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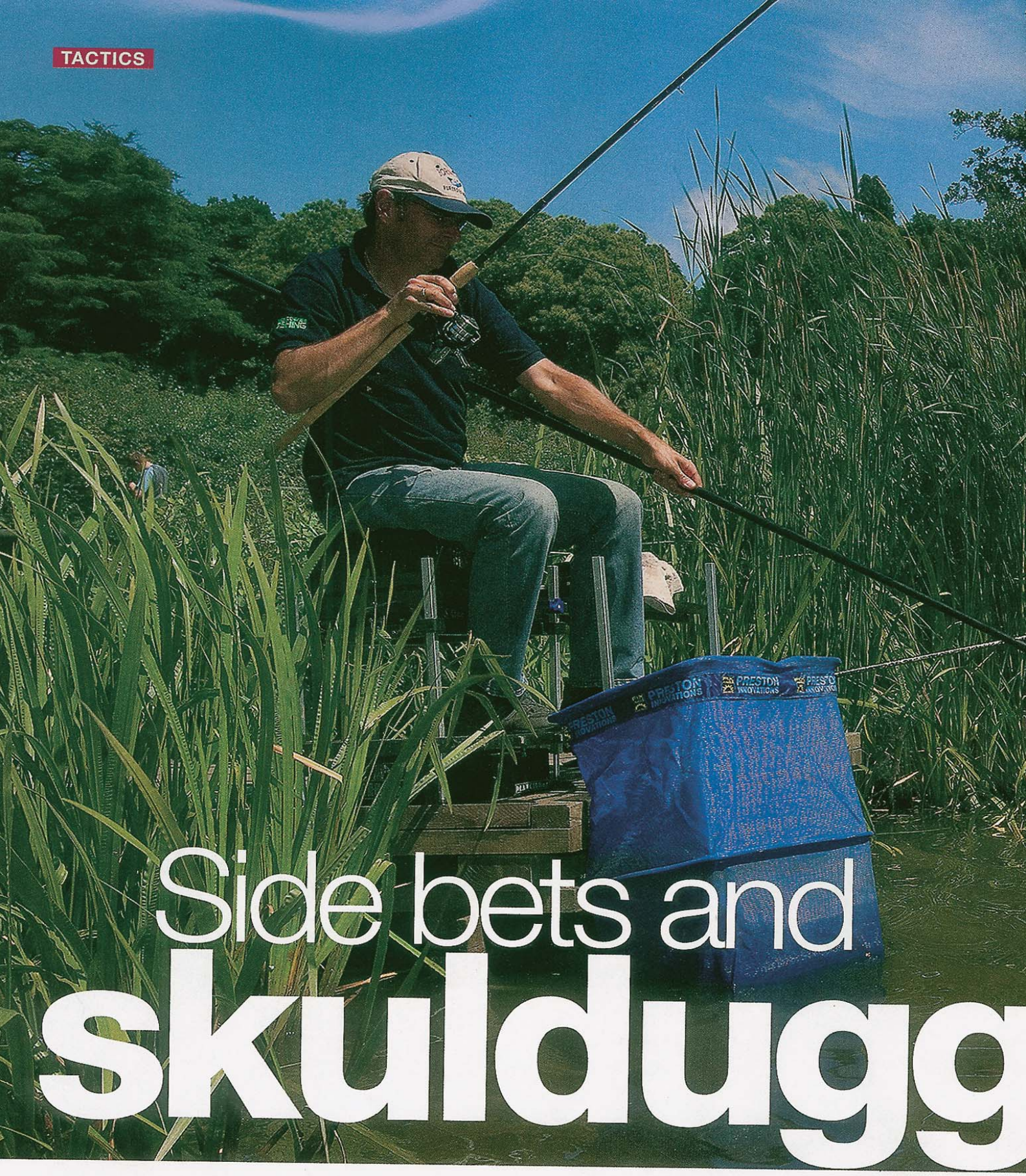


Side bets and skulduggery

A well-deserved day on the bank for this magazine's editorial duo soon saw some side bets and skulduggery at Surrey's Old Bury Hill Lake.

