

ust a desk-width from where I sit tapping these words out, the wind and rain are once again doing their utmost to batter the window. I seem to start a lot of articles commenting upon what Mother Nature is throwing at us; it always seems to be nasty weather when I write, or could it be that I become more inspired to write when the weather is at its cruellest. After all, it's an excuse not to venture out in it. I have never liked the rain, but I must admit to feeling rather snug watching it from behind my window. So much so, I actually raised the floor in my office at home so that my desk became level with the window, so as to allow a much better view of my pool and trees, rather than sky and the upper parts of the trees from my old writing position. I have always struggled to start my articles, but once the first few words are down my brain seems to kick into writing mode and I'm away. So, less

Seventeen years ago I was asked to contribute something for the new baby from Angling Publications. This new publication was to be a follow-on from the hugely successful Carpworld magazine, which had literally taken the carp world by storm. The new baby was, of course, Crafty Carper, and now in this anniversary 200th edition I am delighted to see it still moving forward in a staggeringly competitive

nonsense from me and I'll get down

to the reason for this latest piece.

market, and definitely coming of age in its final teenage years. It is a staggering market if, like me, you were carp angling way before any monthly carp-angling magazines even existed. But instead of taking giant leaps forward in rigs, etc., I want to actually take a step back 17 years to the first article I ever wrote for this magazine.

I sat down and reread it this morning, put the magazine down, picked it up again, looked at the date, and realised that I am still using the combi-rig I mentioned in there; 17 years on, and I had already been using them for a while back then! I guess it's fair to say that it is now more than proven, having stood the test of time for so long. The first combi-rigs I remember using were during my Patshull Church Pool days, and I joined there in 1988.

ABOVE I first started playing with the combi-rig on Patshull in the '80s.

BELOW Kesmark

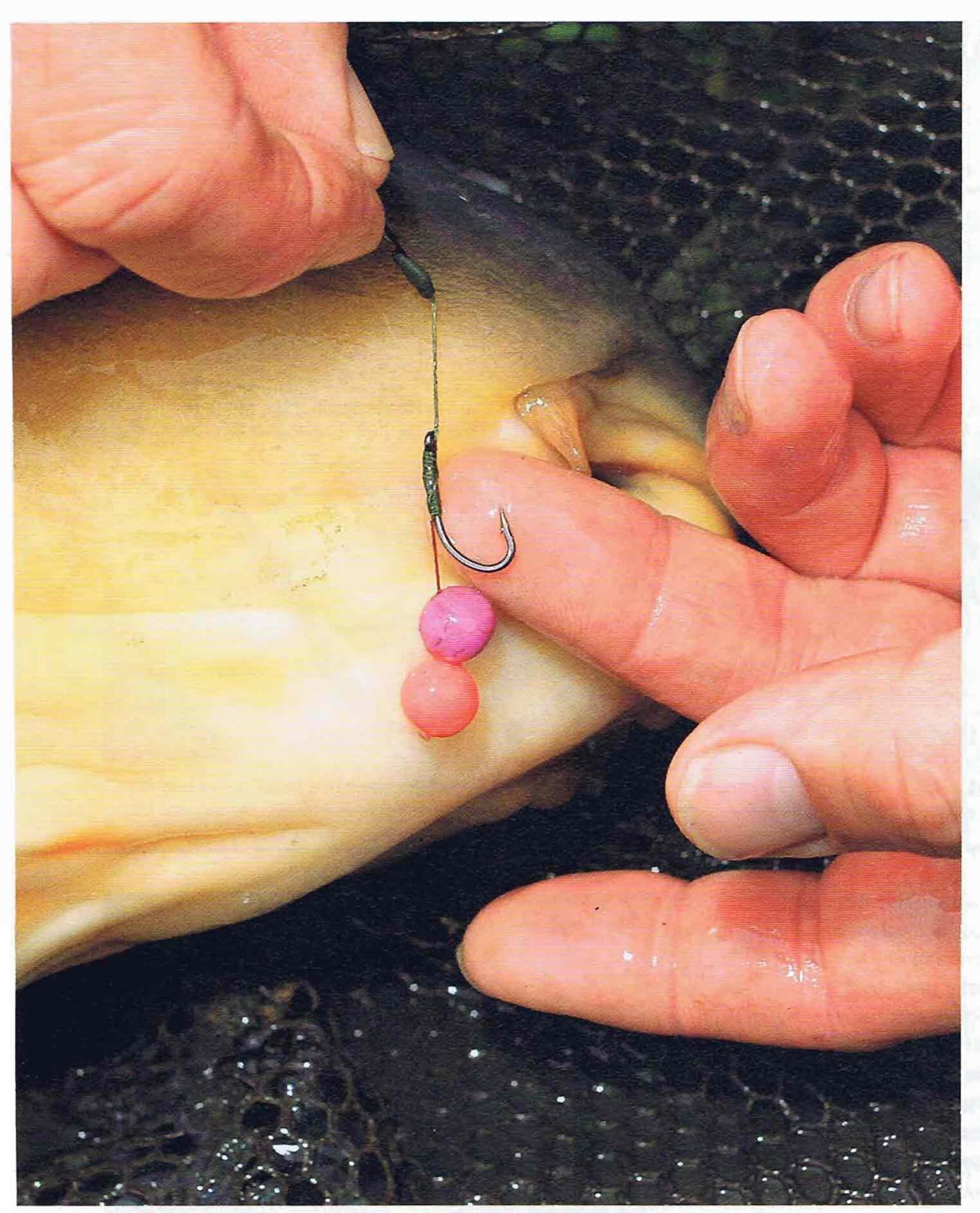
- the first
combi-type link
available. Thanks
to Jan Porter
for finding me
this spool in
a tackle shop
bargain bucket.





