



angler

ANDY OLDHAM
Age: 51
Lives: Rotherham
Sponsor: Frenzee
MF says: A true
match fishing master.

venue file:

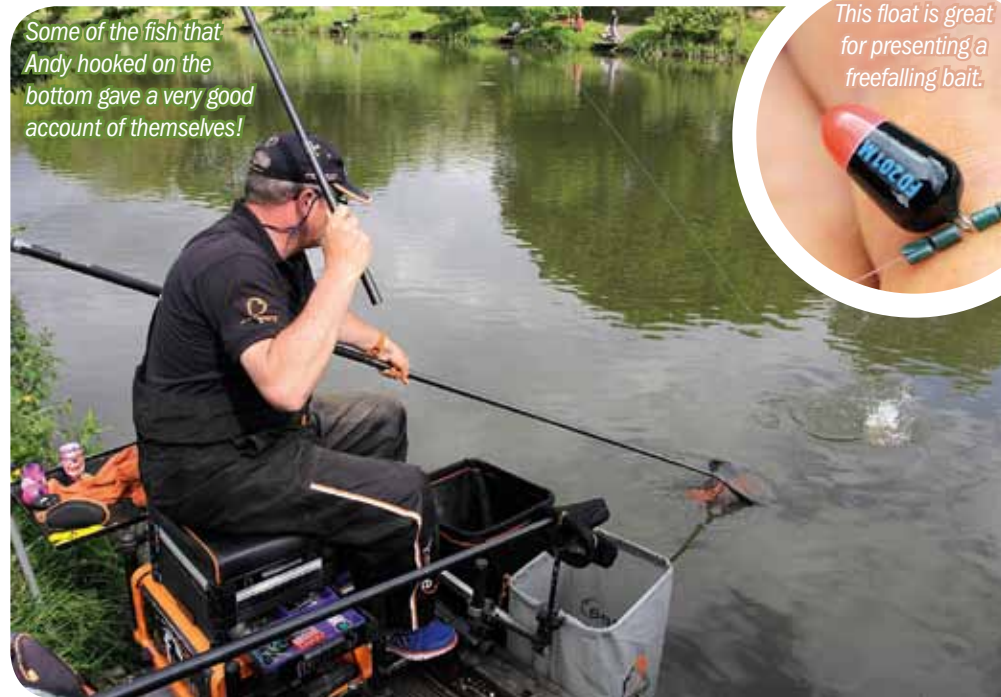
ASTON PARK FISHERIES
Location: Aston Way, off Mansfield Road, Aston, Sheffield S26 5EP
Day tickets: £6
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Worth Their Weight In Silver!

Andy Oldham sets his sights on a big bag of ide and reveals several tricks that help him put together a big net of silvers.

In theory, ide should be the simplest fish in the world to catch. After all, they are notoriously aggressive feeders. Throw in a couple of handfuls of maggots or casters and you will soon see them swirling on the surface to intercept the bait. Indeed, if you drop a rig among them you will probably catch a couple very quickly and very easily.

However, putting together



Some of the fish that Andy hooked on the bottom gave a very good account of themselves!



This float is great for presenting a freefalling bait.



Feed small amounts of bait very regularly.



Getting your setup right so you can be as efficient as possible is essential when a big weight of small fish is the target.

a big weight of fish like this can actually be very complicated. After you have caught a couple, they have a horrible tendency to back off, drop down in the water and, unless you are on your game, become a real nightmare to catch!

Also, when you are fishing a prolific venue like here at Aston Park Fisheries near Sheffield, there is another aspect to catching them to consider – sorting out the better fish. There are a lot of fish around 4oz, which will home straight in on any loose feed. However, there are also a lot of

better fish and the key to a really big weight is to catch these! Often, there are things that you can do to tailor your approach that will have a direct impact on the size of fish that you catch.

Judging The Distance

Obviously, targeting a big net of ide is very much a numbers game. You are looking to catch a lot of fish, so the shorter you can catch the better. However, it is perhaps more important to keep catching fish all day. I have seen plenty of anglers target ide on the short pole and set off like a house on fire, only to spend the second hour sat like a pot frog as the fish back off and they can't catch anything.

So what do I suggest as the safe middle ground? I always start fishing a couple of metres short of the maximum distance that I can throw maggots on a given day. However, I like to

plumb up a line for fishing on the bottom anywhere up to a metre past where I can throw my bait and up to a couple of sections short of where I am fishing. This gives me a very valuable weapon – the ability to constantly change where I am fishing through the course of the day to keep in touch with fish. If the fish back off I can follow them, or if I am catching really well and want to bring them closer, I have the option to do this too.

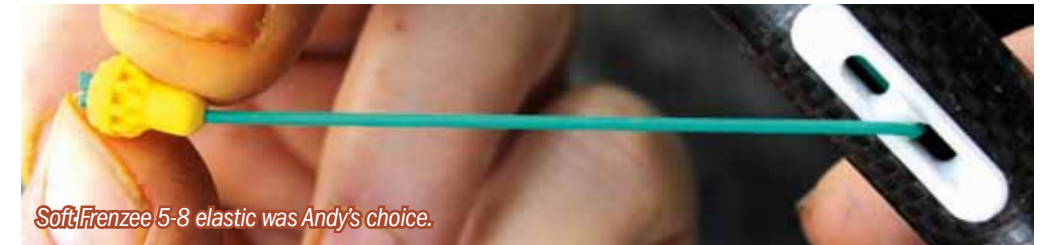
Of course, in and out aren't the only directions these crafty critters can run to escape capture. One of their favourite ploys is to move up and down in

the water column, so a variety of depths also need to be covered by your rig selection. More importantly, you need to give yourself the option of presenting your bait in several ways.

