured I had nothing to lose, as the fish weren't on the bait yet, so there was little point fishing on the deck.

"I then spoke to another guy on the lake who was throwing a Deeper echo sounder around and he said that he'd seen quite a few fish sitting at just above half-depth. That made my mind up. I knew that the spot I was fishing was roughly around 16ft deep, so I tied up a couple of 12ft zigs for the night."

RING THE RIG CHANGES

At some waters, the New Forest Water Park included, foam zig baits and plastic baits are banned, so Kai chose to trim down a pop-up boilie and then use a clever trick to add even more attraction to his hookbait.

He said: "I hair-rigged the boilie tight to the back of a size 10 hook in the conventional manner, but rather than

use a rig stop to hold it in place, I used a small match fishing hook, on to which I added four maggots (two each of red and white), before pulling that small hook into the boilie to secure it in place.

"To my mind, this added movement to the hookbait and made it even harder for a cruising carp to ignore. I then Spombed out a mix of maggots and crumbed boilies over the spot, and early the next morning, around 5am, I got the bite that resulted in a new zig-caught personal best by a very long way!"

SHORTCUTS TO SUCCESS

One of the main problems with zig rigging is the difficulties posed by casting out really long hooklinks. To get around this, Kai uses a simple dodge.

"I set the rig up on a safety clip set-up, with around 40cm of CamFlex lead-free leader above it and a rig sleeve on the hooklink, all to help avoid tangles. ▶





ABOVE LEFT: A heavy bobbin on a tight line is needed to register bites properly when zig rig fishing.

BELOW RIGHT: Leads in the 2.5oz to 3.5oz range help to set the hook far better than light leads.

3 GOLDEN RULES OF ZIG RIG FISHING...



- 1 **DON'T BE AFRAID TO RECAST** several times until you've got it right. Confidence in your presentation is everything.
- 2 **IF YOU'RE FISHING WITH THREE RODS**, set the zigs at different depths until you discover which one the fish are feeding at.
- 3 **USE A HEAVY BOBBIN** on a tight line. Bites when zig rig fishing can be little more than single bleeps.

"To any anglers still reluctant to have a go at zig rig fishing, all I'd say is 'get over the phobia', because that's often all that it is"

I then rest the hookbait on the lid of a pop-up tub sitting on the ground, before simply walking towards the front of the swim and whacking it out," said Kai.

"I'll typically recast my zig rigs every couple of hours. Confidence is everything with this tactic for me, so I'll take time to ensure my zig rig has made it to the bottom without tangling. What I'm looking for is two splashes as the rig hits the surface – one from the lead and the other from the hookbait – and if it takes three or four casts, then so be it."

"I use quite a heavy lead on a safety clip set-up – perhaps 3oz – as I think it helps to set the hook better, and I also always use a heavy bobbin and a tight

line. Because of the mega-long hooklink that's more often than not being used, 'takes' when zig rig fishing can be little more than one or two bleeps on the alarm. If you use a light bobbin on a drop then these are hardly going to register."

Kai's final piece of advice to those anglers who remain disinclined to cast out a zig rig is not tactical, but rather motivational.

"To any anglers still reluctant to have a go at zig rig fishing, all I'd say is 'get over the phobia', because that's often all it is. What have you got to lose, especially if you're fishing with three rods and you're not catching on traditional tactics?" he concludes.



1 Tie a small hook on to the hooklink and thread a cut-down pop-up down it.

2 Thread the end of your hooklink through the back of a size 10 Mugga hook.

3 Whip the boilie tight to the back of the hook shank using a knotless knot.

4 Mount four maggots on to the small hook and then push the point into the boilie.

HOW TO TIE KAI'S RIG