My first combi-rigs were tied with a small Drennan ring in place, as I hadn't mastered a way of tying a stiff material to a soft material back then. The first actual rig I remember using was a normal nylon monofilament main section but with a soft end comprising five pieces of 2lb monofilament, a multi-strand-type setup before multi-strand materials were made available. I reasoned that the flatness of multi-strands would be less noticeable on the lips than a single strand.

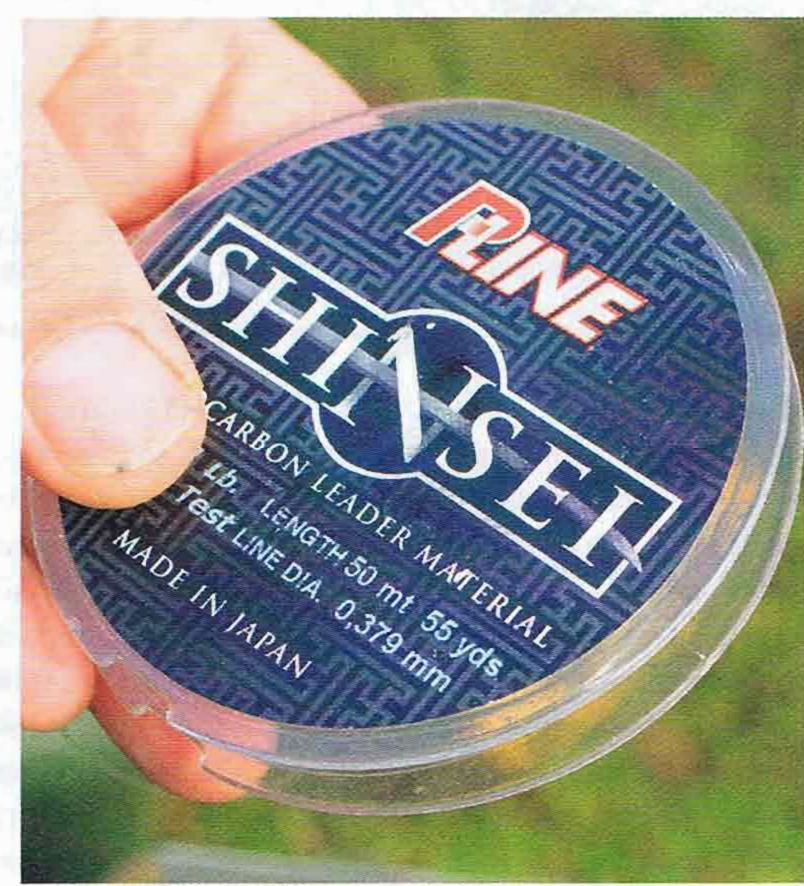
When the first coated multi-strands and the first coated braids were released I was quick to get on board, and took advantage of the speed at which I could now tie my rigs. A particular favourite of mine was the Kesmark Combi-Splice, which the late Keith Selleck was responsible for (he tragically drowned at Savay, along with Clive Rigby, on the same weekend that drivers Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger also lost their lives in the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix. Ayrton was winning when





