

TARGETING COMMERCIAL PERCH

by Martin Bowler

With winter's arrival so the perch angler's attention turns to commercial fisheries and one of the best places to catch a big stripey.

Once the cold has knocked back the carp's appetite and as the sediment settles perch begin to prowl bullying the vast shoals of silver fish and gorging on crays if present. With such rich food sources available it's little wonder that they obtain huge weights with 4lb fish a real possibility on dozens, if not hundreds, of commercials up and down the country.

What then is the best way to tempt a specimen perch from these man-made venues?

Unfortunately, there is never a simple answer to this with water clarity more than anything else dictating the approach. In clear water, I would lean towards live baits and lures if allowed, with poor visibility seeing a worm attack, although I stress both are generalisations. If, however, I had to pick one tactic only for the rest of my life it would involve lobworms. I'm yet to find a perch that can resist a lobworm although how I angle with them is not like a traditional specimen hunter would with a low chair and two rods fished with bobbins. Commercials were designed with the match angler in mind and by adopting the style they fish will, in my experience, catch you more perch.

I use a seat box, not because it's more comfortable but because it allows me to attack the water in front of me with a good deal of accuracy. A low chair encourages you to relax which leads to random baiting, casting and striking. A seat box is also the only way to fish a pole and, within its range, there is no tactic that will produce more bites than a long length of carbon. I do appreciate that in the initial stages this might be one step too far in my bid to convert you from your normal approach, so let's take a look how I leger with bait close to an island margin.

First I ensure the seat box is stable and level, also that everything else I will need is close at hand. I then prepare my groundbait, that will be chopped lobworm and dendrobenas, plus red maggot and caster. How much to introduce initially is dependent on conditions but $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ pint is a good starting point, as I do like to lay out a banquet in a bid to draw the perch to me. For very accurate feeding I revert back to a specimen approach by using an ESP spod rod and small Spomb. With the distances involved being relatively short, I prefer 8lb mono with an ESP tapered leader rather than braid as it's much more user-friendly. On the initial cast with the Spomb, which is used to get the correct distance, I fill it with mud, not bait. So, should I get it wrong, I haven't scattered the feed and only when I have clipped up do I add the chopped mixture.





My 11ft Acolyte Plus Feeder rod is the perfect tool for the job.



The right tip is important with perch as they don't like resistance.



Watching the bite develop, poised ready to strike.

The rod I use for has to have the facility to change the quiver tips and the new Acolyte range fits the bill perfectly allowing me to select the lightest test curve possible. This is teamed up with an FD reel and a sturdy 5lb mainline like the Drennan Method & Feeder Mono or Supplex. The rig is a paternoster arrangement that consists of a sliding link section that has a tiny snap link on the bottom so I can swap between a straight bomb or a Feederbomb should I want to introduce maggots but maintain accuracy as these aerodynamic vessels cast true and straight even in a cross wind.

Many anglers experience tangles when legering but incorporating a twizzled boom section in the mainline before connecting the hooklength on a loop to loop basis they should be a thing of the past! A tail of 4.4lb Supplex fluorocarbon from 1-3 feet makes up the rig's final part, as does a Kamasan B983 hook in a size 6-12 dependent on whether I use a whole or a section of bait. Being wide gaped the point does get masked which can lead to missed bites. A good way of attaching a lobworm is to hook it through the saddle and then snap it in two just above this before hooking the smaller section as well. By doing this, the scent is maximised at the hook end, drawing the perch towards it. In difficult conditions, I might swap over to a dendrobena as these wriggle more and that movement can induce a bite. I will use the spool clip like the Spomb to guarantee accuracy although be prepared to pull the line from it with a hard fighting fish. Luckily this rarely occurs when fishing to an island, as the perch have nowhere to run and simply kite instead.

By fishing from a seat box, everything is much more fluid, from the baiting up to the casting, helping to maximise every chance possible, which is vital when the feeding spell is short. As a general rule of thumb, the colder the conditions the smaller the window of opportunity and this might come down to a 5-minute spell. For 90% of perch fishing, late afternoon and dusk are the times when this will occur, as the light levels drop to a suitable point... but not always. In very coloured water the complete opposite happens as the light levels need to lift the visibility and then lunchtime and early afternoon are the times to angle, so before you draw any conclusions study the clarity. One period that I haven't enjoyed much success in during winter is dawn so rather than be tired during the feeding spell and lose focus I never arrive early in the colder months.

A big perch is a magnificent fish that should be on everyone's bucket list. By combining match and specimen angler's approaches on your local commercial, you too could be smiling with a

Martin's Top Perch Tips:



1. Top up the swim as needed with maggots using a small Feederbomb.



2. Use a big visual bait that leaks off plenty of attraction in coloured water.



3. Bait up using a mini Spomb, for perfect accuracy.



4. Use a wide gape hook to ensure a good hook hold with big baits.



5. Chopped worms are great as they leak off plenty of attractants.



6. Fluorocarbon ensures your hooklink kicks away from the feeder.



The reward, a big stripy caught on a lobworm hookbait just as the light faded.