

January to March on Richmond Park

By Warren Fenn



I think it was 6th January when Richmond Park's Penn Ponds thawed out after an extreme early winter with thick snow and below freezing temperatures, which kept The Penn Ponds frozen solid for a good part of two months. Up until the big freeze (which came in late November) I was on a roll having caught 18 fish in 10 sessions from mid October to late November. This was topped by a stunning Richmond common of over 30lb at 32lb plus. I was eager for the ice to thaw so I could get back down to start again where I left off, but it became apparent that this would be a harder task than first thought.

32lb+ of stunning Richmond common caught late October

With Richmond Park's Penn Ponds being days only and with the harsh weather from the winter conditions it would be near possible to catch on a regular basis but with the added bonus of only being able to fish now once a week maybe two if I'm lucky, due to my pro boxing career, I was pushing it to near impossible to catch regularly, through the hardest part of winter. With these key factors against me it was really important that I made sure every session counted. A lot of my preparation was done off the bank e.g. all my rig tying and testing, thinking what baits to use and where to fish were all mastered together at home, so

every minute on the bank was used fishing. Pre baiting was also very important, I managed to get down to pre-bait chosen spots at least twice a week, which kept the bait source going in to hopefully get the fish feeding confidently on my spots, so when I did manage to fish it would give me a greater chance of a bite or two.

I managed to do three sessions through January without a single fish but did manage to see fish movement which was encouraging. It was my first session in February which brought the first fish, after changing tactics from using a northern special white to pink and changing my pre-baiting bait from live system to the mighty N-Gage XP. A fish known as 'the golden common' slipped up and graced my net at a healthy weight of 24lb. It seemed that the changing in tactics with the bait had paid off.



24lb common known as 'The golden common' what a stunning February fish.

My next session nothing occurred, not even a show from a fish and with limited fishing time on my hands I couldn't risk any more blanks so a change was needed, if I was looking to get amongst the fish regularly. So with a long think at home I decided to add a small kick to my baits.

Before pre-baiting and when using freebies I soaked my N-gage XP in CC Moore's liver Exact for 24 hours. I was hoping the liver soaked baits would give an extra kick and entice these tricky winter carp into feeding in these cold conditions. And so it paid off with my next session, managing to bag two stunning commons one at 19lb+ and the other at 21lb, result! With slight changes to my bait, my plan seemed to have paid off once more.



Here is the N-Gage XP soaked in Liver Exact for 24 hours on the left and the standard N-gage XP on the right. Little changes in your baits could make the difference from blanking or catching. It paid off for me!



Stunning winter commons of 19lb+ and 21lb

Not being able to get down again to Richmond Park to fish through February (but still pre-baiting) it left me two weeks in March to try and get amongst the real chunks of Richmond Park's Penn Ponds as the lakes close season starts on the 14th March.



March Common's of 20lb and 19lb

I opted to carrying on using the same tactics that enticed the two stunning common's from my last session to slip up and end up in my net. Again my first session in March I managed a brace of little stockie commons one scraping 20lb and the other short at 19lb. Yes I'm finally getting amongst them now, is the pre-baiting paying off? I think so!



Doing the business!



Changing my hookbait from a white Northern Special to a pink back in January has brought success, fished on a combi-rig with a bag of crushed freebies.

My next session on Richmond park, I managed to get amongst the fish yet again proving regular baiting with the right bait brings regular fish, catching three fish to 17lb all commons. My next session being my last for the season resulted in a blank, but I couldn't fish to my pre-baited spots which had produced all my fish this year as another angler had beaten me to it, Fair play, a good excuse for blanking? I think so (laugh out loud). All in all only being able to fish a handful of times through the harder part of winter from Jan-Mar and with many factors against me, I still managed success with the methods I adapted.

Planning was the key in all my captures and I'm now looking forward to having the royal in my hands as I return on 16th June when the new season is upon us.



***Tight Lines
Warren Fenn***