ABOVE This spool of Maxima has lasted me years, and I wouldn't change my choice of material whatsoever.

BELOW Although now and then I have opted for fluorocarbon.



his world came to a sudden end).

I had started using combi-rigs originally to try to minimise tangles, which were a common occurrence when the soft braided hooklinks hit the market, way before all the clever little rig bits we have around these days were made available, or indeed invented! Combi-rigs certainly helped in this department. Because I was rarely tangled I caught plenty of fish, so continued using them with. little thought as to why they were so effective.

were/are quick and simple to work with, but I was never overly happy with the colours I had at my disposal. I was fishing some incredibly clear waters, and eventually I decided to do something about the visuals and tie my own, utilising materials, rather than what someone had put a coating over. I researched

Shaun's Rig Checklist

✓ **Discreet** I don't want it to stand out and look unnatural whilst out in the carp's watery home.

√ Tangle-free I see little point in any
rig which gives you nagging doubts as
to whether it is tangled or not.

√ Easy to replicate I need to be able
to tie others exactly the same.

✓ **Separation** I want the bait and hook to separate in the mouth, allowing the bait to be ejected but the hook to remain in place.

✓ Strong It is essential I don't have to worry about the components letting me down.

✓ Versatile I don't want to be having to change rigs when I decide to swap between bait sizes, pop-ups and bottom baits.

"Sometimes I read something and think it is an improvement, but not very often"

the Albright Knot, and from that day I never looked back. My take rate increased and even nowadays I haven't felt as though I have been outfished under the same conditions

My combi-rigs today utilise materials of my own choice; no strip-back braids or anything else. It never even

by anyone using anything else.

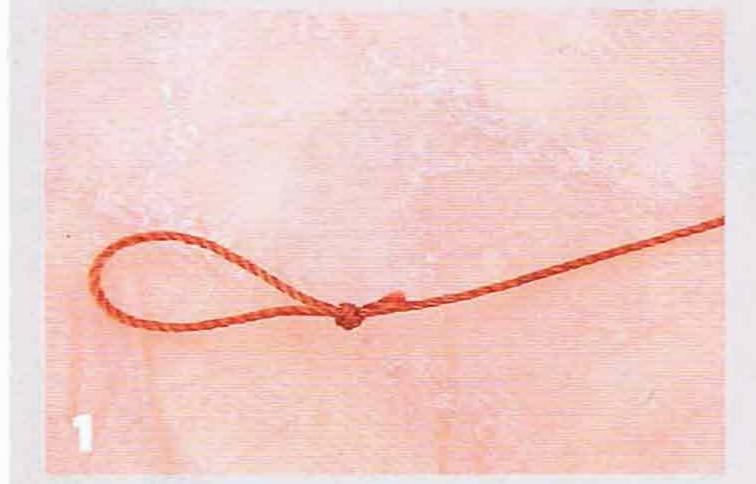
occurs to me now to take a look at what's available in a quicker to use strip-back coated version. I guess I should really because my rig-tying does take longer than most and I'm not always fishing gin-clear water, but I work very much along the lines of if it isn't broken, why fix it?

