

# PVA MASTERCLASS

Much is written about the use of solid PVA bags, but if you really want to know how it's done then ask a master. Step forward PVA ace **JON FINCH**...



**ANGLER FILE** JON FINCH



AGE: 30  
 OCCUPATION: Proprietor, Bankside Tackle  
 UK PB: 46lb 2oz  
 SPONSOR: Avid Carp

If there is a carp angler in the UK who has caught more carp using PVA than Finchy then we'd like to meet him. So, who better to show us how to get the best from this tactic.

Jon Finch is no stranger to the art of solid-PVA-bag fishing – he could probably tie one in his sleep. In fact, many would say that his expertise and subsequent captures on them have helped fuel the popularity of the method on waters up and down the country. It was Finchy and fellow bag master Ian Poole who first started writing about the presentation in carp magazines, drawing anglers' attention to this highly effective approach. Since then, the tactic – along with the kit used for tying solid bags – has developed dramatically, and Jon's at the forefront yet again.

We join the tackle-shop owner on the banks of a private water in Gloucestershire to find out more about what he really thinks about solid-PVA-bag fishing, as we ask him to reveal more about why he places so much faith in this technique.



These Bankside pellet mixes are designed, by Jon, for use in bags.

Those who haven't met Finchy might be surprised to hear that he doesn't take life too seriously on the bank. When quizzed about his approach for the day he simply shrugs his shoulders, preferring to watch the water and the activity of some fish around a large weed bed than offer a complicated answer. There's certainly no ego here, as Finchy demonstrates with his first words of the day:

"Just lob 'em out," he jokes. "The fish are clearly more interested in sunbathing but there are certain areas that look like they will produce. I may as well just lob out a couple of bags while I figure out where these carp might make a mistake."

"You'd be amazed how many carp I've caught by just being cautious and putting bags to likely looking areas while I sit and survey the water some more. A solid bag is a meal in itself, so you can catch plenty of fish in a relatively simple way."

Jon's relaxed approach certainly seems like the right way to go. It's very warm and the wind is fairly lifeless.



Always use short rigs inside solid bags.



Don't neglect PVA-friendly liquids. Jon rates these two highly.

Tricky conditions, given that the fish in this lake have had a hammering off the surface, limiting Finchy's options for the day. While he has brought his floater kit and already invested time trying to get them going on the top, it looks like carefully laid traps elsewhere are most likely to produce a bite.

"I didn't think we'd be fishing the bottom much but I was wrong. Looking at the fish, the catchable ones are quite mobile and patrolling the shaded areas around the islands and far margin," he explains. "The water's clear here so I can see the carp quite easily. A shaded spot under an overhanging tree seems like the best option; for me as well as the carp!"



Jon can tie these in just a minute or two and they're perfect every time.

With that, Jon plots up on the end of the gentle breeze pushing down the lake, seeking out a gap in the foliage on an island to place one of his special solid bags. Watching Jon at work with PVA is like watching a sculptor mould a statue out of clay. It's clear that he has it all figured out in his mind. But where did it all start?

"I can't say that anybody really led me towards using solid PVA bags,"

he tells us. "I just bought some to try because I could see the potential benefits of using that type of setup."

"I figured that anything which allowed me to use much shorter hook links at whatever range I wanted would be an edge. I think of solid bags more as a delivery device for a more efficient rig. In those days carp just weren't used to dealing with 3in hook links at 90 yards. That same situation applies today."

"Back then I liked braided hook links, just like lots of other anglers. The problem was preventing tangles or being brave enough to fish really short rigs that the carp had more difficulty with," adds Jon. "A solid bag took away the doubt and put a pile of bait right over the lead and rig. It was perfect. It still is!"

However, Jon realises that it's not as straightforward as he makes it sound. ▣

**STEP-BY-STEP** COME ON THEN, HERE'S HOW TO TIE A BAG LIKE FINCHY!



**1** Jon uses the Avid Carp Transfer Bags, which can be bought with one of these bag loaders.



**2** He has a short, braided rig tied up that he has baited with a dumbbell and Avid Corn Stop.



**3** The rig is lowered into the bag and his leader traps in the groove of the Bag Loader, like so.



**4** Jon manipulates the hook bait into the bottom of the PVA bag so that it sits like this.



**5** He then starts to pour in Bankside Mini Mass pellets via the Bag Loader.



**6** A couple of broken D-Liver boilies are then added. These match the flavour of his hook bait.



**7** A little Bankside Hemp Oil adds attraction to the bag, as well as changing the consistency.



**8** The leader is then freed so that the lead can be lowered into the bag, along with the bait.



**9** With the lead tucked inside the pellets and oil, Jon sets about tying it all off neatly.



**10** Keeping the bag nice and compact, he then moistens and sticks down the corners.



**11** The excess PVA is then trimmed about the knotted string and he's just about ready to go.



**12** What self-respecting carp could possibly resist? Jon has caught hundreds of carp using these.

**THE TRANSFER MARKET**

**TIME TO RELOAD**

**TRANSFER** PVA Bag Loading Kits. Solid PVA Bagging has never been so easy.

Recognising that his PVA dexterity might come naturally to him and not others, he describes the easiest way he's found to load solid bags.

