Monsters on the Method

One of the most underrated big-carp tactics is shunned at your peril, says day-ticket hauler Chris Lowe. We meet up with him in-session

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FLOATS, maggots and feeders. Perceived wisdom says these are all flung to one side as soon as you start targeting big carp.

The truth, as is often the way in fishing, is that dismissing a certain tactic as inadequate is a dangerous game. Method feeders are a staple of the match and pleasure-fishing scene, but these fairly large chunks of metal and plastic have struggled to gain acceptance among the carp fraternity.

Chris Lowe is a man who knows better. The Avid Carp consultant and carp-fishing tutor targets Oxfordshire’s Linear Fisheries an average of three nights a week and knows the value of the Method feeder lies partly in the fact that it is underused.

“I tend to use them when I’m fishing closer in, which everybody else seems to ignore – because everyone at big-carp waters thinks you need to fish at 60 yards-plus,” says the friendly West-Midlander.

“Others might ignore it, or think it’s beneath them, but I’m more than happy to use groundbaits for big fish, especially if I’m not fishing too far out as it makes it that little bit easier. Balling in groundbait by hand and fishing a Method feeder over the top is a deadly combination.

“The mix is very simple – you don’t have to over complicate things. Make sure you get the liquid attraction in there as that’s what can set groundbait mixes apart from pellet mixes and solid PVA bags. The groundbaits and Method mixes soak up all the liquids and release them in the water, and you can keep adding liquids to them if the mix dries out.

It’s not like pellet, which becomes a bit redundant after it’s all dried out.”

Pointing to a bag of Sonubaits’ Salted Nut Crush, Chris adds: “This is the best groundbait I’ve ever used
A tin of hemp and corn is added to the groundbait, with a few micro pellets. Place a matching Avid feeder into the pile of Method mix and press down firmly. Press the hookbait into the feeder mix and smother in more groundbait if needed. Bind the mix with a bit of lake water before loosely filling an Avid Flatbed Method mould. The mould features a quick-release button on the underside to pop the filled feeder out.

Method feeders are big items, but Chris has no qualms about using them for the largest of carp on pressured waters. Generally my mix doesn’t change much from one month to the next, but the only thing I would add is a few maggots during the colder months. The maggots can break apart the Method ball, but if you add a little bit more liquid to your mix it will go out as normal. Pellets will also stiffen it up.

I’m just using one tin of sweetcorn and one tin of hemp per 2kg bag of groundbait. With the liquids from the corn and hemp that’s – by far. It binds really well, it creates a nice cloud on the bottom and the fish feed on it quite quickly in my experience. I’m happy to use it all the time, all year round, wherever I am fishing.

Small hookbaits, popped up invitingly above the groundbait mix are hard for the carp to resist.
normal the perfect ratio – but I can add more lake water if needed.”

As we speak to him on the banks of Oxlease Lake, one of the busiest of all the Linear Fisheries waters, a chunky carp shows itself just 20 yards from the bank and Chris wastes no time dispatching a Method feeder and a few balls of groundbaits to the spot. No more than 20 minutes later and the rod is tearing off. An upper 20lb mirror is the culprit and the feeder has done its job.

“I don’t think big carp are worried about big Method feeders at all,” says Chris, “as long as they’re happy to feed I think they take everything on board, whatever’s out there. Let’s face it, we all fish with cumbersome items of end tackle and I don’t think they worry about a Method feeder.”

Having removed the hook that was solidly embedded in the fish’s bottom lip, Chris explains his thinking on Method presentations.

“Keep your hookbaits small – two pieces of corn or a little 10mm or 12mm boilies work best. If you have a 15mm bait out there and everything else is 8mm or 8mm, then it seems to sit there a while before getting taken. Just match the hookbait size to what’s in your mix. I also pop up my hookbaits just slightly so they’re the first thing the carp come across.

“Recasting depends on the stocking of the lake. The higher the stock, the more frequently I’ll recast and top up the swim, but I obviously reduce this if there are fewer fish in the venue. On lower-stocked lakes I’ll leave it in for an hour, or an hour and a half, but if there are plenty of fish like there are here then I’m quite happy to recast every 20 minutes or half an hour.

“Compared with PVA, Method feeders are quicker and easier to recast – and the main difference is the ability for groundbaits to take on liquid attractors. You can add oils or liquid flavours which you can’t get into PVA. Also, very few people use it on carp lakes – so that is an edge in itself.

“On the flipside, you can definitely get a further cast with a PVA bag, but I’m quite happy to fish up to about 70 yards with a Method. If I was going for bigger distances I might up the pellet ratio in the mix just so it binds a bit more, but then it takes a bit longer to prepare it.

“The Method really comes into its own when fished on the marginal shelf, where you can ball in additional groundbait around it. And that’s all I do. I don’t want to put boilies over the top, I don’t want bigger baits in the area. I’m quite happy for all the tench and the perch to come in and nibble on the groundbait and give confidence to the carp as they come in.”