

Hi everyone, and thanks for letting me join this panel of carp catching keyboard tappers – although I much prefer the phrase 'pen pusher'. I guess most writers these days now hammer the keyboard rather than slide a pen around a piece of paper.

I really enjoy the format of all rotary type letters. I enjoy reading them and I enjoy contributing to them. I find them so full of thought-provoking material. In fact, there are many 'mini articles' in each piece and you find the writers get straight down to the nitty-gritty rather than beating around the bush and drawing a couple of sentences out into one long article. Anyway, where are we? Ah, that's it, first section, 'Luck'.

LUCK

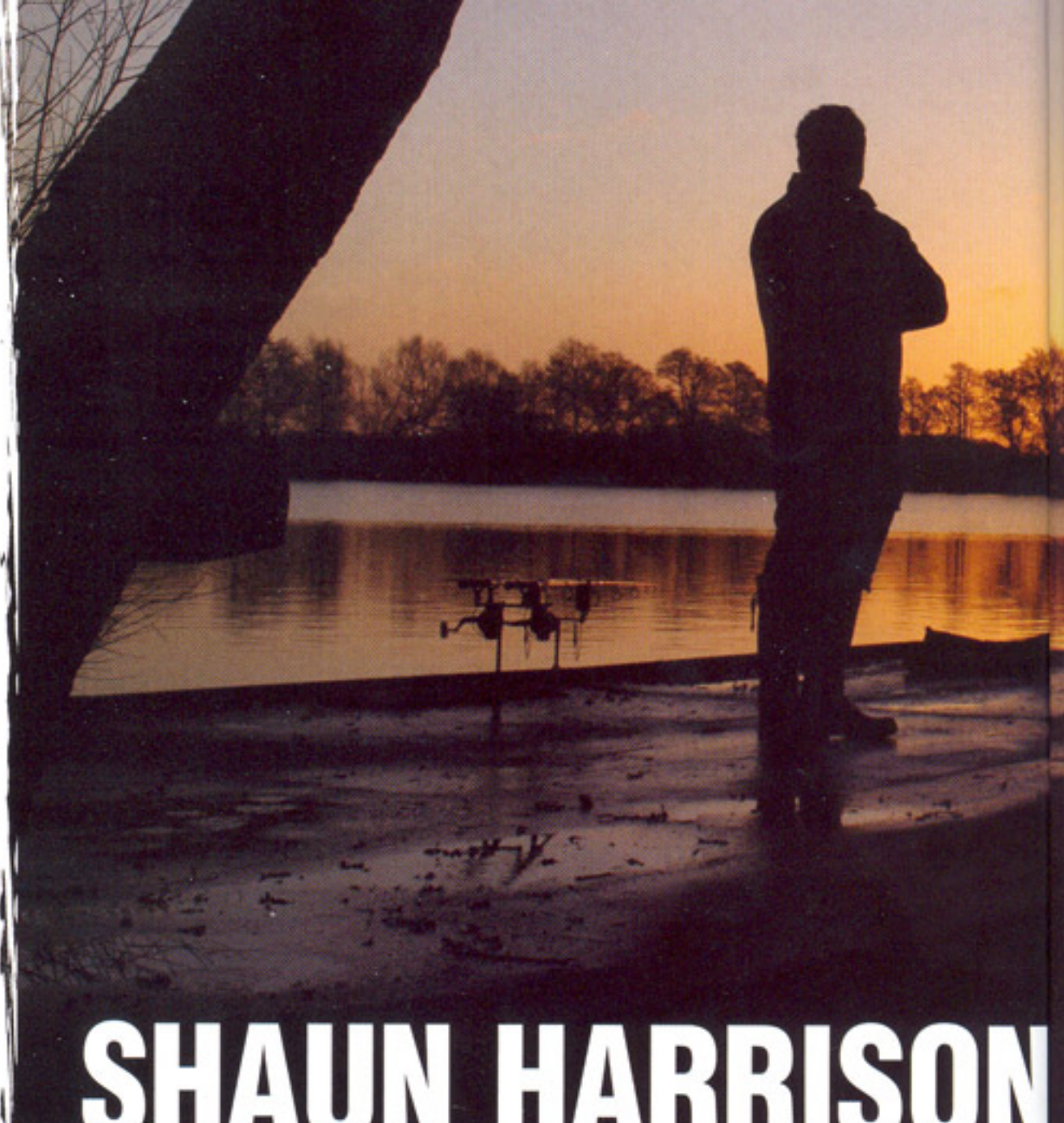
I must say I very much agree with what Jason has just written here in as much as you make your own luck. What the casual observer never sees is just the amount some of us have to go to in order to remain 'lucky'. The afternoon spent up and down trees, the midnight wandering around the bank listening and watching. The early morning baiting sessions, the casual dog walk all add to our luck but by sitting down and explaining all these things we start to give away a few too many hard to come by edges. Myself, I love everyone to simply think I'm very lucky and will play up to it if I can. Believe me no-one is consistently lucky. What you need to do is try and find how they have made that luck.