There have been hundreds of rig articles in the intervening years, some new but mostly very much variations on a theme, and to an angler who has been around a while it is all so easy to think, 'that's a rather complicated way to achieve what can be achieved with a much more simplistic setup'. Sometimes I read something and think it is an improvement, but not very often.

So before I run through the rig that has stood me in good stead for so many years, catching carp from several different countries and during every month of the year, year in, year out, I will state what I consider to be the essential parts of a rig - any rig.



HOW TO: TIE SHAUN'S TRIED-AND-TESTED COMBI-RIG



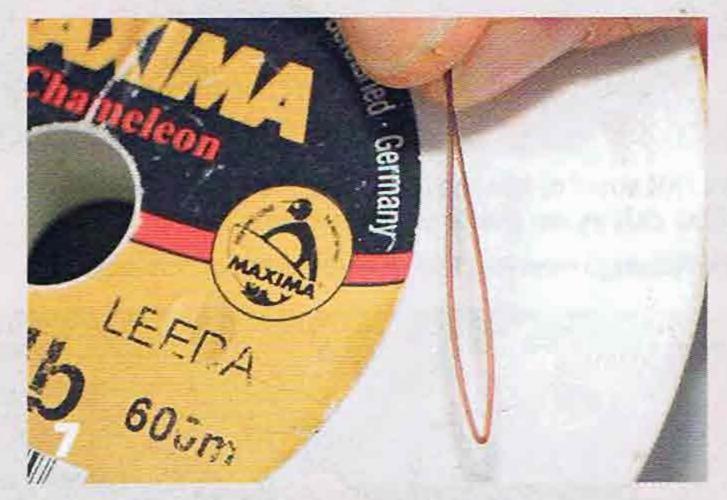
First of all, take a piece of the nylon whipping material and loop the end to create a Hair.



Take the Hair through the eye as well as the braid, like so.



Now trap the Hair in place at the required length and whip down the hook a few times.



Take your chosen monofilament or fluorocarbon line and fold it back on itself, as pictured.

"Dark

brown is a

good natural

colour to find

under the

water"



Next, simply take the braid through the loop you have just formed.



Whip around the line half a dozen times and then pass the braid end back through the original loop.

Discreet

A lot of anglers ask me why I bother to tie my own choice of materials when I could simply use one of the modern coated braids to achieve the same. A fair point really, but I have yet to discover a coated braid that looks as discreet as the materials I choose. I guess it is because I have spent most of my angling life fishing very clear

waters, and have often been in eyeball-to-eyeball situations with the carp. I've seen how easily they can spook from unnaturallooking materials near to food, before they have even thought about testing the bait.

The main section of the hooklink in its original form is obviously the stiff section, and for this, despite trying so many different materials over the years, I still find myself going back to the bulk spool of 25lb Maxima - yes, the same spool as I was using 17 years ago! 660 metres lasts a long time when I am mostly only using around 20cm at a time; a quick calculation equals

UDEBROD 5896

around 3,000 rigs. I, will add here that I purchased a bulk spool for the rig-tying because the bulk Maxima spools were on much larger diameter spools than their 100m little brothers, so it meant that the line came off much nicer and less coiled. Even after all these years it is still a lovely material to work with. In fact, despite the massive leaps forward

