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Barbel

Questions And Answers

This month it is the turn of Pallatrax's Patrick Leigh.



PROFILE

PATRICK LEIGH

(aka Paddy)

Age: 38

Home Town:
Milton Keynes

Occupation:
Development Director

Sponsors:
Pallatrax & The Printbiz

PB: 17lb 12oz

How long have you seriously been targeting barbel?

My first full season after barbel was back in the late '90s when the MKAA still held Adams Mill on the regular ticket. I had 3 barbel that season and they were to be my last from there, as we all know it went to syndicate control soon after. After a few years off just enjoying time on the bank and the arrival of my first child I ventured back out in serious search of some big fish in 2003/04. Fishing a very tricky section of the upper Ouse I had just one fish the first year and 3 the year after. However, I was learning an awful lot about this particular stretch and the fish and knew that I just had to 'tweak' a couple of things and I would get the fish I was after.

Average time spent fishing per week?

Far less than I want! I run my own company and the last 4 years we've been developing a new product which has seen the rod hours severely curtailed. On average, just once a week. However, I am always keeping an eye on the weather and river levels and

if I feel the time is right then I will do my best to get out for at least a couple of hours on a 'fishy day'. That said though, this year the section I was fishing has had a time limit put on it so no fishing after 10pm! Bloody ridiculous and annoying as more often than not I would be fishing from 9pm – midnight.

Which rivers are you currently fishing?

For the last 4 years it has just been the upper Great Ouse. Limited time due to work and family don't allow time for travelling about at the moment. I've had numerous offers to fish many other waters from friends but just can't find the time and let's face it, there are some superb fish in the Ouse on my doorstep.

What is your PB barbel and where did you catch it?

My best is 17lb 12oz which came from the Great Ouse. It came halfway through the 06/07 season where everything was clicking into place and the changes I had made were producing a lot of fish for me.

What is your most memorable catch?

Apart from the capture of the PB which was a really special fish. It would have been a trip I made 3 weeks prior which saw me land 4 fish in 3 hours of 10.4, 10.8, 12.6 & 14.4. Four doubles in one short evening session was just mind-blowing for me considering I'd only had 4 fish the previous 2 years combined and 4 fish in a season was a result for a lot of anglers on the stretch.

Rods and reels, what do you use and why?

I am currently using some Harrison 1.10tc rods. A superb rod that allows you to enjoy the action whilst having enough backbone for you to remain in control of the biggest fish you may encounter. I use them in conjunction with some Okuma baitrunner type reels. Nice compact reels, with double handles (easy to get control of the reel at a grab) and at a very sensible price. I'm not constantly worrying about what happens to them in the heat of the action when they might get a dunking in the river or mud.

What hook-baits do you use in a low and clear river?

As most of my fishing is short evening/night sessions, clear water conditions don't need any special approach from me and I'm not overly concerned at the thought of using biggish baits all the time, so 90% of the time I am using my standard whisker stick and paste tactics which work.

What hook-baits do you use on a flooded river?

Pretty much my standard bait but with the addition of some Whisker Glug and spray to give the bait some enhanced attraction. I also like to roll meat which I inject with some extra meaty enhancer.

What hook-length material do you use?

At the start of the 2006/07 season I was invited to try some bits and pieces from the Pallatrax range and I truly believe the change over to their Steamlink and Stonze system was the reason behind an awesome year. I fish very short, 3" hook-lengths. It is low visibility and the stiffness with a hinge at the hook does not let me down on the take or with a hook-hold. I used to use quite long mono or fluorocarbon hook-lengths to get the bait away from the lead and main line but don't need to these days.

Braid or mono reel lines?

Mono for me. I prefer the fact it has a bit of give in it for the odd unexpected lunge when concentration may not be up to par. I'm currently spooled up with Gamma which has awesome knot strength and abrasion resistance.

Do you think it's okay to retain barbel for short periods?

Yes. A short period for retention, be it for photographs or whatever, allows the fish to

rest up and allows the angler to be confident in returning the fish that it is okay to do so and they won't have issues with a gassed up fish.

What are your favourite conditions for summer and winter?

I don't give barbel much attention in the summer unless the weather has created conditions where I just know I've got to be there. I like a nice big summer storm which brings the river up nice and quickly and is bound to get the fish in the mood for food. During the winter time it would be on a slightly rising river, overcast and a nice mild spell which has seen the water warming up a degree or two during the past 24 hours. That said though, with limited available time, more often than not I can't be that fussy and as long as the rivers got water in it, then that is good enough for me!

Swimfeeder or PVA?

PVA or Method. I like to get a few pieces of free offerings down by the bait and in the general area and both are ideal methods. Small fish and crayfish are soon drawn in by the groundbait/pellets and that will often arouse the barbel's attention to the area and the nice lump of paste it just has to try.

Do you use back leads or lead core?

I don't use leads. I use Stonze. Sometimes with lead core leaders but more often than not I fish the LILO on a fluorocarbon leader with my main Stonze at the business end and a back Stonze some 4/5 feet behind it held up by float stop.

Bolt rigs or running rigs and why?

Bolt (safe version). I, personally, think that if you are using a running rig as you want to see all the little knocks and plucks then you really need to sort out your hooks, rigs and terminal tackle as the barbel are either getting away with mouthing your bait or they are sensing danger from something about your rig. A barbel taking a bait confidently on a good rig is always signalled by the rod hooping round in a big way. No need to worry about hitting little knocks and risk spooking the swim if you've got a rig out there that does the job for you.

Do you use a quivertip for bite detection or the end of your rod?

See answer above: I'm damn confident that the rod tip is all that is required if you've got everything else right. Nothing nicer than watching the tip smack round as the fish has come straight in, found a bait it likes and then having the rig do the work for you.

Do you use buzzers?

I fish with buzzers but they are mostly turned off. I don't need a little sound to alert me to a fish, the rod bending round and clutch screaming is more than adequate. That said, after the birth of my son and the disturbed sleep that followed I would quite often switch them on if I felt my eyes dropping and was not sure if I was going to stay alert.

Clutch or backwind?

The reels these days have superb clutch systems and are put there by the manufacturers for the very reason of playing a fish and controlling the drag both whilst fishing and in a fight with a fish. I've yet to come across a barbel that will do the off with a correctly set clutch, a good forgiving rod and a bit of care.

If you could use only one hook-bait which would you choose?

As it has caught me so many good fish since I've been using it then I will have to say that the Whisker sticks and Paste wrap would be my 'banker' bait of choice followed a close second by a decent pellet.

If you could use only one feed bait which one would you choose?

It would probably be pellet. They can be altered and used in many different ways. Very easy to create a few PVA bags before and during a trip and ground-up and small pellets create an excellent Method mix. There is not much swimming in the rivers that won't be attracted to a smattering of pellet on the river bed that won't take an interest and give you a bonus fish or two. There are some cracking carp in the rivers these days and a 20+ river carp livens up many a session.

What was the best bit of barbel fishing advice you've been given?

Get on the Stonze! okay, who was not expecting that seeing as I fish with the guys from Pallatrax? However, hand on heart, when I was chatting with carp angler Clive Owden about Pallatrax before my involvement with them I could see where he was coming from so I decided to give them a try. The result was immediate and in just a few short evening/night trips I caught a lot of fish, had multiple captures in a trip which was most uncommon and landed all bar one of the biggest fish in the section including my PB. The result was more than luck or coincidence; I truly believe the change was the major factor in fish landed. **CF**

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