THE MOON AND OTHER THINGS RELATIVE

I have never been able to pick my fishing times other than squeezing in a short pre-work or after work session. Unfortunately these days I have very little local fishing available to me which actually appeals to me, that this is now fast becoming a thing of the past. So, I'm in the same boat as most others. I go to work and have to try and make the most of my days off.

I can't pick my times, but I do spend a lot of time studying the weather conditions, moon phases and barometric pressure. It has been mentioned on the previous posts that some don't want to know when conditions are going to be poor. I definitely do, as it dictates the way I fish. If conditions

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SHAUN HARRISON

are likely to be poor I will hold back on the amount of bait used. If I think the carp will really be up for a big munch then I will take advantage and help them have a big munch in my swim rather than someone else's.

I used to always book my holidays around the moon phases and had a much more simplistic view of the moon than I now have. I was always quite happy for a bit of action at the start of any new moon and the one in 'September', which was always my favourite period of the year (end of September/ beginning of October). The waning moon never seemed to produce so many fish for me.

These days I think I have tried to learn a bit too much about the moon and probably ended up confusing myself a little. It is a classic situation of a little knowledge being quite dangerous at times. Naivety is such a wonderful thing in angling. Not knowing keeps the brain a little clearer to focus on what can be much more important things.

The big problem in relying on the moon phases is that the barometric pressures can totally mess things up. I believe the said air pressure to be much more important than simple moon phases but we have to accept that all animals are affected by the moon – fact!

It's not just the stirring in Leon's pants

either (what a horrible thought); it affects all of us although most of us are unaware of such things. A good friend of mine and fellow carp angler, Elie Godsi has spent a lifetime studying, let us say, 'not very mentally stable people'. Murderers, that sort of thing and has a top selling book on the shelves on the subject. He has proven time and time again how these people are influenced by the moon. Indeed, some nights the animal life around the lakes is hectic – other times things are deathly still. The moon has a massive effect but I must stress I don't understand it properly myself.

