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DOWN TO THE WIRE

Angler: Steve Renyard

UK PB: 40lb 4oz

Sponsors: GLT, Shimano and Richworth

Our intrepid Weekender puts his reputation on the line month in, month out and, more often than not, he catches.

With minutes of his weekend left, **STEVE RENYARD** nets a hard-earned carp, but just how big is it?

» When you pass through the huge iron gates at Send Lakes, it's like passing into another realm. You move from suburban, residential Surrey, into prime carp territory. Head bailiff Ronnie Buss, a Richworth consultant and long-time friend of Steve Renyard, has invited us down. Steve is already installed in a comfortable swim at one end of Langman's Lake, a six-acre gem of a water that holds a stock of precious Leney-strain fish and some growing stockies. For a quiet club water, it's looking a little on the busy side, although Steve's swim offers some undisturbed water, and he's already excited.

"For once, the weather is with us – it's warm and there's a nice southerly wind trickling down the lake. I feel a bit rusty, though, because I haven't been able to get out angling due to the freeze that followed our Pads Lake session. I know that I have to be on top of my game because I have never laid eyes on this lake before – all we know is that the carp are pretty cagey.

"I reckon that the fish will be in the edges, especially if there are features to hold them there, which there are on Langman's. Once they wake from their winter state they'll be found right in the edge, reacquainting themselves with their environment.

"I normally like to walk the lake thoroughly on my arrival, not something that I've been able to do on this occasion because Langman's is so busy. There are eight of us on this small lake, which is pretty much unheard of down here.

"I've ended up setting up in a swim that Ronnie has pointed me to, right down at the end of the lake. It's a double swim, but I think that to double up in here would kill it. It is my type of swim, with snaggy old willows and oaks along the margins to my left and right and nice little gravel features among the silt. I'm going to put one rod on each tree line and one on a tiny gravel hump out in the lake."

The soft, spring evening seems ridiculously light after the winter that we've just had, so

Steve has plenty of time to get sorted. He's not going to be using much bait, opting for a scattering of hemp and maggots on each spot. We leave Steve and set up home for the night on the lake next door, Cobbett's. This is the easier of the two lakes and I should get some action tonight. The only problem is, a public footpath, which is fenced off on both sides, splits the two lakes. This means that I have to go through two padlocked gates to get to Steve should he have some action.

Steve's on the phone early next morning, not long after I slip a small mirror back into Cobbett's. He's not happy.

"A fella set up further along the tree line, just along from my right-hand rod," he tells me. "I'm just not feeling it on here now, there are far too many lines in the water."

With that, his mind is made up and he's going to come and join me on Cobbett's. I have to admit that it does seem like a good idea because he's more likely to bag a few from Cobbett's due to the high stock levels. The next problem that we face is that Steve simply can't fit his Armo into any of the swims near mine, so we're off for a recce

around the lake as the sun climbs high in the blue sky. Steve gets a feeling for the bottom end of the lake, off the back of the wind. It's always a gamble to move on a Saturday, but we have to hope that his intuition is right.

Once installed in a comfortable swim called John Cobbett's, Steve weighs up his options.

"I've decided to fish three rods up the margin up to my right and I'm going to drop some hemp, whole and crushed boilies over the top."

As the morning turns to afternoon, Steve entertains visitors in the form of Richworth



Steve Renyard assesses the size of his last-minute capture from the tricky Longman's pit at Send Lakes – will it go thirty?

The Richworth crew of Bob Baker (seated right) and Colin Baker (right) and Ronnie Buss (left) drop in for a cup of tea as Steve struggles on Cobbett's.



With night action expected on Cobbett's, the first brew of the dark hours is prepared.



boss Bob Baker, his son Colin, and Ron. As the lads begin to mercilessly rib Steve about his culinary capabilities (he's charring a couple of burgers) his left-hand rod pulls up tight. He's onto in a flash, but it seems that he wasn't quick enough because the fish has found a hidden snag. Some toing and froing later and Steve retrieves his rig, minus the carp.

"The fish seemed to make an unseen snag immediately," Steve says. "It was definitely a carp because it was pulling back as I tried to ease it free from the snag. Unfortunately, I just got my rig back and that was that."

All that's left to do is get the rods sorted and sit back because Cobbett's is renowned for night action. Steve gets the kettle on to settle his nerves – it won't be the last of the night.

I'm staggered that Steve hasn't been down to wake me for pictures when the dawn chorus brings me round. He arrives shortly afterwards with a welcome coffee for me, although the situation looks bleak.

"It felt colder than the two or three degrees that the weather forecast gave last night," he laments. "I had a touch of frost on my

unhooking mat and my margin spots produced four bream. You have to make a conscious decision on the Weekender as to your game plan and I'm considering a gamble. I could stretch the session out and do tonight back on Langman's, before heading to work early tomorrow. I'll have to scrutinise the lake properly this time, though, which will be easier because most anglers are leaving today."

With the clock ticking, we decide to do the sensible thing and go up to the local café for a late breakfast. It gives Steve chance to get his head together and formulate a battle plan.

"I wasted a good 28 to 30 hours catching bream on Cobbett's, which has left us with an overnigher to save the feature."

Back at the lake, Steve barrows his gear up behind Ronnie's swim on Langman's and sets off for a proper walk around.

"I've found fish in most of the marginal areas that seemed obvious spots," he notes. "Ronnie reckoned that I should either go into the Surgery Corner swim and fish to a snag tree called Winter Bush, or



The ever-faithful Withy Pool rig saved the session for Steve – again.