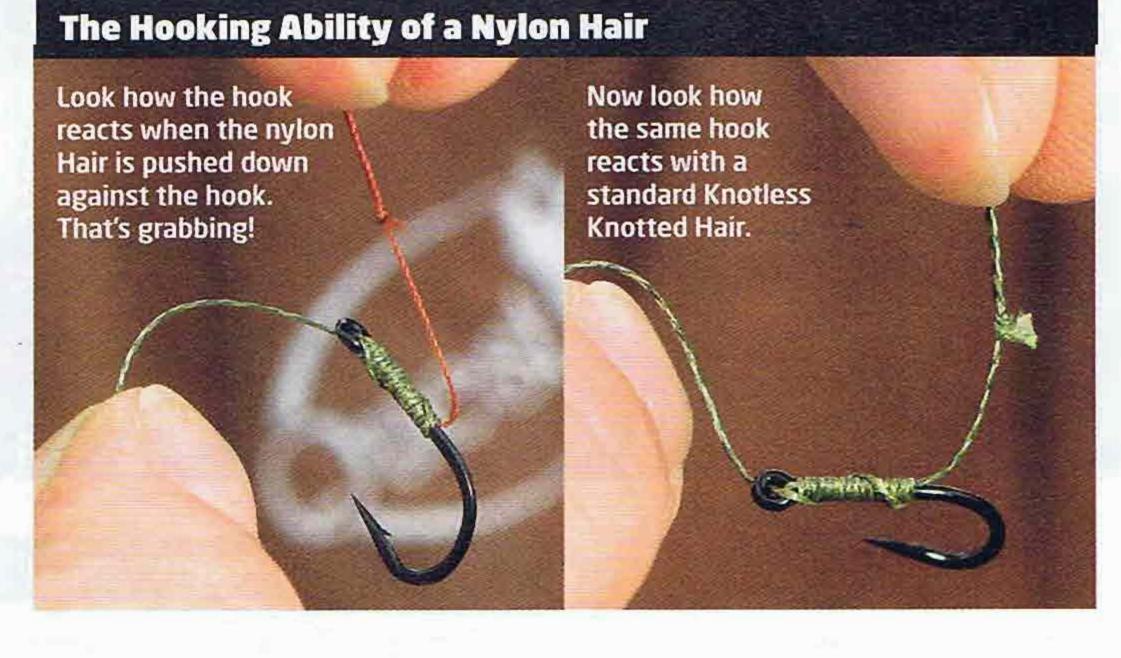
in monofilament technology, I still find the original Maxima

> Chameleon to be one of the nicest lines I have ever tied rigs with. It hardly ever suffers the dreaded crinkling effect a lot of modern lines are rather prone to. I can almost hear you muttering something along

the lines of, "But Maxima is dark brown and stands out like the proverbial sore thumb." Well yes, it is dark brown, and yes, it is quite thick in diameter, but what is the colour of most of the debris you wind in from the depths? Yes, dark brown and often black. As an aside, it used to make me smile just how much olive rig tubing we used to sell in the shop. I don't think I have ever wound anything back in that looked olive, other than other people's rigs!

Dark brown is a good natural colour to find under the water, so it doesn't really bother me that much if it is seen, but during my more paranoid moments I sometimes

LEFT I always use a nylon Hair and this stuff is perfect for the job.



use fluorocarbon for this part of the link, although I haven't yet found one with the same sort of suppleness as Maxima. I don't want the stiff part of my rig too stiff. A final important point about my choice is that it sucks in light rather than bouncing it off itself. I was rather shocked many years ago to find that a lot of drab-looking green and grey-type lines actually showed up as silver under the water when they bounced the light back. To this day I avoid any that do this, more for my peace of mind than anything else. I don't want a silver thread in the water.

