

Matchmans Review – June 2010

Sunday 27th June 2010 – Willington Lake

With temperatures more suited to countries closer to the Equator, the match group gathered for their first traditional fixture of the season at what has been the in-form venue of late, Willington Lake.

Hopeful that the big catches of tench and bream which had been reported over the last few weeks would continue, it soon became clear that the odds were against this as the shoals of fish cavorting in the margins proved they had other things on their mind; spawning was underway!

Numbers were such that it was agreed the anglers would select their swims through a walk-off. With one number remaining in the bag, Match Secretary Neil Bygrave, had the first choice of swim.

Torn between the need for shade and the knowledge the gravel would more than likely hold the fish, following his recent success in the meadow, he opted to fish the 'hot-peg' hopeful that the gravel clearing would produce the goods. Beside him Nigel Gilbert took up station on 'Ridges Pallet' while the others sought shelter in the spinney, where foliage would hopefully protect them from the blazing heat of the sun.

Before long, with a bed of particles introduced, Neil cast his first 'method-ball' hopeful that a bite would quickly follow. With the rod placed in the rests, signs soon became evident that the fish may be feeding closer in as small fizzes of bubbles could be observed just over the marginal shelf. Loose feed was introduced in the general area hopeful that the fish would 'get-their-heads-down' and before long a stepped up match rod was being assembled.

It was at around this time a call from Nigel was heard, signalling the first fish of the day. Fishing the swim he had won the previous weekends 24 hour fixture from he too had commenced the session with waggler tactics.

With rod arched it was evident he was into a good fish.

In many ways the scene resembled that of the film 'Jaws' (where the bait was chained to the staging as the fish took.).....

Would we see a re-enactment of the movie where the staging got ripped from it's tether, resulting in Nigel being dragged to the depths by this monster that had shown an interest in his double caster, or would his tackle hold and his angling skill see him come out victorious? Sadly for the other competitors it was the latter, as after a brief but spirited fight he guided a lovely tench of 5lb + to the waiting net .

First blood had been drawn.

Seeing this, Neil swapped the 'method' rod for the waggler and made a cast to the patch of bubbles that had started to show over the area of feed previously introduced. With around 4 ½ foot of depth where the fish appeared to be feeding, and a thin covering of blanket weed on the bottom presentation was far from easy. Undeterred he watched intently as the warm gentle breeze skimming across the lake made the float rock gently. Suddenly, the dark band beneath the vibrant orange tip sank below the waters surface, and within seconds the strike was met with the resistance of a hooked fish. The double red maggot presented on a size 18 fished directly through to 3lb mainline had been taken by a glorious olive green tench which gave a somewhat disappointing account of itself as it kited to the left, surfaced and then went straight into the net! How lucky was that?

The concentration on Ridges Pallet intensified.

Patches of bubbles continued to show throughout the morning in front of both Nigel and Neil, though sadly the fish proved very elusive.

The days interlude came as the resident cattle in the field made their way round to the two anglers. Both anglers were seen to be in conversation with the creatures at various times through out the morning. Rumour has it that Nigel was seen attempting to capture one of the creatures on more than one occasion with his landing net, though quite how he would have got it into his keepnet remains a mystery. Anyway, Neil soon pointed out to him that cattle didn't count at the weigh in and he should concentrate on a more traditional approach!

With no more than 45 minutes remaining, Nigel managed to re-act to a lightening fast bite which saw a spritely tench of around 4 ½ lb come to the net. With this fish he had managed to secure the upper hand once again, but could he hold out for the final whistle...?

Sadly for Nigel the head-to-head was back on level pegging as minutes later Neil managed to connect with another bite, which saw another 5lb + fish successfully netted. As the last few minutes of the match ebbed away a call from Nigel confirmed he had made contact with, and was in the process of, playing yet another fish.

Neil was heard to say 'Well done Nigel' through somewhat clenched teeth, clearly knowing that a final 3 – 2 result would almost certainly see Nigel secure victory and with it the Andy Anderson Trophy.

Then, all of a sudden the tension in the rod was no more as the fish had somehow managed to shed the hook. (The tension was now, however, clearly evident in Nigel as he too knew that fish would have clenched the victory in the head-to-head battle between the two anglers.)

At 1pm time was called and it all came down to who had managed to net the bigger fish.

Neil was first to weigh and as his net was withdrawn from the water, the commotion caused by the fish certainly sounded impressive. As the mesh was parted, the larger of his two fish was weighed, the scales settling at 5lb 13 oz. His second fish together with a small perch taken midway through the morning were added and the total weight revealed; 11 lb 5 oz.

Would this be enough.....?

With the fish returned, the scales moved on to Nigel who retrieved his net to once again reveal two tench together with 3 perch which had provided the mornings sport. Again, the larger fish was weighed before the other fish were added.....

Would the combined weight be enough to win the contest between the two anglers.....?

Nigels larger fish took the scales round to 5 lb 3 oz and together with the other fish a total weight of 9 lb 11 oz was recorded.

A closely fought contest, the result of which would have been oh so different had Nigel managed to land that third fish hooked in the dying minutes of the match.

Of the remaining anglers, Pete Henegan secured third place with a single tench taken early on to pole tactics for a weight of 4 lb 11oz. In a repeat of Nigels experience with the lost fish Pete mentioned of a fish hooked towards the end of the match – thought to be a carp - which clearly wanted to test his kit to the limit. The 5 1/2lb hooklength was no match for this beast and with its parting so did Pete's hope of securing the trophy for the third year in succession.

All in all, a pleasant days fishing which saw a number of good fish landed. Let's just hope that next time the fish are feeding more freely as opposed to 'wining-and-dining their dates!

Until the next match.....

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