

Hi again everyone.

I guess quite a few of you are just starting your season long campaign on your chosen water as it's the 16th of June now as I'm writing this piece. It's the first start of season which I haven't fished for years and years, but due to being extremely busy at work and just having returned from another foreign excursion I'm feeling all 'fished out', for a few days at least!

After my trip over to France in May I was only back at work for 5 days before I was off again. This time for a week-long trip to the famous Rainbow lake in the Aquitaine region of south west France. I had taken a cancellation on one of Paul Hunt's Rainbow tours trips and was immensely looking forward to a week of sun, and hopefully monster carp. I was booked to fish the famous peg 11, also known as The Black Beach. This was a swim which I hadn't fished before, despite fishing Rainbow every year since 2003, so I was keen to get down there and get the rods out. I was last at Rainbow in January of this year on my annual 2-week winter trip, which was a real struggle. We were beaten by the weather in the first week, with two thirds of the lake frozen solid, and the second week produced some serious flooding and ended with the worst winds and storm damage for over twenty years in southern France. I seem to attract extreme weather wherever I go fishing! Despite all of that little lot, I did manage 4 fish for the trip, including a lovely mirror of 45lb's, and my partner in crime Andy Barnes did his usual Rainbow trick and winkled out a cracking mirror of 53lb 4oz, so considering 11 anglers blanked for the fortnight we felt we'd had a nice little result.



*53lb 4oz Common (1<sup>st</sup> of 3 50's)*



*Early morning 45lb Common*

of my usual Odyssey XXX, mainly as I felt a high energy type bait with good digestibility like the Live System would be a good choice as the carp looked to replenish their reserves after the rigours of spawning.

The nuts would be introduced with each application of bait onto my spots, and past experience in the winter had shown that the Rainbow fish had no qualms about picking up a tiger or two, especially if they were just fished as a small handful around the baited area.

It's worth bearing in mind that the Rainbow carp, although appearing very easy to catch sometimes, can also be very fickle with their moods, and only a fool would turn up just expecting to catch a load on their chosen week. After all, Rainbow is possibly the most pressured venue in Europe, and is fished by some extremely talented anglers from various countries, so the fish are no pushover in my opinion. A careful and thoughtful approach had always brought me regular success in the past, so I was hoping that this week would be no different. I also purchased some Particle Mix +



*A drop of the good stuff in the mix.*

and aniseed and Hemp from Paul to use as a mix to introduce around the hookbait, and I crushed some of my boilies down to chops and crumb to further increase the attraction in the swim. It all sounded good, so it was time to stop thinking and get on with it and get fishing!

I was soon out in the boat and looking for likely spots after quickly chucking the bivvy up and getting three rods ready for the night. The lads in the other swims had arrived by minibus a day earlier, but had the misfortune to be dropped to their

swims as the heavens opened earlier that day and were consequently in the process of trying to dry everything out in the evening sun. Andy had decided not to fish on the first night, so I had the pick of available spots for a night at least.



*1<sup>st</sup> of the day – 39lb*

I decided to fish my rods at different depths and in different areas of the swim to try and assess any feeding activity, and hopefully give us a few pointers as to what kind of mood the fish were in. Before long I had all 3 rigs in position, and after dinner was soon in bed and sound asleep after a long and tiring day. Unsurprisingly, I was completely undisturbed during the night except for the sound of Andy's snoring, which was just epic! I've never heard anything like it in all my years fishing, it was incredible; like a jet engine taking off!

Around 8am the next morning I awoke to a few beeps and through blurred eyes I watched one of my rod tips slam down as a hooked fish

took off at a rate of knots. The water level in the swim was higher than

we'd expected, so the rods had to be positioned a few yards into the lake, and as such I was quickly up to my knees in the lake doing battle with a hard-fighting carp. After a spirited fight of maybe ten minutes I was preparing a nice common of 39lbs for a quick photo; an excellent start, and hopefully the sign of things to come.

My hopes were founded as by mid-day I'd managed another two takes and converted both to fish landed which was a result as some of the other lads were losing a few around the lake. The other fish both weighed 36lb; one a common and one a nice dark looking mirror. I was as pleased as punch with getting a few bites so early into the trip.



*2<sup>nd</sup> of the day – 50lb 2oz*



*A new spot produces this 46lb+ within a couple of hours*

Peg 11 has a bit of a reputation as a 'sit and wait' swim, so I was more than a bit surprised to turn up 3 fish so quickly.

All of the bites had come to one rod and it was hard to look away from that rod as I was expecting another take quite quickly. Andy had his 4 rods in position by now, and I had also found a spot for my fourth, so we were fishing 'properly' at last. No more action was forthcoming for the rest of the day, and after another of Paul and Mandy's mammoth dinners, I was settling in for the 2nd night. This time I made sure I was in bed and trying

to sleep before Andy retired to his bivvy, hoping to gain a head start in the sleeping stakes and not endure listening to the chainsaw like snoring like the previous night! Once again there was no action during the night, but I did awake several times to enormous splashes as huge fish made their presence in our swim known. The weather was excellent, with low pressure and cloudy skies producing intermittent rain, and we couldn't have hoped for much better for this time of year. Also we were fishing over the full moon period, which has also been a favourite time for me in the past, producing some of my biggest fish both at home and abroad.

At around 5am the next morning one of my rods fished on a 9ft bar way out to the left of the swim let out a few beeps as the hanger dropped back before tightening up and slowly pulling the rod tip down to the water.

