

BATTLE OF THE BAIITS

Andy Lloyd and **Dan Varney** tackle the excellent Ivy House Lakes in Wiltshire to experiment with contrasting feeding approaches.

Two heads are better than one, as the saying goes, and that is certainly the case when fishing. It is always difficult to come away from the bankside knowing if you have made the right or wrong decisions, especially if you are the only angler on the lake. You could have used the wrong bait, fished in the wrong area or the fish were simply not there? Without another angler to make comparisons with, who would know for sure? This is precisely why match anglers can have such a big edge when it comes to baits and tactics. As they are all fishing the same times – most commonly five hour sessions – their results can be analysed and compared against every other angler on the bank. It is probably the closest thing you'll get to a controlled experiment within the very diverse parameters of fishing.

With this in mind, we have met up with two top match anglers at the excellent Ivy House Lakes complex near Chippenham in Wiltshire.

First up is Andy Lloyd. This man is an experienced bagging machine from the south west with plenty of big match wins under his belt. He also has a 'slight' advantage as he is the venue owner and lives just a stone's throw from the lake! In fact, he won the last competition on the main match lake – so no pressure on our second angler! ▶

ANGLER

Name: **Andy Lloyd**
Age: **48**
Lives: **Grittenham**

ANGLER

Name: **Dan Varney**
Age: **32**
Lives: **Banbury**



ANDY'S GEAR



Andy likes to fish worms on a size 14 Wide Gape Pellet hook to a 0.15mm Supplex hooklink.



A fairly large section of worm helps single out the better bream and carp.



Andy's main rig incorporated a stable 0.6g Drennan AS2 float. Note the half-blackened tip that helps him spot lift bites.



Two dropper shot just above a 4in hooklength creates a positive arrangement that also helps to magnify lift bites.



Green 6-8 Carp Bungee through a Side Pull Kit helped to cope with both carp and smaller skimmers.

Next up is Dan Varney. This is only his second ever visit to Ivy House (his first visit was to present a film for the drennantackle.com website) and the first time he has actually wet a line. The Drennan employee fishes for top match squad Kamasan Starlets and is a well-versed all-rounder. He regularly travels the length and breadth of the country competing in big competitions on lakes, canals and rivers. So, although he's relatively new to this venue he has plenty of all-round experience to draw upon and can approach the day with a fresh perspective.

Andy has chosen two decent swims for the session and is eager to get started, so let's see how they get on.

ANDY'S ATTACK

One of the beauties of this venue is that it is not 100% dominated by carp, as there are lots of other quality species such as bream, skimmers and tench on the cards. Quite often in matches here you have to catch both carp and silverfish to do well. My last

win proves that perfectly as the catch consisted of 40lb of carp, plus 78lb of bream and skimmers – so these fish should definitely not be ignored! The silverfish are actually a more reliable target at this notoriously tricky time of year when the carp are thinking about spawning and not too interested in bait.

To target both carp and silvers I have had a lot of success over the past few weeks with a simple chopped worm and groundbait approach.

You don't need masses of worms for chopping, just a quarter of a kilo is ample, as I bulk them out with casters and dead maggots. Again, less than a pint of each is more than enough for a day's fishing, especially as I'm not planning to loose feed at all today. I know that catapulting maggots and casters would actually draw in too many tiny roach and perch into the swim today. These tiny fish can give you all sorts of problems when they start intercepting your bait on the drop. That is why all of my feeding will be done via balls of



As Andy predicted, the carp fed early and late in the session.



Green Bungee dealt with everything, big and small.

ANDY'S RIGS

I have two or three rigs set up but the main one sports a 0.6g Drennan AS2 float and this is what I expect to catch most of my fish on today.

This rig is shotted with a 'double bulk' arrangement, which basically means a main bulk around 15 inches from the hook with a smaller bulk just above my 4in hooklength. This second bulk is usually a pair of No10 or No9 shot. I find this creates a really nice and positive seup that helps to magnify bites from species like skimmers. I also paint the bottom half of my float tip black as I expect half of the indications today to be lift bites.

A 0.15mm Supplex hooklength to a size 14 Wide Gape Pellet hook is perfect for fishing with worms. I don't think you need to fish really light tackle with worms at this time of year, plus there is every chance of hooking a 10lb carp today – and they are particularly lively fish at the moment!

Completing the setup I have 6-8 green Carp Bungee through a Side Pull Kit. This elastic is light enough to cushion soft-mouthed skimmers but I am still confident of getting any carp I hook out, so long as I take my time and use the side puller.

groundbait being cupped in.

I use Thatchers Black groundbait, which is a 'sweet fishmeal' mix that's really popular here in the south west of England. I find it's ideal when you are after both carp and bream, like I am today.

All I plan to do today is fish a single swim at a comfortable 13 metre range. Here it's about 5ft deep

and I have a nice and flat bottom that isn't too silty.

I will cup in four balls of my mix at 13 metres to start with and then top up occasionally throughout the day as bites dictate. This will be done with a slightly smaller ball and most probably every 20 minutes. I find this is a really simple and effective way to fish and the swim should get stronger and stronger as the session progresses.



A chunky Ivy House skimmer for Dan.



DAN'S APPROACH

This is the first time that I have fished at Ivy House so I plan to fish to my strengths. That means pellets, groundbait and dead maggots are my three main go-to bait options.

If I am ever in doubt I always have some pellets on my sidetray. Most fish that have been stocked will have been reared on them, so they have become a staple diet on most commercials. A mixture of micro pellets and 4mms are excellent attractors and help to form a bed to graze over. I am lead to believe skimmers are a major target today so I have dampened

the pellets with water as this species in particular tends to prefer softer baits.