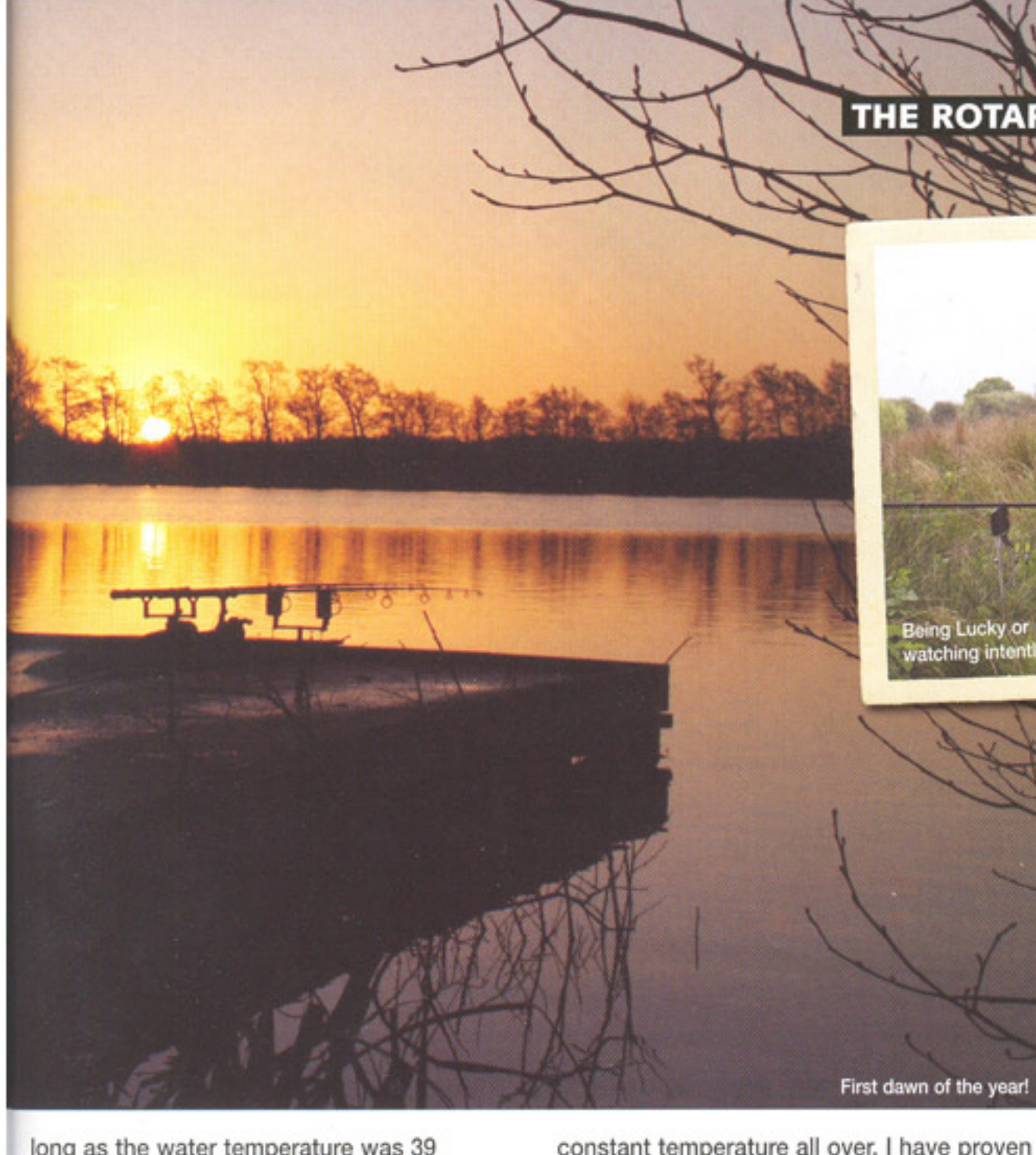
TEMPERATURE

Mmmm, something I did religiously for years was record the temperature whilst winter fishing only. After years of doing this I came to the simple conclusion that so



THE ROTARY LETTER

TACTICS



First dawn of the year!



Being Lucky or watching intently.

long as the water temperature was 39 degrees Fahrenheit (hopefully someone will convert that one to new money for the younger reader) or above I stood a chance of catching a carp. I truly believed that in temperatures less than 39 degrees they ceased to feed. In 20 plus years I took temperature readings during the winter (I don't usually bother these days) I only ever once recorded a capture of my own in less than 39. I also saw two others caught on separate days in lower temperatures. There will always be exceptions to everything. I will add that the three captures I witnessed were all just before a massive freeze up which lasted quite some time. It was as if the carp knew it was coming.

This falling in temperature also brings me nicely onto the fact that I tend to have more winter action in plummeting temperatures than I do in rising temperatures. I guess that may surprise a few armchair theorists.

These days I have a totally different view as to what the drop down from 39 to 38 actually does. I have since watched carp feeding in temperatures less than 39, but and this is a big BUT. The carp move so slowly with their cold blooded metabolism slowing right down to tick over mode that they are very unlikely to move against a lead sharply enough to prick themselves or give any indication on anything other than a float set-up. In situations like this we could all do with a few of Jason's 'silly sharp' hooks.

Before leaving the temperature theme, I must say I have to disagree with Leon's scientist mate who claims that the water is a

constant temperature all over. I have proven time and time again that this is simply not true. In fact, only last week I was on a magazine 'on the bank photo shoot' winter session and I had dragged out one of the thermometers to illustrate a particular point. The cameraman wanted a picture of the temperature it was showing, but where the digital read out was positioned, the light was pretty poor so we pulled it into a more convenient place. Problem was, the probe taking the temperature was pulled out of about 6ft of water into about 2ft of water and we had a 2 degree difference in the screen reading. The temperature is most definitely different in different depths.



I use Metcheck a lot in conjunction with the carp in my main pool at home which can be seen over my computer screen out the fishing room window.

I also feel Mr. Scientist has probably forgotten about underground/underwater springs too. It isn't a coincidence that many lakes have small areas which are always the last to freeze. And finally, I have physically walked around more than one lake casting my ever-faithful Hardy Brass thermometer (I utilise different thermometers for different situations) into different areas and come back with different temperature readings. I will stress the temperature taken in the shallow margins is rarely anything like that of the area you are fishing. It is essential to take temperature readings from the depth you are placing your baits if you are going to come to any sort of accurate conclusion as to what is good and what is not.

Sorry to go on and Leon – great move saying it was your scientist mate – gets you right off the hook! A lesson for us all here, if we start all our pieces with, "a friend once said to me..." we will never be wrong.