MAKE STEVE'S ACTIVEXTRACT BAITS



There's a number of ActiveXtracts, Steve uses the 15hr version in Fish and Squid.



He adds a slug of Minamino. It's a liquid food that's packed with attraction.



He mixes the liquid and powder so that it comes together nicely, forming a paste.

"If you have something that you know works, then keep it in your locker."

go back to the swim I primed on Friday night because he bagged a 35lb mirror near the spot after seeing fish bubbling up. He was adamant that I'd have caught it if I'd stayed there – typical."

On his return, Steve has come to a decision and barrows his gear to a neglected swim a couple down the bank from Ronnie.

"I have chosen a little swim that allows me to fish back into a small wooded bay. It reminds me of a swim called Bob's at Withy Pool. I'll have to don the waders and step off into the water to flick the baits around the corner. I'm starting off trying to buy a bite from fish that are cruising in and out of the bay, using tiny yellow Pineapple Hawaiian boilies, tipped with a plastic maggot as a hair stop."

Steve looks in contemplative mood as I leave him to think his way into a last-minute whacker. When I return to the swim in the afternoon he's tying up rigs for the night.

"While the little yellow baits were out there, I tried to analyse the situation and suss out the presentation that would definitely get me a bite tonight. I came to the conclusion that I'd use the Withy Pool rig along with some of the new bait that I've developed for Richworth. I have a tiny amount of hemp left as well as a few maggots and I plan to spread them over the three spots for the night. I'm also going to drop in about 10 or 12 Richworth Active Extract paste baits that I've made up, just for some added attraction in the area. I'm going to tip off the pop-ups with a Solar Glow ball, which adds buoyancy and brings that little something different."

With Sunday afternoon anything but relaxed, Steve swings into action knowing that he has 12 hours to save the

feature on a difficult lake.

"I'm aiming a bait towards a silver birch tree growing on the end of a small spit of land that sticks out into the bay. The bottom slopes

up to the spit, leaving a nice shelf to target around four or five feet deep. It's an ideal little patrol route in a corner that they obviously frequent. I'd say that most anglers would fish the open water from this swim, because of the difficult cast around to the right. The rules allow you to step off the front of the swim to a distance of a yard, which I'm using to allow me to make the casts.

"When you have 12 hours for a live feature, the pressure is on. That's why I'm using the parts of my armoury that I've stored up. I could use the Withy rig all the time but it wouldn't make for a very interesting feature! If you have something that you know works, then keep it in your locker for times like this. As well as the silver-birch rod, I've flicked one towards the far margin and I'm fishing the other along my margins, parallel to the bank because I don't

ADVANCED ANGLE

Because the lake bed in the bay to the left of Steve's swim was covered in rotting leaves, he opted to use dissolving foam.



Steve gently sinks his line to allow the long fluorocarbon leaders to sink fully.



4



The finished paste should be slightly tacky and can be used just like this.

5



You can create a number of different-shaped hook baits from the paste.

6



Steve has a pot of baits that he's left to harden, they're like little bullets.

want too many lines stretching across the small bay. I'm using 36 feet of 20lb GLT fluorocarbon leader to make sure that the lines are suitably pinned down and I've taken the drag weights off my bobbins so that they're as light as I can make them."

With rods primed, all we can do is hope and I leave Steve well and truly hoping for a last-minute reprieve.

His early morning arrival in my swim can only mean one thing and I can honestly say that I've never been so pleased to hear that someone else has caught a fish. I practically skip down the bank to check it out. Steve fills me in on the action as we walk.

"There were definitely fish there because I had a few liners through the night. I fell asleep pretty early because this weekend has taken its toll on me - I've never moved my gear so many times. I woke at 11.50pm to an absolute screamer. It kited right along the far margin and buried itself in a set of dead pads. It was devastating because I didn't expect to get another bite. I could have flicked the rod back out into open water but I opted to leave it out and fish with two. Even getting back into the water could have disturbed the fish.

"About 5.50am I woke up and was looking out pretty despondently. As I did, the bobbin shot up to the top and I thought: 'Here we go, another liner.' I was encouraged with that but it was no liner. Line started pouring from the reel and I was joined in battle with a fish that really put up a scrap. The line kept flicking off the fish's pectoral fins, making my heart skip a beat. I finally got the fish close in and it looked big. I was thinking to myself: 'This is a right result, I have to get this in,' as I reached for the net. It wasn't over, though, because the fish decided to take off again, agonisingly stripping 30 yards off me, heading back out. It took me another



Head bailiff Ronnie Buss hoists the latest Weekend whacker onto the scales.

STEVE'S VERDICT

I could quite easily have given up this weekend. I was thinking that there was no way that we were going to be able to catch with just 12 hours left on a difficult pit like Langman's. I literally had to pull myself together and tell myself to give it my best rig and bait and use my knowledge. The water is still cold and with 12 hours to produce a carp for a live feature, I'm quite happy with the result.

few minutes to get it back in. I led it in steadily, trying to make sure that its mouth didn't come out of the water - I just wanted it to ease its way in. Into the net it went and I'm glad I went gentle with it because as soon as I touched the hook it fell out and I could feel that the fish had a really hard bottom lip."

With the clean-looking 32lb 4oz mirror held up for a few snaps in the early morning sun, all the effort and worry suddenly seems worth it. He's only gone and done it again!



What a result. This clean-looking, 32lb 4oz mirror has got to be one of the all-time Weekender highlights.