



Catch Short In Winter! Troubleshooter

In Association With The Preston Innovations Team

Who better to help perfect Callum McCormack's short-pole skills than his angling hero and England international, **Lee Kerry!**

THE CHALLENGE

THE ANGLER

Callum McCormack is a 12-year-old schoolboy from Liverpool. Although he's only been fishing for three years, he's already taken part in several junior matches and had some great results! He's extremely keen to broaden his skills, in the hope of progressing into an open-match angler.

THE PROBLEM

During winter, Callum finds that most anglers resort to fishing the long pole. However, he currently struggles to hold a pole at distances beyond 10 metres and wants to know how he can make the most of a shorter-pole swim. He's looking to establish which species can be targeted at shorter lengths in winter and learn an approach that will keep him catching at close range in the cold.

THE STAR

Lee Kerry is regarded as one of the best all-round anglers in the country. He represented England in the European Championship this year, is a key member of the notorious Ultimate Barnsley Blacks squad and already has a number of big titles under his belt. Equally at home on natural and commercial venues, he's sure to put Callum on the right tracks when it comes to close-range pole tactics.

VENUE FILE

PARTRIDGE LAKES FISHERY

Location: Glaziers Lane, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4AQ
Day tickets: £7; concessions £6
Contact: 07950 057613
Web: www.partridgelakes.co.uk



When I was handed a question regarding a short-pole attack in winter, I couldn't wait to get out on the bank and meet young Callum. Anyone turning up to a commercial fishery at this time of year is likely to be met with the sight of long poles sticking out into the middle of the lake. However, just because the majority of anglers are fishing at distance doesn't mean that you can't catch closer in. In fact, you're likely to have a short-pole swim all to yourself, and this is one of my favourite ways of fishing!

I've met up with Callum at a very cold Partridge Lakes near Warrington, where hopefully I can help him improve his short-pole skills!

ARCTIC BLAST

The first surprise of the day comes when we arrive at the lakes to find that most of them are covered with ice! The only pool free is Gold Lake, a large, open expanse of water. There's apparently a good head of quality silver fish in here, as well as some big carp and F1s. Settling on Peg 45 with the sun shining on us, Callum gets set up as normal. I'm pleased to see he's a chatty little chap, as he remarks: "It's a little cold today, but we've got Lee Kerry with us so I'm sure we'll catch a few!" That's me under the cosh already!

SIMPLE RIGS

It's great to see how many rigs Callum has ready for the day – we'll be signing him in



Lee showed Callum his secret way of lowering his rig in!

A mark on the pole ensures total accuracy when fishing short.

the Barnsley Blacks squad with preparation skills like this! He's got the perfect float for the job made up too, a 4x12 Preston Chianti. However, I've adjusted his shottig to form a bulk of No10s two feet from the hook, with two droppers spaced evenly below. His 0.14mm main line is fine, although I've attached a lighter 0.10mm hooklength and size 18 PR 412 hook – perfect for a mixed bag in winter. This is matched to a No8 Slip elastic, which should enable us to catch fish of all sizes.

PLUMMET PERFECTION

It is vital to find the right area to fish when targeting fish on the short line. I'm keen to ensure that Callum understands this, and sit beside him so we can plumb the swim together.

Starting on a top kit, we find the bottom quickly slopes away until around five metres. Here, the steepness begins to reduce. He gradually works his way out to six metres, where we agree that the bottom becomes almost flat.

This base of the marginal slope is the ideal place to target. In winter, the fish are often in the deeper water and the base of the marginal slope offers depth alongside a feature for fish to gather around. The base of the slope turns out to be halfway along

Callum's No6 section. However, rather than estimating this distance every time he ships out, I've put a small mark on the section using float paint, where he can place his hand every time he ships out.

SWIM SELECTION

Fishing short doesn't mean you are limited when it comes to options. By plumbing one swim at an 11 o'clock angle to our left, we can easily feed another to the right at a one o'clock angle where it's conveniently the same depth. When you're unsure of what baits the fish want, you can feed the separate swims differently.

"My usual winter baits are maggots and pellets," explains Callum. "I think it's a great idea to fish two swims with different baits so that we can find out which is best. I usually fish just one straight in front of me."

The bait tray is simple, consisting of maggots, 4mm Fin Perfect feed pellets and some expanders. I doubt the carp will feed after the freezing cold night but, hopefully, the maggots should keep us busy with silverfish action, while the pellet swim could produce a bonus skimmer or F1!

BIG POTTING

After chatting with Callum, he's keen to feed with a pole-mounted pot. However, I much prefer to start a session by feeding an initial amount and establishing what fish are present. If you start by regularly feeding bait, you could risk the fish feeding off the bottom and you could miss out on some bigger specimens. I've suggested that Callum feeds a quarter of a large pole pot of maggots on the left-hand swim and a similar amount of 4mm pellets to the right.



Quality roach like this will often give the smallest of indications, as Callum found out!





Just because you're fishing short doesn't mean you can't feed more than one swim.

EARLY INTRUDER

Laying his rig over the maggot swim, it isn't long before Callum gets his first bite. In fact, I have to give him a nudge to strike; he must have been daydreaming! Still, he hooks a big fish, which unfortunately tears off and breaks his hooklength. It must have been a carp and I think it was foul hooked. Nevertheless, it's back out with another hooklength and this time a roach of around 3oz comes to the net. Many commercials are full of fish like this and in the winter months you can enjoy some fantastic silver sport on a short pole. Next is a handsome gudgeon, before he catches a run of chunky roach and rudd.

