

RISE TO THE TOP

Surface fishing maestro **JON FINCH** reveals the hottest new tactic that will be taking waters apart this summer... overdepth zigs!

Jon Finch is an angler with a renowned surface fishing pedigree, having caught carp to over 40lb from a number of tricky waters utilising this method. However, when he's just trying to get bites from more heavily stocked venues, he'll leave the controller floats at home. If the weather warms up and the carp are cruising in the upper layers, it's time to start fishing all three rods on the surface with overdepth zigs.

But Jon doesn't fish them in isolation, oh no. In fact, he uses a special new device from his sponsor, Avid Carp, to deliver freebies to the swim at whatever range he likes. We met him at a runs water near Cheltenham, Isbourne Fishery, to find out more about this modern tactic.

ANGLER FILE JON FINCH



AGE: 30
 OCCUPATION: Tackle-shop owner
 UK PB: 45lb 9oz
 SPONSOR: Avid Carp

"It's a perfect day for a bit of floater action," says Jon, squinting at the sun-filled sky. "There's a bit of cloud around and a good wind thrashing across the lake, so trying to fish a controller float in the usual style isn't going to be very effective. You can never keep the float or your hook bait still enough to get a bite, so I'll be using the old overdepth zigs instead."



Jon has been involved in developing the new Avid Surface Spod.



All you need for a successful day's surface fishing.



See how the overdepth zig-rigged hook bait sits perfectly among the freebies that Jon spods out.

The rigs are pretty simple. Some 8lb monofilament is tied to a size 10 hook and a few bits of silicone are used to neaten the setup. After a bit of plumbing around, Jon notes that the depth is 10 feet so goes about tying a 12ft hook link. He wants his Zig Lite hook bait to actually be on the surface because he'll be spodding mixers to the area with the new Avid Carp Surface Spod. This is a bit of a contraption, by the looks of it, but it seemingly works on a very simple principle.

"This is one of Jon 'Shoes' Jones' clever designs and the spod has a weighted nose. A floating ball runs up and down inside a chamber and this will float to the top, releasing the floating hook baits inside," he explains. "It casts miles, so you can fish on the top at whatever range you like. It's a nice easy 50-yard lob but I can't wait to get down somewhere like Brasenose 1 to give this a whirl in midsummer."

With three hook links tied using an assortment of Zig Lite hook baits, Jon starts priming the swim with the Surface Spod. He's baiting up with Sonubaits' Oily Floaters, which leave their individual slick on the surface. Finchy's oiled them up a little more with Hemp Oil so that he can see the fish in the area much easier in the cloudy water. It's a proper edge because in no time at all we can see a pack of hungry fish looking up for a floater!

"I'm only using light leads so I've kept the tail rubbers on the Zig Clips. This clip can also be used with PVA tape whipped around it instead of using a tail rubber. You can just pinch it off under the cleat that's built into the clip, which is really smart when you're zig fishing for big fish or in weedy waters. In those situations you really want the lead to come off on the take," Jon tells us. "Over at Abbey Lakes, in France, I've had carp up to 47lb on zigs, so losing something of that size because the lead's got stuck in the weed would be a disaster."

Loaded with floating baits and ready to fire out. This new spod makes feeding mixers at range quick and easy.



Jon likes to boost the attraction of his hook baits...



... which are these wicked new foam Zig Lites.

Today, that's not an issue. Isbourne is around 2½ acres with depths up to 15 feet and the carp absolutely love it up on the surface. It's clear that these fish are used to feeding in the upper layers because the first few spodloads of floaters are slurped from the surface.

"This is when it gets really exciting. I can just about make out the Zig Lites on the surface. I'm using the two-tone versions because, no matter what colour the sky or the surface, I can see some sort of contrast," he says. "Usually you just watch for the big explosion, which is normally followed by a screaming bite alarm!"

Jon keeps a stream of Oily Floaters on the surface to prevent the carp moving too far out of his swim. He's staggered the rods at three ranges to suit the windy conditions and he's expecting action at any moment. No sooner does Jon put down his spod rod than the middle rod bursts into life as the surface erupts with a number of bow-waving carp. ■

Jon's quickly onto the rod to prevent the swim getting too disturbed and he's managed to keep the fish away from the main bulk of feeding carp. It's no monster, but the scaly little mirror that comes to the net is sure to be the first of many.

"He's a little beauty," smiles Jon. "What an exciting way to fish!"

No sooner does Finchy put his fish back than the right-hand rod is away! This time it's a smaller common and throughout the afternoon we see a steady stream of single-figure and low-double carp coming to the bank. Jon's really working the swim now and it seems that he even has a few fish feeding close in on the odd floater that's spilt from his spod.

"These fish are wild for it," he laughs. "I can barely keep a rod in the water and it's not even that warm a day. I dread to think what it would be like on a warm summer's evening!"

Throughout the day we've noted that Jon has slightly adjusted a couple of the rods after watching the way the

carp were approaching his hook baits. One has had the hook link lengthened, while another has actually been dragged a foot under the surface, just in case a few better fish are lurking below. Jon's had quite a few carp but the average size hasn't been monstrous.

"I suppose that you can only catch the fish that are in front of you," he concedes. "But trying a standard zig just under the surface at the very back of the swim can often produce a cagier carp that's just hanging around off the main shoal, picking off baits that have been on the water for a long time.

"Once you have them up in the water and in a bit of a frenzy, you

can really start to experiment to see what gets bites quicker. Today the yellow and black Zig Lites have definitely been the most productive, but if I hadn't tried the others I would have never have figured that out."

It's clear that this approach can work well in a really short period of time and in a short day session Jon's enjoyed great sport on light tackle. We're sure that the overdepth-zig approach will work on venues all around the country, and with a bespoke device for delivering freebies at range about to hit the tackle-shop shelves, what are you waiting for? **TC**



This new Avid Spod is easy to fill with mixers.



PVA instead of a tail rubber guarantees lead ejection on a zig rig.



Jon proudly shows off a double-figure common caught using the overdepth zigs. Try them for yourself this summer.