DAYLIGHT HOURS

Oh dear, you've got me going now on what triggers feeding, temperature and everything else which constantly adds tiny pieces to the massive jigsaw puzzle in catching carp.

I am sat writing this on April 1st. Yes, honestly, it's no April Fools joke. I believe that at this time of the year carp start feeding in earnest regardless of conditions. By the middle of March the daylight hours extend and nature starts to spring back to life. I have hundreds of frog's spawn each year in my pool in the garden and every year they end up with a freeze-up whilst they are doing their bit. This last week we have had snow but nature is still battling on. I truly believe that the longer daylight hours have much more of an impact on nature than the weather conditions. It was never a coincidence how in the 'good old days' of the three month close season the last week of the season would usually produce a fair few carp after a winter of total struggle.

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DUFF CONDITIONS

Having tapped away at the keyboard covering the previous few issues I must conclude with the fact that I quite like what would seem 'duff conditions' times when we don't expect much to happen.

I have caught some very good fish when theories would point to the fact that conditions weren't too great. I feel that the big fish have to eat more regularly and during the times the smaller fish may be laying up, the big fish are still mooching around and the chances of legging one of these up is greatly enhanced.

Has anyone else any view on this one? Only an armchair theory of mine which I don't usually put to paper, but it does semi-explain quite a lot of my bigger fish captures.

BAIT

Obviously one very close to my heart and interestingly no-one seems to want to say a lot about bait and conveniently run out of space before they get there.

Indeed Leon is right in as much as 'most bait companies produce quality bait'. But, what do we really mean by quality bait?

There isn't room in the market these days for poor quality anything.

There are some good quality baits out there which don't particularly benefit the fish, but the ingredients are still of a good quality – i.e. they are well within their sell by dates etc. I could put together very cheap baits which would be good quality and catch fish, but choose not to do so as I like to feed the fish as well as catch them. My way of 'giving them a little bit of something back' and over a period of time ensure they keep eating and wanting to eat those baits.

There are so many different things which could have explained the carp's preference on Horton Church Lake for the tiger nut baits over the fishmeal baits. It could have been down to a simply pH clash with the flavours used in the baits (I'm presuming the 'tiger nut bait' was a tiger nut flavoured boilie). Another common scenario on many lakes is the fish becoming a little wary of Robin Red if they have seen a lot of it. You can definitely reach a saturation point with this if it is one of the main ingredients in a bait.

Carp love the stuff but if they are caught time and time again with it then they will naturally try and avoid eating it.

This takes us back in a way to 'cheap baits'. I could knock together a few cheap ingredients, add a sprinkle of Robin Red and accurately call it a Robin Red bait and everyone is happy because most know that Robin Red is quite pricey 'so it must be good'!

Robin Red is only as good as the other things you choose to blend with it. Add a few more quality ingredients and the bait is more likely to keep working – particularly on



The longer daylight hours and a higher sun are more important than the weather in the early part of the year.

waters that have just about hit the Robin Red saturation level. I approach most waters these days with more than one bait and let the fish choose what they want rather than be stubborn and try and make them eat what I want them to eat which again leads me nicely onto the next section.

FEEDING BEHAVIOUR

For many years now I have been a fan of fishing more than one rod on the same baited patch. On the Mangrove I took this the whole way by fishing four baits on the same baited area. This gave me many multiple captures. After the first fish was landed I would re-cast that rod out of the way as I knew I still had three rigs fishing. Second fish and the same again. On loads of occasions I had fish on all four rods simply by not crashing my lead back in amongst them.

When starting on a new water I will fish different baits and different rigs on one area. I do find this the easiest and quickest way to find how 'they' want it. As I start to come to a few conclusions I will end up with more than one rod on the same method and bait

but always keep one a little different.

I am a massive believer in changing the hookbait colour and often the flavour on a regular basis. Space is getting very tight now to run into detail here, but do yourself a favour and try totally different hookbaits to those of which you are feeding regularly – you could be quite surprised by the outcome.

RIGS

I've got carried away as usual and used all my allocated space up and a little more. So, in quick conclusions to some of the other subjects raised. Leads I prefer smallish if I can reach the fish. Usual for me is 1oz to 2oz. Hairs I prefer quite long, but they MUST be made out of very fine and soft materials for my rigs to work to their maximum effect. I use rod-whipping thread. I like home tied combi rigs for fishing over clean lakebeds and soft braids for weed and soft silt.

Psyching the carp out? Why bother when you can have so much fun psyching the other anglers out! Get the bait right and create a competitive feeding situation and the carp will slip up on most rigs.

Thanks for reading this – if I managed to keep you interested this far.

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