Little And Often

I want to explain what I am trying to achieve in terms of feeding; good bait presentation is all about making your rig and feeding pattern work in unison. Unless you have shallow water (either because the lake is less than three feet deep or you have a feature such as an island) it is very difficult to keep ide on the bottom and catch them consistently, especially in warmer weather.

However, it is always worth setting a rig up to fish on the bottom because you can often nick fish here earlier in the day before fish move up in the water. Sometimes you can pick up welcome bonus fish (crucians, tench, carp especially) from this line.



Soft Frenzee 5-8 elastic was Andy's choice.

To catch a big weight of aggressive feeders like ide, though, the key is to get them competing for bait, which means feeding little and often. Maggots are invariably my choice of feed and I will look to feed six to 20 every 20 seconds, varying the exact amount depending on how I think the fish are feeding.

By adopting this technique, you are

essentially creating a column of loose feed through the water, which the fish will feed from and around. To get the best from your peg you will have to work out where the fish are feeding in this column and then target them accordingly, while always thinking about trying to sort out the best stamp you possibly can.

Rigs

I almost always start by fishing on the bottom with a strung-out rig that gives my bait a nice slow fall through the water. Today I am using a 0.1g Frenzee F01M, with strung No11 Styx. Not only is this often the best rig for searching the peg, but it also allows you to get a feel for where the fish are in the water column. For example,

if you are getting bites before your rig has had a chance to settle, it's fair to assume that it might be a good idea to come up in the water.

I also like to set up three shallow rigs. The first is very similar to my rig for fishing on the bottom; the same float and shotted pattern but set shallower, at around two feet deep. The second is an FD200 dibber set to fish in the top 12 inches of water if the fish should move right up and feed very shallow. Thirdly, I set up what I like to call my secret rig!

If the fishing is good, this probably won't come out to play, but on difficult days it is absolutely deadly. I use the FD201M floats, which actually feature an eye in the top. I shot them with a small bulk of Dinsmore Styx either



Andy's float for the deck and deep shallow.



This bonus chub made an appearance once Andy had caught the 'easy' fish.

side of the eye to lock them in place. Crucially, though, this rig doesn't feature any shot down the line, so the bait falls completely naturally through the water.

Keeping Active!

It's time to reveal a few of the little tricks of the trade that I employ to keep fish coming to the net and hopefully sort out a better stamp. Often, the best mode of presentation is to feed and then put your rig right among your falling bait. You then generally find that fish attack the column as it falls through the water. Because your hook bait is among it you get a bite very quickly.

You will often find that you have a golden spell in the early part of the session by simply doing this, as you catch what I call the 'easy' fish, which are greedy for food.

Today is no exception. Fishing my 2ft-deep rig, I catch 30 to 40lb in two hours, coming back with a fish every single put-in.

As you start to run out of these eager feeders, you have to be a little more intuitive with your presentation to keep fish coming, however. Altering your depth by an inch or two in either direction can be deadly. Fishing past where you're feeding is often worth a few bites. Cutting right back on your loose feed – feeding just four or five maggots every put-in – can also be devastating. Flicking your rig out past your pole tip, then holding a tight line to it can also be a worthy exercise. The crucial thing with all the above tactics, though, is to not hammer them. Treat them as ways to nick an occasional fish before changing again.

Today's session couldn't really have gone any better. I fished a little under four hours and caught well over 70lb. As explained, the early part was relatively easy. It was all about feeding accurately and putting my



If your feeding is right, most of your fish will be hooked just in the lip.



Over 70lb of ide, chub and crucians for Andy.

rig among my bait to come back with a fish as quickly as possible.

Later on I have had to work harder for bites but, interestingly, the stamp of fish that I caught were a lot better, with some big ide coming to the net.

I also managed a couple of big chub and some quality crucians. I'm sure these fish were there all along but simply couldn't get a look in early in the day because there were too many ide present.

So there you have it. Feed regularly, ensure your setup is as efficient as possible, vary your presentation, and be prepared to constantly keep working and you too could catch a valuable bag of silvers just like this.

Think Efficiency

Something that is often overlooked by commercial anglers is the need for efficiency when targeting a large number of fish like ide. After all, the more ide you can catch in an hour, the bigger your final weight will be. Use a soft elastic so that the fish you hook don't splash on the surface and you can ship back quickly. The Frenzee 5-8 in conjunction with a puller kit is my choice today. Make sure you put your rollers in a position that allow you to ship back quickly and smoothly. If the bank behind you allows, can you ship back without breaking down your top kit from your No4?

Finally, make sure your bait is within easy reach, so you can feed effortlessly without having to reach down at an awkward angle into your bait box. ■