

Matchmans Review – July 2010.

18th July 2010.

The second traditional match of the season took place on the 18th July, with the Airman Pit the venue.

Hopeful that the abundance of the roach within the venue would see a feeding spree take place, the draw saw 6 anglers in the car park including a certain Mr Ridge; a most welcome sight at any draw as his presence usually means that the venue is fishing particularly well!

With the whole lake pegged the question was asked;

‘Do we leave peg 1 in or take it out?’

Now many of you will realise that peg 1 can, on it’s day, be a very productive swim, though clearly the general lack of depth to the left often sows the seed of doubt in the match anglers mind; who wants to spend 5 hours looking into inches of water, especially when it is clearly devoid of fish!?

The lack of immediate protestation saw the draw commence with peg 1 included and one-by-one the swim choices for the day were made.

With only one of the favoured road-side swims taken, Pete Henegan stepped up and stuck his hand in the bag.....

.....‘No. 1!’ came the cry as he withdrew his hand followed by ‘I’ve never fished that one before.....!’

Mr. Ridge then took his turn. As he placed his hand in the bag he could be heard muttering ‘road-side peg, road-side peg,’ under his breath..... and promptly drew No. 12 which wasn’t!

It was clearly evident that the confidence he had arrived with was draining away from him in front of our eyes.

Last to pick, Match Secretary Neil Bygrave tried to influence the draw with positive thinking, again hopeful for a roadside swim. Unfortunately for him his luck appeared, for once, to be out as he revealed peg 20 – the Old Point. Oh well, at least the day was overcast and the breeze was steadily increasing creating a welcome ripple to the surface.

With the draw completed, the anglers made their way to their swims.

Upon arrival at the Old Point Neil could see the clear line between the calm and ripple was some 4 to 5 rod lengths out. With the depth evidently dropping away in the margins it was clear fishing the float may be a problem. Undeterred he set up the longest match rod he had and proceeded to plumb the depth.



After a number of casts the float finally showed on the surface, while the plummet was sat some 15' beneath it on the bottom! With such a depth of water, there was only one option to fish the swim comfortably and that was to fish it 'slider-style'.

The stop knot was tied and the shot bulked 3' from the hook with a couple of dropper shot spaced equally between.

It was round about this time that the whistle sounded the start of the match and it was also about this time that Neil realised that he had a wasp nest at the back of his swim, the creatures conscious of someone within their territory, a number of them starting to take flight! Fantastic, not only did he have what he considered to be a poor draw but now he also had a load of angry wasps for company! In two minds to look to see if he could re-draw, he decided against it and hoped that by keeping relatively quiet the wasps wouldn't prove too troublesome.

Only time would tell.

Eventually, some 10 minutes after the match had started, he was ready and proceeded to introduce a carpet of feed, hopeful the bigger fish would be drawn in.

With two red maggots on the size 16 fished to a strong low diameter hooklength the first cast was made.

The float sat riding the waves quite nicely as the wind intensified. With no immediate indication, the rod was placed in the rests and with gear strewn around him he decided a tidy up was called for.

Keeping an eye on his float, after a couple of minutes, he looked up and realised he had a bite, the float no longer visible. A lift of the rod and it arched over as the fish on the other end made a vain attempt to secure it's freedom. Seconds later a skimmer of about a pound was being lowered into the keep net.

The next cast was made and once again after a matter of minutes the float buried and his second skimmer of the day was on it's way in. Maybe it's not such a bad swim after all he thought? With tackle re-cast another tentative bite followed and the 2 skimmers were joined by the first roach of the day.

Now, some $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour into the match, a text was received from Nigel advising of a couple of missed bites further round the lake, while at the same time enquiring after Neils success. A brief response was hurriedly compiled – 'a couple of small ones' SEND - and efforts returned to watching the float continuing to ride the waves.

For the next 3 or 4 casts, the float remained stationary as the bites appeared to have ceased.