RE-FEEDING

As bites dry up, I ask Callum what he thinks he should do next. "Can I put my pole pot on now?" he giggles. It's not time for that yet and I explain that because the last lot of bait produced a nice run of bites, he should feed the same again. He accurately pots more maggots and is instantly into another run of fish. This style of feeding is great in winter because you keep the fish on the bottom and have ultimate control over how much you introduce. Each time he feeds the maggots, I've urged him to

feed a small handful of pellets on the right-hand swim too. We'll leave this 'til much later, when hopefully the better fish will turn up.

DEAD GOOD

Callum is doing well catching small fish regularly but I think there are a few minor adjustments I can make to improve things. He's mastered the feeding and I haven't even



Feeding this amount with a big pot helped keep fish on the bottom.



An expander hook bait brought Callum a bonus hybrid!

prompted him to pick up his pot the last few times. However, he's missing quite a few bites, and I get the impression there might be an odd better fish in the swim.

I've kicked him off the box for a few minutes to show him some of my tricks. The first lies in my hook bait, and rather than hooking live maggots I've rolled them on my leg to kill them. This makes a soft hooker, which quality fish will suck in with less suspicion. Dead maggots don't wriggle, so there's less chance of a small fish being attracted to them.

THE LEE LOWER

Another adjustment I make is to add an extra inch of depth. It doesn't sound a lot but gives me confidence that the bait is laid on the deck for a better fish to pick up. Callum's certainly keen and as I ship out he's stood right over my shoulder! I lower the rig over the feed, before pausing to let everything straighten out with my hook bait two feet off the bottom.

After a few seconds, I slowly lower in the last part of the rig, concentrating hard with a steady hand. As my bristle sets, it immediately dips and I strike at the small indication. A few yards of No8 elastic judder out and I turn to see a beaming smile on Callum's face.



Lee was itching to jump on the box when Callum started catching big roach!

"How do you do that?" he laughs!

After a short battle, an angry 2lb perch comes thrashing to the surface and is soon scooped into the landing net. Lowering a rig is a great way of fooling quality fish. The water is fairly clear, as most fisheries are in winter, and the wiser critters watch the hook bait fall through the last few feet.

CALLUM CLASS!

As soon as the little apprentice jumps back on the box, he's putting my tricks to the test. He lowers the rig in excellently and first drop he latches into a quality roach of around 10oz. Another chunky one follows, before a hybrid of around 1lb graces the net. It's also noticeable that the bigger fish are producing the smallest of indications. Listening to my advice, he's striking at these tiny bites, and it's a pleasure to see how keen he is to put everything into practice.

PELLET PERFECTION

Although he's happy catching quality silvers, I suggest Callum has a look on the pellet swim. It's a shame to leave feeding fish but a bonus carp late on could really make the session.

Baiting up with a 4mm expander, he lowers the rig in. Unfortunately, nothing happens, although I didn't expect us to get many bites on pellets after such a cold night. I've urged Callum to lift and drop the float to induce a bite and just as he's about to switch back to the maggot swim, the float dips and he hooks a good fish. It's another quality hybrid of around 10oz; not the carp we expected but welcome on a cold day nonetheless!

SILVER SENSATION

With no bites following and the lake freezing around the edges, we call it a day. On lifting the net out, there's a lot more than I thought, as Callum waddles up the bank with a net of pristine silvers pushing 20lb! Hopefully, we've demonstrated just how successful a short-pole swim can be in winter. By finding the right areas to fish, and covering your options, there's some excellent sport to be enjoyed! ■



A fantastic net of fish, all on the short pole in the cold!

CALLUM'S VERDICT

Today has been one of the best days on the bank I've ever had. I have learnt loads and it's been a great laugh with Lee too! There are lots of little tips I've picked up, from the essentials of plumbing up in the right areas, to feeding and that all-important presentation. Lee's method of lowering the bait in was deadly. I'll be much more confident in feeding with my big pot in the future, too. I haven't even put a small pole pot on today. Thanks Lee!

LEE'S SHORT-POLE TIPS



A Preston Chianti is ideal for a variety of baits in winter.



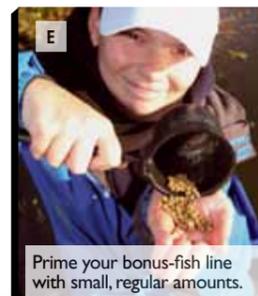
The quality fish fell to double dead white maggot.



A plummet is your best friend when fishing short!



Balanced gear will allow you to land a variety of fish.



Prime your bonus-fish line with small, regular amounts.

WIN A DAY WITH A STAR!

Pole Fishing and Preston Innovations have teamed up to offer one lucky reader every month the chance to have their problem solved in person by a Preston-backed star and win £250 worth of Preston goodies relevant to their problem!

To stand a chance of winning, simply fill out the form below and send it to:

Troubleshooter, Pole Fishing, DHP Ltd, 1 Whittle Close, Drayton Fields, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 8RQ

Alternatively, you can e-mail your question to: polequestions@dhpuk.co.uk

Photocopies are acceptable. Please remember to include your address and phone number!



Your problem:

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