

BIG WAG, BIG CARP, NO FEED!

“Just because it’s cold, it doesn’t mean you should pack away your waggler rods for shallow fishing on commercials.” So says Preston Innovations-backed Paul Holland as he shows why not in a session at Gold Valley.

At this time of year, from October through to March, the days get shorter and the nights get colder. The fishes’ metabolisms slow down and match weights start to drop as the carp become more and more lethargic. A typical matchman will change from Method feeders to straight leads and PVA bags in an attempt to become more subtle and hopefully catch a few more fish.

As a rule, however many anglers there are fishing your chosen venue there is a very good chance that every one of them will be fishing a straight lead of some form or another, and in most cases the peg where most of the fish are shoaled up will be the peg that wins. It’s simply the nature of commercial-fishery fishing in the winter! You have no advantage over another angler and are relying solely on luck rather than skill, mostly at the draw bag.

But I believe there is a way to swing the odds in your favour and try to catch a couple of extra fish where others may not. It’s called the waggler!

Even when we have really hard frosts, in the depths of winter the big float can outscore the straight lead. There is a very simple reason for this. As the sun comes out it warms up the top layer of water first and therefore many of the fish will want to be in this layer in an attempt to keep warm. Fish a waggler this deep and you’re going to be putting a hook bait right among the fish.

At places like Gold Valley in Surrey and Larford Lakes in Worcestershire, and other venues where you have good depth (six to seven feet or more) and distance between you and the opposite angler, with enough space in between, the big float will work.

What I mean when I say big float is basically a loaded waggler bigger than 15g. The specific floats I use are GV Flighted Pellet floats (available in the on-site Gold Valley tackle shop), and I prefer

these models for several reasons: they have a brass loading at the bottom so I can dictate how much of the tip I want to see above the surface, they are very well made – although I adapt mine so they are impossible to break or take on any water – and most importantly they fly perfectly straight. The two sizes that I use are 15g and 20g.

As with all most other types of fishing, this method is based around feeding – get the feeding right and you’re halfway to success. The difference with big-float fishing in winter is that 99 times out of 100 you feed absolutely nothing! So the question is, if you don’t feed anything how on earth are you going to get a bite? The answer lies in the float and the noise it creates.

When the float lands the carp’s inquisitive nature makes them look at or swim towards whatever has created the noise. The only thing the carp will then see or find is the hook bait.

So now we have all the elements we need to catch them – the float landing, the splash caused and the bait falling through the water. But, as with all fishing, it’s the finer points that will catch you more than the rest.

I know exactly what it takes to get a bite, but I see so many anglers still get it wrong because they just don’t think about it. They chuck the waggler out and it dives so deep they have more chance of spearing one than hooking it, and this now



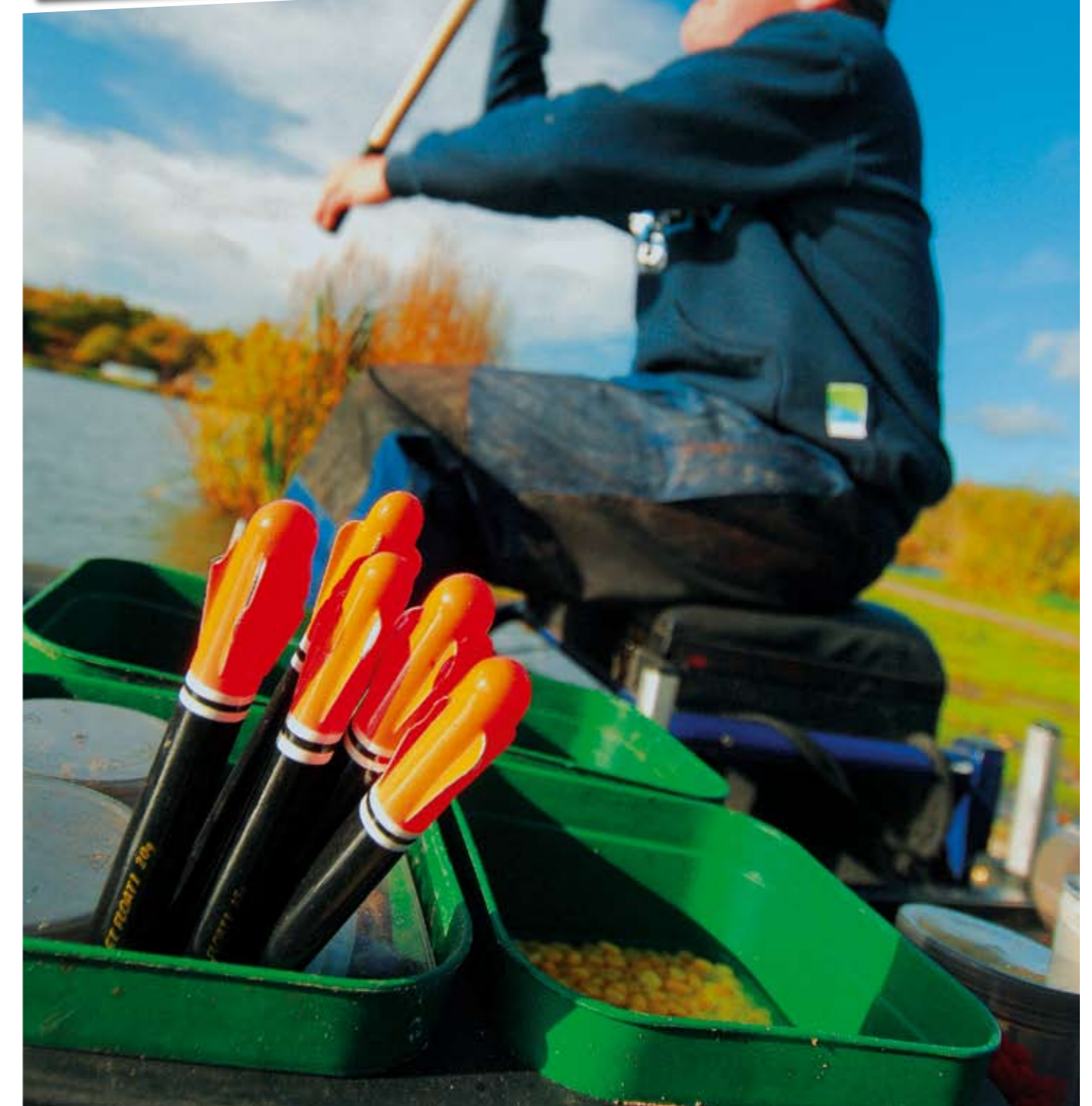
A longer rod gives you better line pick-up when striking.