The soft part of my combi-rig is only around the length of the hookshank, so it hardly shows up anyway, and being a drab colour, I really don't worry about it; I have even used white with no obvious detrimental effect. For what it is worth, my preferred braid for the tag end is Dynon 3000 SK 22lb, and the Hair is always a different material

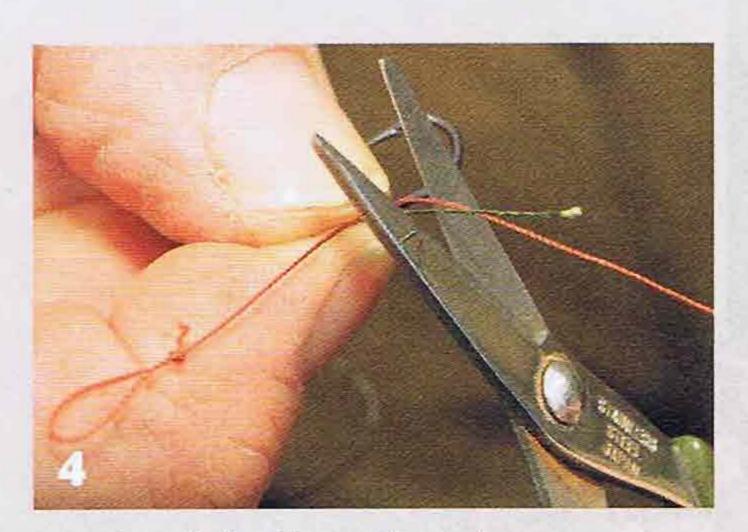
- Gudebrod 'D' rod whipping thread is my choice there. My hooklinks are quite discreet when compared to thickerdiameter plastic-coated-type braids.

Tangle-free

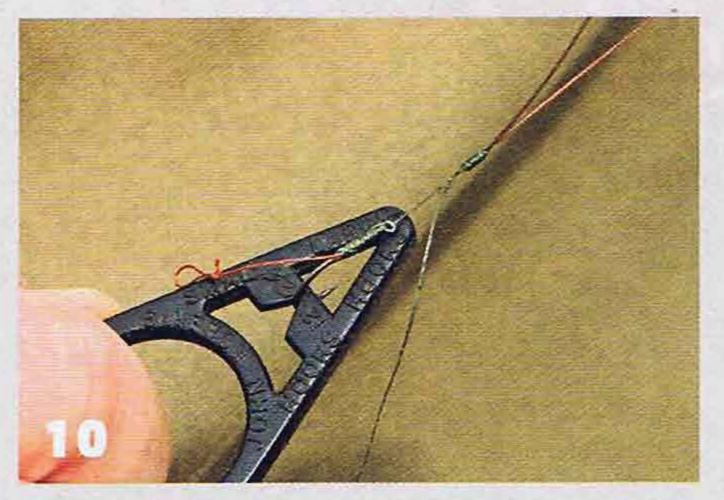
This is the main reason I started to use combi-rigs in the first place, simply because I tangled far less with them. I don't think there are many rigs that are totally tangle-free, but nowadays the only time I ever seem to suffer the odd tangle is when casting hard into a head-on wind. With the wind ever so slightly to one side, I hardly ever tangle. The tangles can be totally eliminated by PVA-ing the Hair or using a stringer or small stick mix, and if I don't want freebies right next to my hookbait I simply use pop-ups as stringers or in the bag.

Easy to replicate

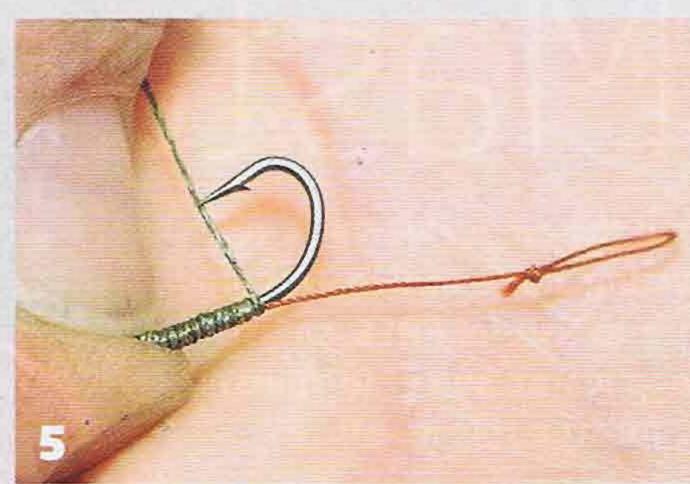
No issues here; once the knots are



With the Hair fixed in position, trim away any excess material with braid scissors.