A typical big fish bite I thought to myself as I lifted into the fish. Ten minutes later after a nervy fight where the fish plodded around just under the surface, and Andy had a nice common safely in the net as I peered over his shoulder to view my prize. 'Blimey, that'll do' I said out loud as I looked down on a wide set of shoulders in the net. The common was weighed at 53lb exactly; I felt like it was going to be a good week after all as I held him up for a photo. The fish was a new PB common as well, not

to sleep before Andy retired to his bivvy, hoping to gain a head start in the sleeping stakes and not endure listening to the chainsaw like snoring like the previous night! Once again there was no action during the night, but I



*Atmospheric Rainbow*

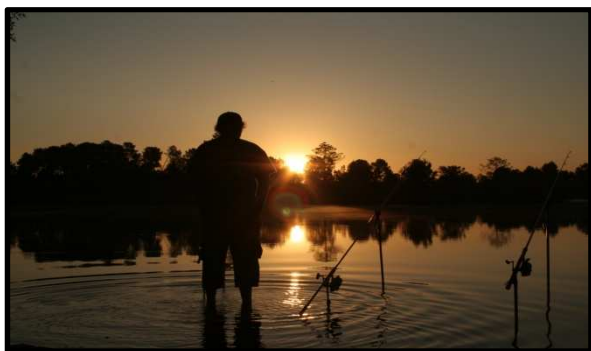
that it really matters to me, but I was wondering what else might turn up in the next five days or so as it was obvious we had a few decent fish in front of us.

I was introducing several kilo's of the particle/hemp/boilie mix after each fish - not enough to really fill them up but hopefully enough to keep the fish at the spot long enough to get a bite. I chose to fish tigers on the hair with a piece of fake jumbo corn, mainly so I could confidently leave the rods in position for several days undisturbed if required. I felt this could be a good edge, and would keep boating activity to a minimum, which I feel is a good thing at Rainbow as 9845 boats are used so often around the lake.



***36lb Mirror***

type common than a typical rainbow type. The night was again fishless for us both, but I was quite unperturbed as a good nights 'kip' followed by daytime action suits me just fine. The Wednesday produced three more bites for me, and a couple for Andy. My highlight was a common of 47lb's, caught from a shallow snaggy spot at long range and I was quite surprised for a fish of that stamp to come from the spot in question, as often at rainbow the shallow spots seem to produce mainly smaller fish-not that i was complaining though! Andy managed a couple of nice fish himself, the biggest being a long, pug nosed common of 35lb's which had a massive frame and pre-spawning would probably have been mid 40s. The weather was turning warmer by the day, and there was promise of 30-degree heat by the end of the week. At this point, neither of us had left the swim at all, apart from the necessary (if you get my drift) and the lure of a nice cool shower and freshen up was hard to resist.



***Another hot day in the office!***

my 2nd 50+ common of the trip up for the camera, and I could scarcely believe my good luck. My grin had barely subsided when I had another take on a newly found spot whilst I was eating breakfast, only for the fish to shed the hook after a minute or so. Oh well, some you win and all that!

I tied a fresh rig and was soon out in the boat back at the same spot with a few more kilos of bait. It was surprising how much bait we were going through, but we were constantly boiling up more seed mix and hemp to keep the swim topped up. I was mid-siesta at about 3pm when the same rod lurched towards the lake once more. I slowly walked backwards leading the carp away from any potential danger, and was soon wearing the daft grin again as another large common sat amongst the mesh.

Three more bites came to my rods that day, including another low 30 and a scale-perfect 26lb 8oz common. Rainbow's not all about 60's and 70's, all of the fish are corkers; this can sometimes be overshadowed by the sheer number of monster carp present in the lake.

The next day produced another two fish for me: A scaly low double mirror and another cracking common of 45lb 4oz; again on the left hand open water spot. The 45 came at around 6am, and this turned out to be a regular feeding time for the rest of the week. Andy also managed to extract his first fish of the trip; caught from the margins to our right in shallow water - a beautiful



***Andy out in hot pursuit!***

common of 46lb 4oz, which looked more like a Redmire

The only problem was the lure of a large carp coming along at any time, so we both decided to put pegs on our noses and get on with it - at least most of the other guys were up-wind of us!

The Thursday turned out to be a bit of a red letter day for me, starting once again at around 5am with a nice common of 39lbs - again on the left hand open water spot. I now had two rods fishing in this area of the swim, and at 8am my second rod hooped over violently and I was instantly flat-rodded by the fish as I picked up the rod. This was one

seriously angry carp! It towed me around all corners of the swim before eventually being scooped into the net by Andy. I was shortly holding



This time a nice, deep bodied 47 pounder. This was getting silly; I never catch this many good fish in a season, let alone a day! After the photos and rod re-positioning I was sat eating dinner with a cold beer when my extreme left hand rod was nearly torn from the rest and despatched into the lake; such was the force of the take. After asking Andy to put a lid over my plate to keep dinner warm (gotta get your priorities right) I was up to my knees in the warm margins doing battle with another heavy feeling fish. Disbelievably, I gazed on as Andy netted another long common a few minutes later, and I shook my head in amazement as the scales read 50lb 4oz, to make a brace of 50 commons with the earlier 50lb 2oz fish.

*Afternoon Siesta interrupted by this 47.4  
Common*



What a day! After all the winter suffering at Rainbow, maybe this was a little bit of payback....who knows?

The end of the trip was soon upon us, and on the short flight home we both reflected on a cracking week's fishing. The bait and tactics seemed to have worked a treat, as we ended up with around 30 takes between us. I only wish we'd had a second week, as it was only a matter of time before one of the real bigguns, which were in evidence in our swim each night, made a mistake.

Cheers for now, Mike

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> of the brace of 50's- 50lb 4oz*