"I always used just my hands to load the bag," he smiles. "It took time to really get my head around it all but I still find it less complicated to load it by hand rather than with a spoon or something, because that's what I'm used to."

"The Bag Loading kit I helped develop with Avid Carp makes life easier, for sure, and makes the presentation much simpler for other anglers to get to grips with."

"It's important that the hook bait goes into the bag first, followed by the bait mixture. You then want to coil the hook link in an S-type shape, putting the lead inside when the bag is two-thirds full. A little top up so the lead is concealed with pellets and it's ready to be tied off."

"Sounds simple on paper, but you try doing all that and then twisting and tying it out without a Bag Loader. It's difficult. The Bag Loader makes it easy."

Unlike some of his fellow Avid Carp consultants, who advocate solid PVA bags, Finchy likes to use fairly large, round bags for most of his fishing. It's only when range is required that he'll change to the smaller bags to get the increased distance.

"I like to present a proper amount of food around the hook bait, rather than just a mouthful, because if other fish swim by then there will still be some items around that ultra-short rig," he reveals. "I have three pellet mixes that I use to suit where I'm fishing and the size of bag I'm using. One has larger items like pellets and half boilies, while the next level down features more small baits with boilie crumb. The smallest mix has just small pellets, nothing bigger than 2mm."

"What I choose to put inside the bags depends upon how big the carp I'm fishing for are, how many of them there are, and how far I want to cast."

"The Mini Mass mix I developed at Bankside Tackle suits long-range solid bagging and fishing on waters where there are lots of doubles and twenties, while the Complete Combo is a more general mix for bigger fish when used in bigger bags."



More back-bending action for Finchy as his solid bags produce the goods.

"Finally, the mix with larger items includes big boilie samples and larger halibut pellets to ward off nuisance fish. I use that type of mix abroad quite a bit and when just casting out bags to fish for themselves. I try and take each venue and day as it comes."

So what about edges in bags? What does Finchy do to make his solid bags more attractive than everybody else's? The answer lies in two bottles, which he keeps in the bespoke Bagging Bucket that he's designed at Bankside.

"Hemp Oil is such an edge," he grins, squirting a good dose into a solid bag. "How else can you get oil to the lake bed? It floats! It gets trapped in the pellets so it leaks up in a trail, drawing fish down. It's great on deeper venues and can make the difference between catching straightaway and not at all!"



The perfect hook baits to use inside a solid bag.

"The other liquid I use is the D-Scent, which is ultra-heavy and really thick. It's PVA-friendly and stays glued to the lake bed, leaking out attraction. The new D-Liver version that matches my boilies has been very effective for me recently. Liquids can play a huge role in attracting fish and solid bags again provide a delivery option."

Jon's hook-bait choices when solid bagging are also very important. There often seems to be argument between top solid baggers about whether pop-ups or bottom baits are best, while

others advocate the use of balanced hook baits like wafers or snowman presentations. For Finchy, it's all about the venue being targeted, and how he thinks those fish might be feeding.

"Some carp might feed on the bag contents from quite a way up from the lake bed, which is when a balanced bait on a slightly longer braided rig can really pay," he explains. "On other venues the fish are really attacking the bag and are right on top of it when they feed, so a pop-up is best because the hook is hanging prone for a bite."



You beauty! Finchy proves once again that he's the PVA master.

This is when a short rig works so well, because there's instant tension in the braided hook link to help the hook flip into position.

"There are other times when the carp are feeding very cautiously, almost 'tiptoeing' along the lake bed on their fins and with their mouths grazing over a spot. That's when the bottom-bait option is better with the larger mix of bait. It's much harder for them to single out the 'danger' food item."

"If you're confused about it, use all three rods to experiment because every water's different and, to be honest, so is every day. I've had sessions where I've been catching but the hook-holds haven't filled me with confidence, so I've tweaked the buoyancy of the hook bait to give the rig more chance to grab hold in a better area of the carp's mouth."



Vary your bait size to suit the fishing situation.

As the sun's ferocity starts to fade, chances of a bite look increasingly likely and it's not long before the rod under the island is bent over in Finchy's hands. He's used a drop-off-style setup this time because he's fishing a snaggy area of the lake, which has put the fish on the surface right away and out of danger. Before long, the perfectly proportioned common slides into Jon's net.

"I'm well chuffed with that," he grins, holding his prize up for the Total Carp cameras. "It goes to show that even when the carp really aren't up for feeding that a well-tied solid bag in the right place will still produce the goods."

"That's the main reason I keep using them," he concludes. "Because they just keep on working!"

You can't really argue with that logic, and you certainly cannot argue with the results that Jon achieves. You'd best get trying some bags then! **TC**