

TACTICS

42 PAGES OF EXPERT TIPS TO HELP YOU PUT MORE FISH ON THE BANK

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Ambush in the margins

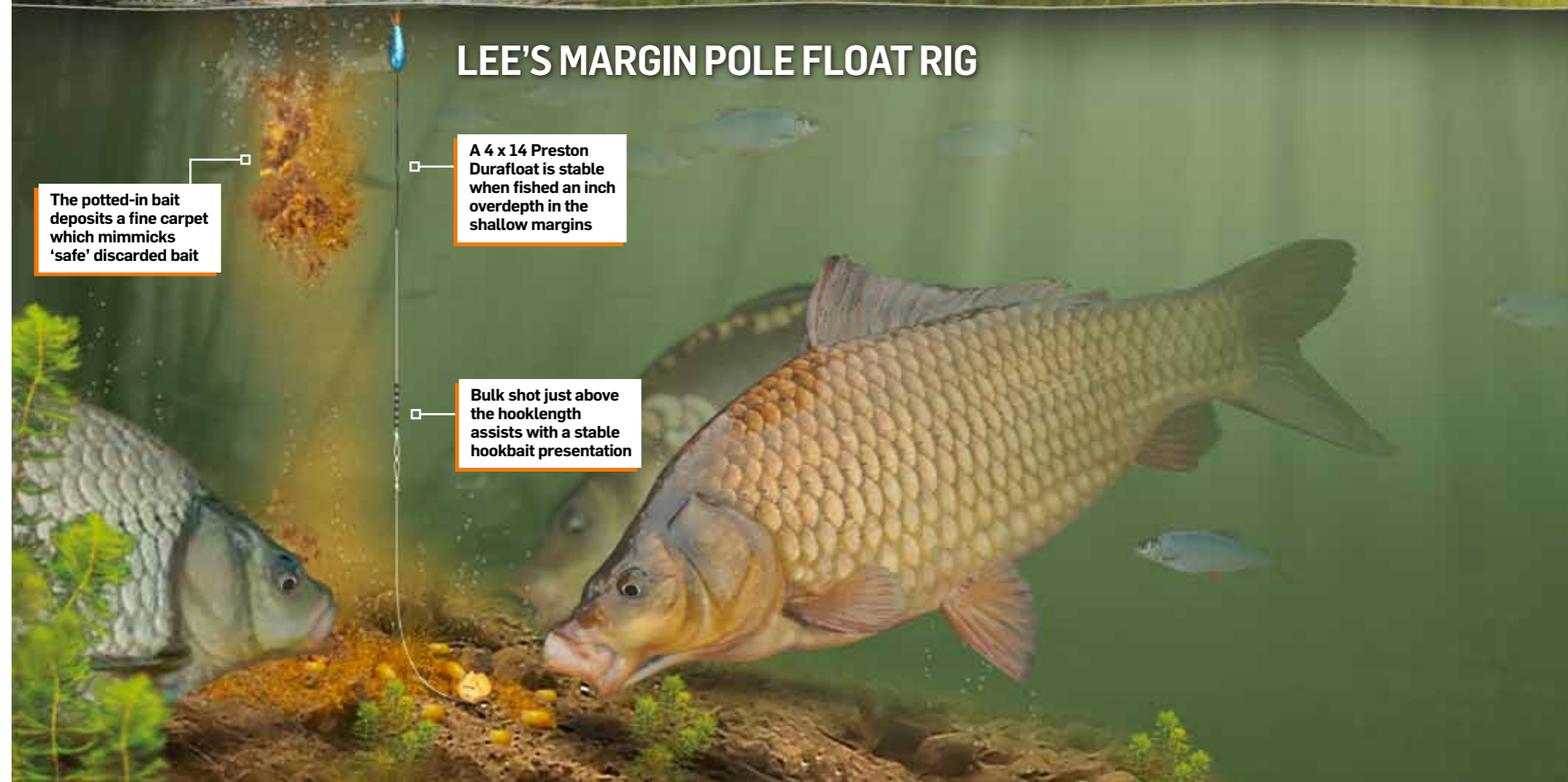
The biggest fish can often be caught inches from the bank. We joined England international Lee Kerry for a masterclass in close-range fishing ▶

Words Mark Parker Photography Mick Rouse





Lee pots in a 250ml pole cup full of loose crumb and sweetcorn kernels after every fish



LEE'S MARGIN POLE FLOAT RIG

The potted-in bait deposits a fine carpet which mimicks 'safe' discarded bait

A 4 x 14 Preston Durafloat is stable when fished an inch overdepth in the shallow margins

Bulk shot just above the hooklength assists with a stable hookbait presentation

WITH current angling trends leaning towards 16-metre poles in match fishing and 100-yard casts in specimen carp angling, you could be forgiven for sometimes wondering if there is any point in fishing the margins.

