

THANKS FOR THE TIP

JON 'SHOES' JONES examines the true effect that tipping your hook baits has on their efficiency and how a slight adjustment to your thinking could pay dividends.

There's a lot written about hook-bait buoyancy these days. I'd hazard a guess that the majority of anglers are using some form of buoyancy in their hook baits, be that using pop-ups, wafers, snowmen or tweaking baits with bits of cork and foam – and quite right too.

In my experience, a finely tuned hook bait can make all the difference between a decent season and a great one. The idea here is to get you really thinking about what they're trying to achieve by doing this. ▶



Angler: Jon 'Shoes' Jones

UK PB: 36lb

Sponsor: Avid Carp

Shoes' innovative approach to angling has helped him bank carp from waters like Horton and Birch Grove.

Do not underestimate the difference that tipping a hook bait with a buoyant or sinking piece of corn has on a rig's mechanics.

I was asked recently if I thought that too much emphasis was placed on lightening the hook bait. I agreed that maybe we should consider something very different, especially on heavily pressured venues where the carp have seen it all before.

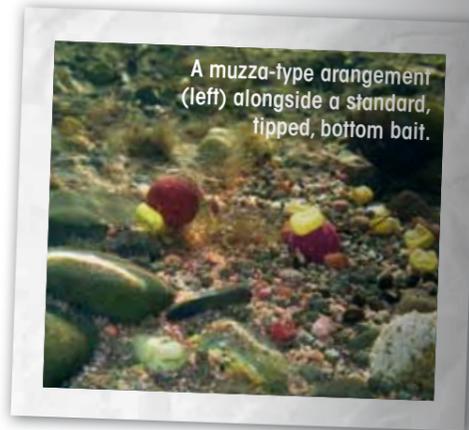
The idea was really brought to my attention with the staggering sales of the Corn Stops I designed for Avid Carp. These are sinking baits (although by the time you read this buoyant ones will be available too) and the catch rates that people have reported have been nothing short of remarkable. So riddle me this: if the sinking Corn Stops actually add weight to the hook bait, why the

obsession with negating the weight of the hook? Maybe we should consider the alternative; actually using the weight of the hook bait to catch more.

One important factor, which may have played a part with the Corn Stops captures, is that these attach to your hair loop via a hook, which actually adds a few millimetres to the hair length. Anglers may well be inadvertently using heavier hook baits with longer hairs, which is a highly effective setup and one that I used to great effect many years ago.

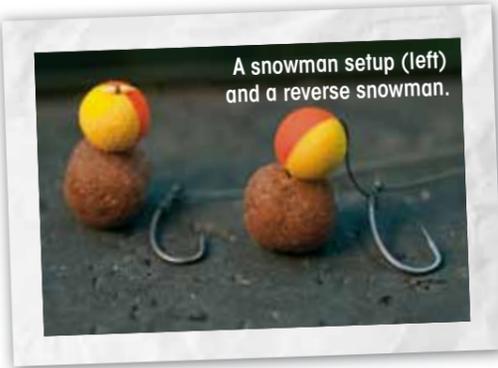
It's why I started to look at and consider the Kenny Dorset or KD rig. I'd used a similar rig when I fished Christchurch Lake in Oxfordshire, trying to increase the separation between hook and bait so that when it was in a carp's mouth the hook would tip up and hang below the bait. Regular readers may remember me writing about this in the June 2010 issue and I mentioned then how the KD arrangement and principle appealed to me.

Well since writing that piece I have used the setup in my fishing and found it very effective. I'm



A muzzer-type arrangement (left) alongside a standard, tipped, bottom bait.

sure that the long hair makes a big difference and using a balanced bait certainly does. I was looking at a recent Korda video and listened with interest to young Tom Dove's observations while fishing the same rig, although he calls his 'muzzer' style. Inserting a cork plug into the bottom of a boilie hook bait, Tom was essentially creating an upside-down snowman setup, with the buoyant part of the hook bait nearest the hook. I've found that I can create the same effect when using a sinking Corn Stop with a waffer hook bait.



A snowman setup (left) and a reverse snowman.

Putting the theory into practice has already paid off.



PRESENTATIONS THAT WORK, AND THOSE THAT DON'T



A sinking Corn Stop, waffer bait and short hair won't allow the hook to sit well.



However, the same presentation with a longer hair is ideal.



A short hair with a standard bait and buoyant Corn Stop sits perfectly well.



A KD setup with a short hair will cause the rig to exit a carp's mouth like this.



Trapping a short hair on the shank will see it ejected bend first...



... but lengthening the hair will see the tubing slide and the hook exit point first.

The waffer has to be the right buoyancy; sometimes you need to trim bits off to get it right, otherwise the hook actually sits off the bottom upside down. This looks a bit weird, but does mimic the weighted drop-hook rig that Rob Maylin made famous back in the day.

Take a look at the underwater shot we've taken of a standard buoyant Corn Stops fished with a bottom bait, next to a muzzer-style sinking Corn Stop with a waffer hook bait. Underwater, it's actually the muzzer-type arrangement that moves around much more naturally. That said, both approaches are successful and I'm sure that each rig will probably have differing results on various venues. I'm certainly going to be doing more comparisons between these two setups over the coming year because I know that there's further development with the KD setup to come.

My preference with the KD rig is to use a coated-braid hook link with the coating only stripped from the hair. I find the semi-stiff hook link coupled with a curved-shank hook creates another problem for fish; it keeps the hook hanging at the right angle in a carp's mouth to find a hold. With a supple link the hook can twist and fold more easily, rather than hanging prone like you want it to. It's my own tweak on it I suppose, but I'd recommend it to anybody suffering hook-pulls or strange hook-holds.

I'd had thoughts about using the rig with fluorocarbon, using a braided hair,

and this will be something that I'll be trying this season on anywhere with clear water. I'll be getting around a few venues this year with the filming work we plan on doing for Avid promotions, so if I have success this way I'll be writing all about my experiences in ACF, as always.

One interesting point that I'd like to make is that I have traditionally made my own hook baits, designed to be slow sinking. Some are pop-ups made to sink under the weight of a small split shot, while others sink under the weight of a rig. I still have some of the two-tone orange/white baits that I made when I was fishing at Birch Grove, which had extremely low levels of pineapple flavouring in. They are proper pop-ups now, having dried out over time, but they still produce fish.

I think the original concept with the KD rig was to use a shot on the hair with a pop-up, which is good for anglers who want their hook baits to last. Pop-ups are traditionally firmer and will outlast a frozen food-bait boilie on a hair rig.

I'd certainly recommend the buoyant element with the KD arrangement, as we've discussed, but don't rule out going in the other direction. On waters where nuisance species are prevalent, or just



The weighted, drop-hook rig from 'back in the day'.

where the carp are mega-fussy, using a heavy bait is an approach worth taking as an edge over other anglers who may be using a balanced setup that's running out of legs. By that I mean that the carp are beginning to find a way to deal with, or avoid, such rigs.

I've always liked to stand out from the crowd and I know how making a tiny tweak can totally transform a session. So, if you're looking for a trump card to keep up your sleeve, start at the hook bait. There's nothing wrong with the KD setup, so if you're not catching on it that may not be through any fault of the rig that you're using. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. However, as with a decent car, you can improve the performance by making small changes, which is what I'd recommend people bear in mind when they are on a bad run. Rather than rushing to change hooks, hook links, rigs, rig length, lead size and leader type – start with the simple changes and concentrate more on putting it in the right areas. **ACF**