Let me give you one piece of advice: if you get the chance to fish an estate lake, grab it with both hands. Sadly, many of Britain's estate lakes are strictly private fisheries where trespassers are shot before being prosecuted.

This isn't the case at Old Bury Hill near Dorking in Surrey, though. This large and extremely beautiful estate lake is home to some seriously big carp, irritatingly elusive crucians and some rather large tench.

It also holds vast shoals of bream... and it was these we were targeting today.

Deputy editor Steve Martin and I have been working far too hard lately and we had promised ourselves a day's fishing together. Our company photographer Pat

Once Steve changed to worm on the hook, he started to catch regularly.

ery

MacInnes got wind of it, found a free day in his diary, so all we had to do then was decide upon a venue.

It didn't take long to come up with Old Bury Hill. I'd been there once before, with legend Bob James for a zander feature back in the early 1990s. I remember it like it was yesterday. The weather couldn't have been better for a visit to such a beautiful lake. It was a winter's morning with the mist swirling around the islands and one fine fish fell to Bob's deadbait approach.

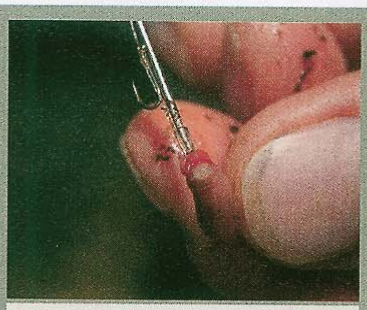
I vowed to return one day, and when a chance conversation with the owner David De Vere revealed that the bream were feeding even during a mini heat wave we were experiencing, we were on our way.

DIFFERENT METHODS

Typically for Steve and me, the competitive element was never far away. I don't know about you, but whenever I go fishing with a mate, I want to beat him.

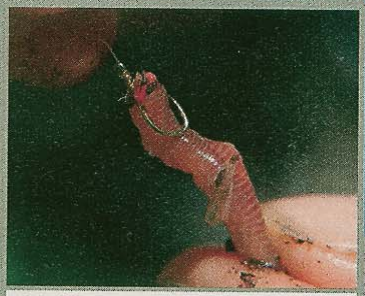
I also like to use methods that maybe wouldn't be the most obvious, so when Steve quickly announced that he intended to use an open-ended swimfeeder, I

HOW TO HAIR RIG A WORM



01 Use a Korum Quickstop. Push a Quickstop needle into the Quickstop and push this into the worm.

02 Push the Quickstop half an inch along the worm and out of the side.



03 A hair-rigged worm ready for casting.

went for the float option and both pole and waggler tackle were soon loaded into the car, along with those obligatory bream baits of worms and casters.

For Steve, groundbait and pellets in the feeder would be the approach, but I did notice a bag of worms sneaking its way into his carryall as well. A £1 side bet was soon placed and daggers were drawn.

KEV'S SET-UP

Old Bury Hill Lake was just as beautiful as I remembered – a huge relief after the nightmare journey from Cambridgeshire. Several carp anglers were already fishing, most of them, it seemed, intent of breaking the world casting record as they launched their leads towards the island some 120 yards away.

For Steve and I, a couple of swims close to the boathouse suited us just fine and after a hearty breakfast we were soon out on the extensive platforms setting up our kit.

Old Bury Hill was just as beautiful as I remembered – a huge relief after the journey from Cambridgeshire.

An easterly breeze was blowing from left to right in front of us and when I set my pole up to fish at 13 metres from the bank, I soon encountered my first problem. The 0.5g float I'd put on was clearly too small. It was towing to the left, dragging the bait at a rate that no self-respecting bream would ever consider taking. A change to a 1g float was the answer – a nice, wire-stemmed and cane-bristled model that was shotted positively with an olivette and three No10 shot below.

