

Words and pics: Mat Woods

NOT JUST A SMALL-FISH TACTIC

MARK BARTLETT proves that chopped worms and casters, a combination commonly used by match anglers, will catch specimen carp.

When Mark Bartlett informed us that he had been catching loads of carp from a variety of pressured venues using maggots and casters, we were dying to get out on the bank with him. We joined him at the popular Linear Fisheries day-ticket complex, where he was planning to spend 24 hours.

“Although I spend a lot of time targeting large carp, I get a real kick out of pole fishing for mixed species. Recently, I’ve been competing in lots of matches against some of the best anglers on the match circuit. It’s been a real eye-opener and I’ve started incorporating a few of the match-style tactics into my carp fishing.”

Mark’s setting up on Manor’s river bank, in the same swim that he caught the sought-after Cut Tail from.

“When I arrived I had a walk around the lake and spotted a small carp crash out at range in front of this swim. On heavily stocked venues, like this one, the carp move in shoals and I’m certain that the common will have a few of his mates with him.”

The carp ace blasts his marker float into open water and begins carefully searching the swim for features that could attract a few of Manor’s stunning residents.

“That’s a lovely spot,” he exclaims, as he slowly pulls his lead across the bottom.

Mark uses a spod to introduce his worms and casters.

ANGLER FILE MARK BARTLETT



AGE: 26
OCCUPATION: Fishery owner
UK PB: 39lb 8oz
SPONSORS: Avid Carp and Mainline Baits



Keep your rigs simple.



Solid bags offer great presentation.

The Linear expert is soon clipping up his rods and marking his lines, so that he can hit the area accurately should he catch during the hours of darkness.

“When I’m fishing pressured day-ticket waters I rarely target gravel areas because I’m certain that the carp feed on them with caution. Gravel is easy to identify and lots of anglers that visit Manor seem to target the blatant gravel bars that litter the lake’s bottom. Soft silt, on the other hand, seems to be neglected, which is strange because it’s full of natural food and the carp love rooting around in it,” reveals Mark.

With his rod leant against his bivvy, Mark begins tying a couple of rigs that he hopes will single out one of Manor’s big ‘uns.

“I’ve messed about with loads of rigs but I always seem to revert to something simple. Lots of anglers blame their rigs, thinking that rigs are the be-all and end-all. They are important but, for me, locating the fish is definitely the key to succeeding anywhere.”

Mark opts to use one of Mainline Baits’ Indian Spice pop-ups on both rods, and he critically balances them using soldering wire.

“I shouldn’t really be telling you this, but I’ve caught loads of large carp from Linear using green hook baits. When people first look at them they laugh and they don’t actually believe how well I’ve done using them. If you use the same tactics as everyone else you will catch the same number of fish. However, if you try things that are a little bit different, you could catch more than them.”

This attractive mix could be the secret to catching more carp on pressured day-ticket venues.





Walking your lines out will ensure that you hit the spodded area with pinpoint accuracy.

At 6am Mark's right-hand alarm shrieks and he begins the battle with an angry Manor carp.

Mark carefully lowers his hook bait and lead into a solid PVA bag and fills it with micro pellets. With two solid bags tied up, he launches them onto the silt area at 100 yards.

"Right, now for the fun bit," chuckles Mark, as he roots around in his bait bag. "How often do you see carp anglers using casters and worms?" he asks. "The answer is probably never, or very rarely. I match fish most Sundays and I regularly catch massive bags of small carp on the pole using chopped worms and casters. It didn't take long for me to work out that if the small carp eat them, the big girls will do to. A combination of natural baits like this can be absolutely devastating on the right water. I absolutely love maggot fishing and I've caught hundreds of carp using them over the years. I don't use casters and worms all the time because I cannot neglect the effectiveness of other baits. However, if I'm targeting pressured venues, like most anglers do, I like to try something a little bit different."

Mark tips the worms onto a large riddle, in order to get rid of the compost that they are stored in, and begins chopping up the worms with a pair of scissors.