Use 8lb main line for increased durability.



Paul swaps between maggots and hair-rigged carp pellets on the hook.



BIG WAG, BIG CARP, NO FEED!

In winter, 99 times out of 100 you feed absolutely nothing!



This big 'un tipped the scales at 18lb – bigger than your average commercial-fishery carp!

BIG WAG, BIG CARP, NO FEED!

In deep, large commercial fisheries expect to catch big carp in the upper layers with this brilliant tactic.



Large, cigar-shaped wagglers are best for casting long distances and fishing shallow.



has taken the hook bait below the fish. They then leave it there for a minute or so, wind it back in and do the same again. If all the fish are in the top few feet the float must not dive – the hook bait must be in that 3ft area for as long as possible.

It takes a bit of practice but the waggler must also make a 'slapping' noise when it lands on the water. This will ensure that the hook bait is falling through those three feet for as long as possible. When the hook bait has settled it's time to give the rod a quick, sharp flick to make the hook bait rise as high as possible. Once the hook bait has settled it's time to reel in and recast. This is a very simple and easy way to fish but to make it effective you must work hard at it.

For this style of float fishing I like a 13ft rod with plenty of backbone in it to get these floats to the spot, even if that's 50 to 60 yards from the bank. The model I use is a 13ft Preston Innovations C-Series float. I prefer a longer rod for this kind of fishing as it has a better line pick-up on the strike. This is very important as it puts me in contact with the fish quicker.

Equally important is the reel. You need a 3000-sized model as you could cast up to 300 times in a session. Reel line is 8lb PI Direct Mono for durability and strength. Hooklengths are two-and-a-half feet in length and normally 0.17mm or 0.19mm PowerLine, depending on the size of the fish. These are tied to a Size 14 PR36 – one with a band on a hair rig for attaching pellets, and one without for hooking maggots.

As it's mainly the noise of the float slapping the water that attracts the fish to the area I like to make the most of the previous casts by clipping up. It's very much the same as if you were feeding groundbait – you want as many fish as possible in a smaller area so it's best to get the feeding tight. Then you fish on this area, just past it or either side of it to make the most of the 'feeding' area.

I have a routine in which I will have up to eight casts to the clipped-up spot, trying to hit the same spot every cast, then one cast on either side of this area. This way I feel as though I'm making the most of the noise created by the float.

Always try unclipping and going a yard or so past the area every once in a while – it can often throw up a quick fish or two.

Because there is no feed going into the water you can continually change areas in your peg to try and find out where a few fish are 'holed up'. Try to spend at least 10 minutes in each area, though, to see if you're attracting a fish or two into the area by the regular splashing as it lands.

If you have never fished this tactic before, then I would really urge you to go out and give it a try. It really is adrenaline-pumping stuff – you cast a big float to the middle of a lake that looks like a

glass sheet, the waggler lands with a big slap on the water and bobs about as it settles, a big red tip that looks like a pike float stares back at you and you wait... and for a split second you think that never in a million years is anything going to move that, it looks so wrong. Then it's gone, you strike like Zorro because you can't help yourself and the rod just horseshoes over – fish on! And every bite after that will be just as heart-stopping.



Four carp for over 50lb is proof that you shouldn't put away the waggler rods this winter.