After moistening the knot, use a puller and tighten; this helps bed it in nicely.



Carry on whipping the braid until it's in line with the hookpoint and take back through the eye.



Trim off the tag ends of both the line and the braid.



Now pass the braid through the back of the eye like this, completing the Knotless Knot.



Add some tungsten rig putty to the knot you've just formed and you're ready to go.



ABOVE I have used the Smart Point hooks since the start... and only recently I have tried these offerings from PB Products.

RIGHT The second of my two rigs is still a combi, but a reverse version for softer bottoms.

mastered then every single rig can easily be copied to exact lengths.

Separation

In my mind, this one is so incredibly important, and is the main thing that stops so many rigs working as efficiently as they perhaps could.

Anyone using a simple Knotless Knot scenario can improve its effectiveness by a considerable margin by going to the simple trouble of trapping a much finer Hair in place, rather than the tag end of the braid, as most do. I have told people this time and time again for many years, and most just don't see what I'm getting at until I tie two identical rigs, one with the tag end continuing through as normal and one with a much softer Hair, and then leave them to handle both. The hook combined with the soft Hair continually grabs them, while in comparison the conventional one only grabs on the very odd occasion. If you bother to try, I know you will be surprised

at the difference.

I have tried many different materials for Hairs, and have yet to find anything I feel works better than rod-tying thread. I use the Gudebrod 'D' in different colours for simple quick identification; green for barbless rigs and brown for barbed. If I'm messing around with a different hook pattern I sometimes use black, just so I can easily see what's what on the rig board, which is usually a jumbled mess. I'm not the tidiest of anglers by any means.

Strong

I know exactly when my hooklinks will break. I don't want to have to worry about tackle whilst playing fish, and the hooklinks I use for the biggest carp are the same hooklinks that I use if I visit a small-fish runs water. Fine line damages carp; I

ABOVE A 20lb mirror caught live for the Crafty cameras shows that the combi is still going strong.

couldn't tell you the last time I caught a carp on a braided or nyion section of less than 20lb connected to the hook. I choose my materials carefully and they work as effectively as many much lower breaking strain materials.

It's only during the last year that
I've actually tried a different
hook. The Ashima Strong
Points have been rested
while I try a couple of
versions from the PB
Products stable, and
so far I've been very
impressed with them.

Versatile

I use the same rig for pop-ups as I do for bottom baits and Snowman presentations. I guess that statement should get me a visit from the rig police, but I judge my catches alongside others fishing the same waters, and I would certainly be altering things if I wasn't holding my own.

So there it is, a brief history of a rig I have used for about 25 years, and will probably still be using in another 25. I mentioned at the beginning of this article that anglers taking a look in my messy rig box are often disappointed to see just two rigs there. One is my standard combi-rig and the other is what I call the reverse combi-rig, which I use on soft ground. It is basically the combi principal reversed, with the main part of the hooklink being soft braid and the end part next to the hook incorporating the stiff section. This is a very neat way of achieving a totally safe bent hook setup without the bulk of tubing, or the extra weight of a big hook. I first started using it fishing for smallmouthed buffalo carp in Texas, and I caught a lot of carp whilst doing so. Naturally I brought this rig back home with me, and have since caught a lot of carp in the UK, from the most difficult of waters.

Now for the bit that might just surprise a few. I am not sponsored by any of the companies whose products I have mentioned. When I need replacements, I pay for them. Now that does make a change, doesn't it? A rig article written by someone not pushing any of their sponsors' products!

Best fishes, Shaun. **CC**