Groundbait is another really important attractor for skimmers, so I have some Van den Eynde Super F1 Carp and Sonubaits F1 Green mixed together.

I also have a large handful of dead maggots (pinched from Andy!) and these will probably come into play later in the day if the fishing gets difficult. This is another soft and light hook bait that skimmers will accept. Two or three on the hook should hopefully help to pick out some better quality fish. ▶

I am going to hedge my bets a bit more than Andy, so that means I am feeding two swims at 13 metres. These swims will be fed differently; one with pellets, dead maggots and groundbait and the other with just pellets.

If I want to catch mostly carp then I expect the pellet swim to be better. If it's a bream day then the groundbait swim will probably work best. I could easily convert both of the swims to groundbait later on, or it just gives me a nice back-up area to occasionally try.

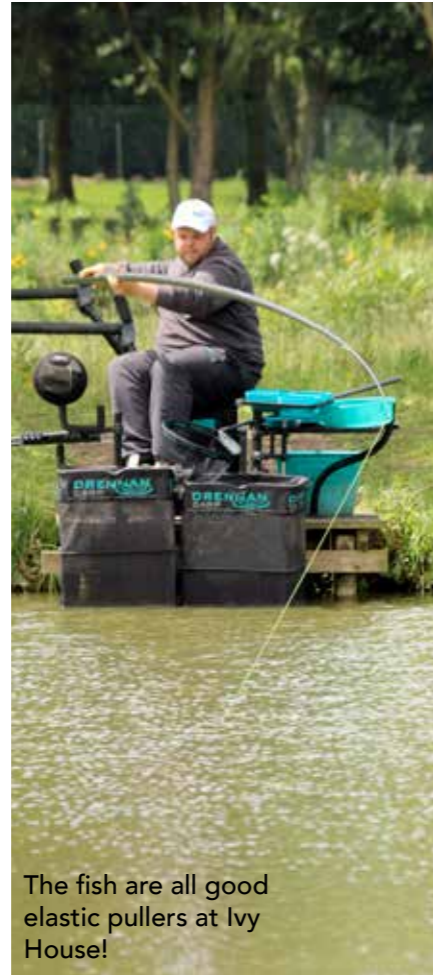
DAN'S RIGS

I probably use Drennan Carp 5 pole floats for a good 75% of my commercial fishing these days, so it's no surprise that's all I have set up today! I have a 0.4g and a 0.6g assembled, which are both on 0.16mm Supplex main line.

The heavier of the two floats has a 0.13mm Supplex Fluorocarbon hooklength to a size 16 Drennan Silverfish Pellet hook. The lighter float has a slightly finer 0.12mm Fluorocarbon trace to a size 18 hook. Elastic on both rigs is Green 6-8 Carp Bungee through a Double 2 Kit.

I have set both up with a bulk of shot 18 inches from the hook with three No10 droppers spaced evenly below. If I want to make the rig more positive I will bring the bulk down six inches closer to the hook.

Each rig is set just a float bristle overdepth so I can spot bites instantly from shy biting fish.



The fish are all good elastic pullers at Ivy House!

I won't feed masses of bait on each spot to begin with as the fish on most places I have visited lately aren't feeding too ravenously. Two balls of groundbait are accurately cupped in to my right and a third of a 250ml pot of pellets are introduced six metres further to my left, where it's exactly the same depth. I aim to feed just enough to coax a few fish at a time. As the old adage goes, you can always put more feed in, but you cannot take it out!

DAN'S GEAR



Dan's attack involved pellets, fishmeal groundbait and a few dead maggots.



A 6mm Sweet Fishmeal Yum Yum tempted an early flurry of bites.



When sport slowed down, Dan switched to potting in dead red maggots in small balls of groundbait.



All of Dan's top kits sported Carp 5 pole floats, which are slim, sensitive and very stable.



Just like Andy, Dan favours the versatility of 6-8 Green Carp Bungee hollow elastic.

THE SESSION

Despite being a friendly session you could still sense a hint of competition in the air as the anglers kicked off their swims! Andy accurately potted in four feed-rich balls on his single 13m swim before quickly shipping out over the top with half a worm on his size 14 hook.

Meanwhile, Dan potted pellets onto his left-hand swim (he always feeds the swim he plans to fish first) and then two balls of groundbait onto his right swim.

Just as Andy anticipated, his first fish was a carp; a really healthy and lively fish that gave a good account of itself. A great start!

Again, carp were first on the scene for Dan. The first fish unfortunately shed the hook at the net but he made no mistakes with the second. A 6mm Yum Yums was its downfall.

The carp then decided to shut up shop and could be seen cruising around aimlessly for most of the day. For the next couple of hours it was bream and quality skimmers that took over. Several of these were the 'flying' variety that leapt clean in the air as soon as they were hooked!

A steady session followed and Andy's worm and groundbait definitely had the edge on the day, topping up every 10 minutes. By now, Dan had also settled on potting in small walnut-sized balls containing a pinch of dead maggots.

It seemed like the bream were milling around off the bottom, but if you cupped in a small ball of groundbait you could tempt a couple to drop down and feed.

Andy was now using smaller inch-long worm segments while two dead maggots was best for Dan. Despite not catching quite so many skimmers, two small tench were a welcome surprise.

As the session drew to an end the carp once again magically switched on to feed. Both were into a hard-fighting fish within seconds of each other. With the fish eventually netted they agreed it was a timely end to a great day. ■

VENUE FILE

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Plenty of bites and a great session for our two anglers.



Both anglers concentrated their efforts at a comfortable 13m pole range.