This was just the job; the float held well, with the movement of the water in the lower part of the depth counteracting the movement caused by the wind in the upper layers.

I also set up a waggler as promised, although with the wind as it was, I didn't think this would be too productive. The waggler I chose was a straight, loaded peacock, a good 12 inches long to try to counter the tow on the water. Interestingly, try as I might to hold it still, the float wanted to move from left to right, in exactly the opposite direction to the pole float. The only way I could get the waggler to hold still was by moving the float up so that around 12 inches of line plus one No10 shot were lying on the bottom.

My hook bait was going to be a redworm-and-caster combination. Redworms are my all-time favourite bait for bream but they're becoming increasingly difficult to find. You'll find them in established compost heaps but don't take more than you need if you want to keep a ready supply. For feeding, I had two pints of casters and a quarter-kilo of dendrabaena worms – total cost around £10. If the float went under, it would be a tenner well spent...

STEVE'S SET-UP

For Steve's feeder session, he mixed up one bag of Dynamite Baits Silver X Bream, one bag of Marine Halibut groundbait and a few handfuls of dry 1mm pellets.

Having mixed all this together, Steve was careful to ensure this groundbait stayed fairly dry, so that it just stayed in the feeder when squeezed. The result would be that the mix would 'explode' from the feeder when it landed on the bed of the lake.

His hook bait would initially be

The editor has been well battered by his deputy. In my office Steve, now!

STEVE'S FEEDERS TOP TIP

Steve started with a large cage feeder (top) but changed to a smaller Drennan Gripmesh when he started catching.

This rudd/bream hybrid fell to double caster on Kevin's waggler set-up.

a hair-rigged 8mm Sonubaits Pellet O, and the large cage feeder was attached to a simple running rig, stopped by a standard Korum Quick Change Bead between the main line and hooklength.

His favourite old bream fishing rod was perfectly adequate to cast the feeder some 40 yards into the lake.

THE SESSION

I'd now like to tell you how I battered deputy Steve into submission with an exemplary display of pole fishing which the likes of Bob Nudd could only sit back and admire.

Sadly, it didn't quite happen like that. I thought it was going to, when after feeding a pole cupful of chopped-up worms and casters, I had a bream on my very first drop-in with the pole.

Bury Hill bream are notorious for 'porpoising' out of the water when hooked, and this one was no exception. It jumped not once, not twice, but three times before realising it had met its match and wallowed towards the landing net.

Another fish followed soon afterwards, but then the bites stopped and it didn't matter what I did, I couldn't catch a bream. A change to the waggler brought a couple of roach and a lovely rudd/bream hybrid – the first I'd seen for years – but there weren't any more bream until just before we were due to pack up when I caught two more.

By then, Steve had built up a tidy catch of Bury Hill 'slabs' by casting his feeder to the same spot consistently, changing the large cage feeder to a smaller Drennan Gripmesh as the fish arrived.

Mind you, he had sneakily swapped his hook bait from a pellet to a hair-rigged worm to catch. Often on lakes containing both bream and carp, you need to use 'carp' baits like pellets to tempt the bream. Thankfully, the bream of Bury Hill are suckers for tradition... total coarse FISHING

VENUE FILE

BURY HILL FISHERIES

Location: Bury Hill Fisheries, The Boathouse, Old Bury Hill, Westcott, near Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3JU

Day tickets: £11.50, £8.50 concessions Monday to Saturday only, not including bank holidays. Tickets must be purchased from the boathouse before fishing.

Contact: Call 01306 877540 or visit *www.buryhillfisheries.co.uk*

How to get there: Bury Hill Fisheries is situated just off the A25 between Dorking and Guildford, Surrey. As you leave Dorking on the A25 you will find the fishery approximately one mile on the left. There is a large brown tourist sign on the right pointing left. The fishery is at the end of the single-track lane after a further mile.