Hopeful this wasn't the case, and thinking the fish may respond better to a bait tethered on the bottom, the float was retrieved and the feeder cast.

After a couple of minutes a bite was signalled, thought sadly missed. Re-cast and with hand poised over the rod the next indication was met with a swift strike and the resistance of a hooked fish was felt. Before long another skimmer was introduced to the temporary residence of his keepnet.

The next cast was followed by a period of inactivity, and deciding to twitch the bait, a couple of turns of the reel handle were made. The hand hovered once again and right on cue the tip pulled round once more. The strike was met with considerably more resistance on this occasion and indeed the fish took line initially before kiting right and then into the margins. A cracking bream approaching 5lb surfaced and was guided steadily into the waiting net. Hopeful another would follow the hook was re-baited and the cast made.

The tip remained motionless for the next 10 minutes.....

Throughout the morning, Neil had been keeping an eye on Mr. Ridge, fishing peg 12, and from what he could ascertain he was struggling. This was soon confirmed as with the first 2 hours of the match gone, he appeared to call it a day and started packing up. The question remained, how were the others doing.....?

Deciding a change was in order once again, the feeder was retrieved and the waggler cast once more. No sooner had the float settled than it was gone. The culprit another skimmer of about a pound. Bites continued to come in quick succession for the next dozen or so casts, in many instances the float barely dipping to signal a take from a fish. On a couple of occasions the strike was met with the rod taking on a healthy bend and the fish actually taking line. Initial thoughts were 'carp', then as the control was regained and the fish drawn to the waiting net it was seen to be another 5lb+ bream on the first occasion followed by a spritely tench of about 3lb the next, both of which found their way safely into the waiting mesh of the keepnet.

With yet another strike resulting in the rod taking on another healthy bend, fishing the next peg, Chris Rees appeared. He clearly wasn't happy;

'Every time I've looked up I've seen you get a bite and your rods hooped over; I've not had anything yet!'

As Neil slipped his 3rd 5lb+ bream over the rim of the landing net, he replied 'I don't know what it is but I seem to have got the bream out there.'

With that Chris returned to his swim and with 2 fresh maggots on the hook, Neil recast hopeful another fish would take.

It was about 11.30 by this time and for whatever reason, try as he might no further bites came from the 'hot' area. It was as though the gate had been shut and the fish were no longer allowed through.



The bream had moved on.

A few casts made around the swim in the last hour resulted in 4 or 5 more 8 oz roach coming to the net and at the whistle the tally stood at 3 'proper' bream 7 skimmers, 1 tench and half a dozen roach.

As Neil made his way back to the car for the scales and clip board he could see Pete Henegans net was in use, so clearly he had managed something.

With Pete being the first to weigh, Neil opened the conversation; 'With this being the first time you fished this swim, I've got to ask, would you be willing to fish it again?' to which the response came 'Yes, I think I would'. - Clearly he had had a good day, though how good was yet to be seen - He went on ' If only we'd had another hour; I'd just started to get them feeding confidently; I lost 3 in the last hour!'

With the scales zeroed Pete retrieved his net to reveal 4 glistening tench in the bottom. 15 lb 5 oz registered on the scales and with that, they were returned to their watery home.

One by one the other competitors were weighed in.

When the scales reached Chris, with a smile on his face, he retrieved his net to reveal a single bream which registered 4 lb 5 oz pushing Brian Webster into 3rd. With only Neil to weigh, the scales moved on.

Thankfully, both Nigel and Chris came round to help with the weighing.

As Neil retrieved his net from the water, the commotion was incredible! What would the total weight be? The 3 'proper' bream were weighed initially recording a total weight of 15 lb 10 oz on their own. The remaining skimmers, roach and single tench were then weighed and a further 13 lb 8 oz was recorded, making the total weight 29 lb 2 oz.

Not only did this win the match convincingly, it later transpired that this was actually a new 5 hour match record for the venue!

Some people are so lucky!

Until the next time.....

..... penned by the quill of Avalon.