Well, you couldn't be more wrong, because the truth is that to be in with a chance of catching the biggest fish in your local commercial, you should often be fishing mere inches from the bank, not at 16 metres or beyond.

Assuming that you follow a few simple but important guidelines, you could be only one drop-in away from a new personal best. That's the view of England international match angler, and all-round nice guy, Lee Kerry.

He is well aware of the fact that fish love to feed in and around features and there is no bigger feature on any lake, be it a tiny farm pond or an inland sea, than the margins.

"Fish, particularly big ones, love to come in and feed really close to the bank," said Lee.

"It's the place where natural food collects and an area where they feel safe. You just need to abide by a few golden rules to catch them."

To get the lowdown on his approach, we met up with Lee at Lindholme Lakes in South Yorkshire.

MARGINAL PULLING POWER

In a nutshell, margins are often favoured by a lake's bigger stamp of fish because they offer food, shelter or safety - and sometimes all three.

Carp in pressurised venues soon cotton on to the fact that there is often a ready supply of safe-to-eat food in the margins, either natural offerings that have fallen from trees and bushes, small fish and insects that live in bankside reeds and aquatic plants or, perhaps

more commonly, left-over bait heaved into the swim by departing pleasure and match anglers.

For the most part, big fish know what is safe to eat and what's less so. By emulating this, you can trick them into taking a hookbait without them even realising that they are being fished for.

"My first port of call when fishing any lake is to take a long hard look at the margins, and March to October is the best period to target big fish in these areas. You need to remember that most of them were stocked at around 1lb in weight, yet many are now well into double figures, and it's largely down to the free bounty they have enjoyed from the margins over the years," said Lee.

He reckons autumn is the very best time for a short-range attack as lakes have had the benefit of several months of summer sun and, as a result, the usually shallow water found there is the warmest and most comfortable part of most venues.

As well as the time of year, the time of day is also important for margin success. From 3pm onwards is generally best, a period often referred to as 'carp o'clock' by Lee and his associates!

Fish have learned that as the light levels start to fall - from 3pm onwards - free food begins to appear just as matches finish and the majority of pleasure anglers start to leave for the day.

Therefore, as a starting point to maximising your chances of a big lump from close in, Lee recommends buying a cheap evening ticket and fishing from 3pm until 7pm when the fish are willing and ready to feed in earnest.

PRIME LOCATIONS

Ideally, Lee will look to target both his left-hand and right-hand margin, but if this is not physically possible due to the make-up of the peg or the proximity of other anglers, he is more than happy to target just one side.

If he is able to fish both, he will usually feed them differently, to see if there is any difference on the day. As a general rule, one will be fed heavily, the other more sparingly.

Lee advocates fishing towards an adjacent swim, wherever possible. With a clean bottom, due to keepnets going in and out, carp regard this as a very safe area as they are rarely, if ever, caught from here because most anglers usually fish well out into the lake.

The depth in the next peg is usually shallow, which is another advantage.

"On the lake we're fishing today, if you were to fish to the end of the reeds in front you would be in three to four feet of water," Lee explained. "This means that the fish have ▶



Heavy but well-balanced pole tackle is needed to land big carp from the margin with little fuss

"It's important to guide the hooked fish out into the lake"

Lee plumbs his left and right swims to find the same depth so just one rig can be used



room to feed up-in-the-water, which can cause problems such as foul-hooking. By fishing the adjacent peg, with somewhere between 24 and 30 inches being the magical depth, the fish are forced to feed on the bottom. They don't need to tip up to feed, which is another plus point for the fish, meaning it is easier for the big ones to feed in the shallower water."

As an additional bonus, by looking for the same depth (24 to 30 inches) on either side, Lee is able to use just one top kit and one rig for both areas, so less time is consumed plumbing up and altering his presentation.

TACKLING UP

Targeting big fish at close quarters requires strong tackle. You are hunting out the larger inhabitants in the pool, and must step up accordingly. There is a huge range of quality purpose-made 'margin poles' designed specifically for the job, with many sub-£100 options available, so make sure your length of carbon is up to the task before starting, or it could end up being an expensive day's fishing!

The rest of your set-up also needs to be strong, but well-balanced at the same time. Lee uses a size 17 Preston Innovations Hollo Elastic, which is more forgiving than a solid elastic. If he does hook a big fish that wants to run out into the lake, he can allow it to do so and remain confident that the hook will not pull out or the line snap.

