

TENCH ON THE WAGGLER

Dew on the grass, a cuckoo calling in the trees above and a warm sun beginning to kiss the jade surface at my feet – these are reasons why spring is so special for me.

by Martin Bowler

Even more so when the scene has a final brush stroke added to it and the tip of a Crystal Wagglers sits in a continuous stream of bubbles while occasionally swaying, not by the wind, because there isn't any, but by a series of olive green flanks and paint brush tails brushing against the line some feet below. A moment to treasure especially when a bite follows and the serenity is shattered by a big, angry tench realising it had made a mistake.

Like so many other anglers this dream had meant a night of broken sleep but at least it had ensured there was no way I was going to miss the alarm call. A quick black coffee and I left the house still in darkness in a bid to turn my dream into reality.

An early start meant traffic didn't have an opportunity to blacken my mood and within half an hour I was meeting my friend at the fishery gate full of the joys of spring, particularly when I was introduced to the spot he had diligently pre-baited for a number of days. This was where the two of us would be sitting side by side for the rest of the morning. The logical questions to ask were how far out and how deep? The response of 14-15 feet had me asking again how deep as I assumed I now knew the distance to cast. The reply was 14-15 feet again, tagged with about 30 feet out.

Immediately I knew my 13 feet long float rod would have problems. This could easily have scuppered my plans if experience hadn't given me the knowledge to overcome an issue that when I was a kid would have been insurmountable. I knew I should have asked these questions before leaving home and in all probability I would have pole fished but that wasn't going to be possible so instead I would fish a 'slider' float setup.

When the depth of water in front of you is deeper than the rod you wield and the bait needs to be presented on the bottom, locking a float in a conventional manner isn't possible so after erecting my 13ft Acolyte plus rod combined with an FD4000 reel and 4lb Specimen Plus line a stop knot formed from another short length of 4lb monofilament was tied on with plenty of saliva so not to cause any damage and would move when finger pressure was applied. Ultimately this would sit at the exact depth of the water in front of me but first there was plenty more preparation to do.

A large 2 swan plus Drennan Insert Waggler was slipped on and while normally a float adapter would have been used for flexibility the eye of the swivel on one of these would allow the bulk shot and the float to separate during casting causing tangles. The small hole at the bottom of the waggler gave a little more friction but not enough to prevent the bait falling through the water column once in situ. Next came a micro bead to aid this process before the bulk shot sat at the 3/4 point followed by 3 dropper shot, progressively getting smaller, were lightly pinched on the 3lb 8oz hooklength finishing with a size 14 Red Maggot hook. With the float tip just showing I could now begin plumbing up very accurately.

Pushing the stop knot up to the 13-foot point I attached a small plummet and cast out followed quickly by the float disappearing beneath the surface. This was exactly what I wanted to see as now I could slowly increase the depth a few inches at a time until the tip was just on show. But even then this wasn't accurate enough for me so it was now time for fine-tuning. A much more accurate reading is achieved by a float connected top and bottom so by forming a loop in the mainline

and placing it over the tip I could temporarily achieve this while I made minute adjustments to ensure the red maggot hookbait would just kiss the bottom. This final attention to detail would make a big difference, especially with a finicky feeder like tench for be in no doubt there are many occasions when they can be feeding a poorly, or rushed, float arrangement will fail to register a single bite. I may have been fishing half an hour later than I had expected to but at least it could be done with confidence.

Two grubs were impaled on a Red Maggot hook which discreetly matches their colour and I then punched the rig out far beyond the position I actually wanted to fish, feathering the line in the final quarter of the flight. Immediately on impact I buried the rod tip sinking the line while drawing the waggler back towards its desired position. Then I flicked the bail arm open and allowed the bulk shot to pull the line down through the lake until the stop knot was hit. I then observed the 3 drop shot slowly fall into position, gradually impacting on the tip, lowering it until the maggot and hook took its final free fall, resting gently on the gravel.



Above a selection of Drennan Insert Crystal Wagglers, perfect for the job.



By observing the whole process closely I could now be sure there had been no mishaps or tangles and I was fishing perfectly.

Two pouchfuls of free maggots followed in close pursuit to draw the

tench to the exact spot where my offering was being confident that they were already present in the general location by their constant rolling, showing the pre-bating had certainly done the trick. The float stayed on show for less than 5

minutes, sinking with conviction that is afforded when the rig is set up correctly. I had done the groundwork and that was now turning the dream into reality. A perfect picture can be painted with perfect presentation.



Top 5 Tips

1. Your mainline must sink so use a brand that does or degrease it, better still do both.
2. Don't rush the preparation – approximate plumbing just won't do.
3. If the tench are being finicky a correctly set up waggler will catch more than the lift method.
4. During the cast the bulk shot and float should stay together and make sure you feather the line to separate this from the hooklength.
5. Remember a bottom end only float like a waggler will not give you a perfect reading when plumbing up.