"I tend to use two pairs of scissors at the same time. Preston Innovations manufacture worm scissors but I can't find mine anywhere!"

Eventually, after plenty of chopping, Mark is left with a tub of finely chopped worms that are oozing with attraction. He tips some casters into the tub and gives the lot a good mix by hand. It's dirty work but it looks like it could be well worth the mess.

"Look at that," he says. "What carp in the country could resist that combination? I've found this mix to be super-effective on silty areas, which makes sense because carp spend a lot of their time grubbing around in the soft stuff searching for naturals."

Mark fills a spod with the attractive mix and chucks it towards the silty area. After 20 minutes of spodding he has introduced the majority of the bait, so he pops the kettle on and has a quick tidy up.

"Think of the attractive signals that the worms are giving off in the water. The fishing has been quite slow on Manor recently but I'm confident that a carp will feed on that spot at some point during the night. I doubt they've seen a bed of casters and chopped worms on the bottom for a while. Hopefully something out of the ordinary will make them more inclined to have a quick feed."

Mark finally hits the sack at midnight, after watching the water intently for most of the evening.

At around 6am his right-hand alarm shrieks and he begins battle with an angry Manor carp. The carp ace applies the pressure and carefully leads it towards the bank. A dark common rolls under the rod tips

before heading down the margin, taking line in the process.

Eventually, after a spirited fight, a plump common carp rolls over Mark's spreader block.

"The maggots and worms do it again!" he exclaims. "It's not massive but it's a carp and it proves that the tactics work."

With the sun slowly creeping over the distant tree line, Mark carefully places the carp into his recovery sack and waits for the light to improve so that he can rattle off some decent trophy shots.

Before long he is posing for the TC camera with a chunky common that weighs 17lb.

Roy Parsons, the Linear Fisheries bailiff, wanders into the swim just as Mark is releasing the fin-perfect common. He then tells us that no other carp have been caught over the past two days.

"What a result," says Mark. "It just shows that worms and casters can produce a fish when all other tactics are failing."

Just as the TC cameras are leaving, Mark hooks into another fish that tears line from his reel at an incredible rate. Unfortunately, after a couple of minutes, the hook pulls and the fish evades capture.

STEP-BY-STEP HOW TO MAKE MARK'S WINNING MIX

- 1 Get yourself some nice, juicy lobworms from your local tackle shop.
- 2 Place the worms onto a riddle and sieve away the excess compost.
- 3 Place the worms into a tub and chop them into small pieces.
- 4 You will be left with a mound of chopped worms that are oozing attraction.
- 5 Now add a liberal amount of casters and give the lot a good mix.
- 6 The finished mix will look like this. It will send the carp into a feeding frenzy.

STEP-BY-STEP HOW TO CREATE A BALANCED HOOK BAIT

- 1 Here's the rig that Mark uses when he's targeting pressured day-ticket venues.
- 2 Carefully cut a Mainline Indian Spice dumbbell pop-up in half.
- 3 Mount the hook bait onto your hair and fix it in place using a boilie stop.
- 4 Mark uses a length of soldering wire to balance his pop-ups.
- 5 Carefully push a small piece of wire into your hook bait, like this.
- 6 Keep pushing wire into the pop-up until it sinks slowly through the water.

TOP TIP



USE TWO PAIRS OF SCISSORS
It can be hard work chopping lots of worms, so Mark usually uses two pairs of scissors at the same time. Preston Innovations actually make worm cutters that are specifically designed for chopping lots of worms quickly and easily.



This pristine common tips the scales to 17lb. It just couldn't resist a bed of Mark's worms and casters.

"The lake is fishing really slowly, which is strange for this time of year. The carp just don't seem interested in feeding, which makes the capture of the common

all the more rewarding. If you are looking for an edge this season then why not give casters and worms a go. They are easy to prepare, can be bought from most tackle shops and carp simply love them." **TC**