"It is important to guide the hooked fish out into the lake, rather than 'heaving' it straight in, because you don't want to break your line, or your

pole for that matter," said Lee.

His mainline choice is 0.21mm (8lb 15oz) Preston Powerline, attached to an 8in length of 0.19mm (7lb 6oz) Powerline hooklink. This may appear on the heavy side for the pole, but the combination balances perfectly with the heavy size 17 Hollo Elastic.

"If you tried using lighter lines you'd snap every time due to the pressure applied by the elastic, and if you used heavy lines with a light elastic you would never get the fish to the net in the first place!"

Lee's hook choice also errs on the strong side in the shape of a Preston Innovations eyed size 14 PR38. Eyed hooks are preferable for heavy lines as they reduce the chance of the knot pulling over the spade during the fight. To attach the hook, Lee uses a knotless knot, which works well with the out-turned eye of the PR38.

On the float front, he opts for a relatively heavy 4 x 14 model from the Durafloats range so that he is able to present a static bait well and better distinguish a line bite from a real bite.

"People think nothing of using a 30g Method feeder, so why quibble over the size of a float?" he suggested.

A bulk of No.8 shot 8in from the hook completes the rig, which is fished an inch overdepth.

LEE'S SIMPLE MARGIN BAITS

As well as taking advantage of a low-cost evening ticket, Lee also recommends using a cheap baiting approach. Typically, he will go



All you need for a successful margin session is a cheap tin of corn and half a bag of groundbait



In addition to balls of groundbait Lee also pots in a 250ml cup of loose crumb and corn kernels

"Ideally, Lee fishes both left and right-hand margins in a 24in-30in depth of water"

armed with a tin of supermarket sweetcorn and half a bag of groundbait, and admits that he often uses barely half of what he takes.

He's a big fan of the combination, believing that the bright yellow corn stands out well over a bed of crumb, which acts as the layer of attraction, helping to pull the fish in without really giving them much to feed on.

"You could use maggots or worms on the hook, but these also attract small perch – which also love to come into the margins at dusk. Generally, if I don't use corn then I'll fish 8mm cubes of meat on the hook which work really well," he said.

"I think groundbait has become a bit of a forgotten bait on commercials. Too many anglers fish just pellets, which are only hard groundbait anyway."

For Lee, a bed of mixed crumb fed loose via a pole cup creates a haze of food that the fish are able to graze over, gill feeding and picking up the odd kernel of corn as they go. Feeding the crumb loose resembles a pile of pellets breaking down after some time in the water, which carp believe is safe and to be enjoyed at their leisure.

Lee's crumb is usually Sonubaits Supercrush Expander or Match Method Mix. To prime the swim, he simply introduces a full 250ml pole

pot of groundbait and 20-30 kernels of corn. If fishing two lines, he will feed only 15 pieces and half a cup on each line. It is then a case of fishing over the bait until he gets a bite. After a bite or a fish, he tops up the swim with same quantity of feed, fishing until he gets a bite again.

With the time nearing 3pm, Lee duly kicked off his two swims, and was soon rewarded with his first fish of the day, a beautiful ghost carp of around 8lb.

After topping up the spot, he swung his rig over to the right-hand swim to see if anything was waiting. Nothing was present, so after a re-feed, it was back to the left-hand side of the swim.

"This can often be the case, one line will fish better than the other," Lee offered.

Over the next couple of hours, Lee took another three decent-sized carp from the left-hand swim and only one from the right, as well as a few roach, a tench and a bream, leaving him with tidy net of around 40lb by the time it came to bring the curtain down on the short afternoon session. All in all, it was a great return for the meagre cost of just £2 worth of bait.



Big fish like this are often lurking inches from the bank

By following some simple rules, being patient and fishing in the right area and at the right time, Lee had shown just how easy it is to set a margin ambush.

WIN

Here's your chance to get your hands on the margin pole Lee was using. We've got two to give away!

LEE WAS using a prototype of Preston's brand new for 2014 'Pro Type Power' margin pole for this feature.

We have two of these superb 9.5m packages – each with an RRP of £199.99 – for you to win.

The 20-elastic rated product has a Power Kit in the pole,

plus a spare Power kit and comes with a holdall.

The first two correct answers to the question below, drawn at random, will win. It's as simple as that!

EACH POLE WORTH £199.99

How to Enter

Enter online at www.greatcompetitions.co.uk/iycf or post entries to Pro Type Power Draw (Issue 277), PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough PE7 2FF. Closing date for all entries is midnight on October 29, 2013.

QUESTION: What size Preston Hollo Elastic did Lee use?

- A – 15
- B – 17
- C – 20