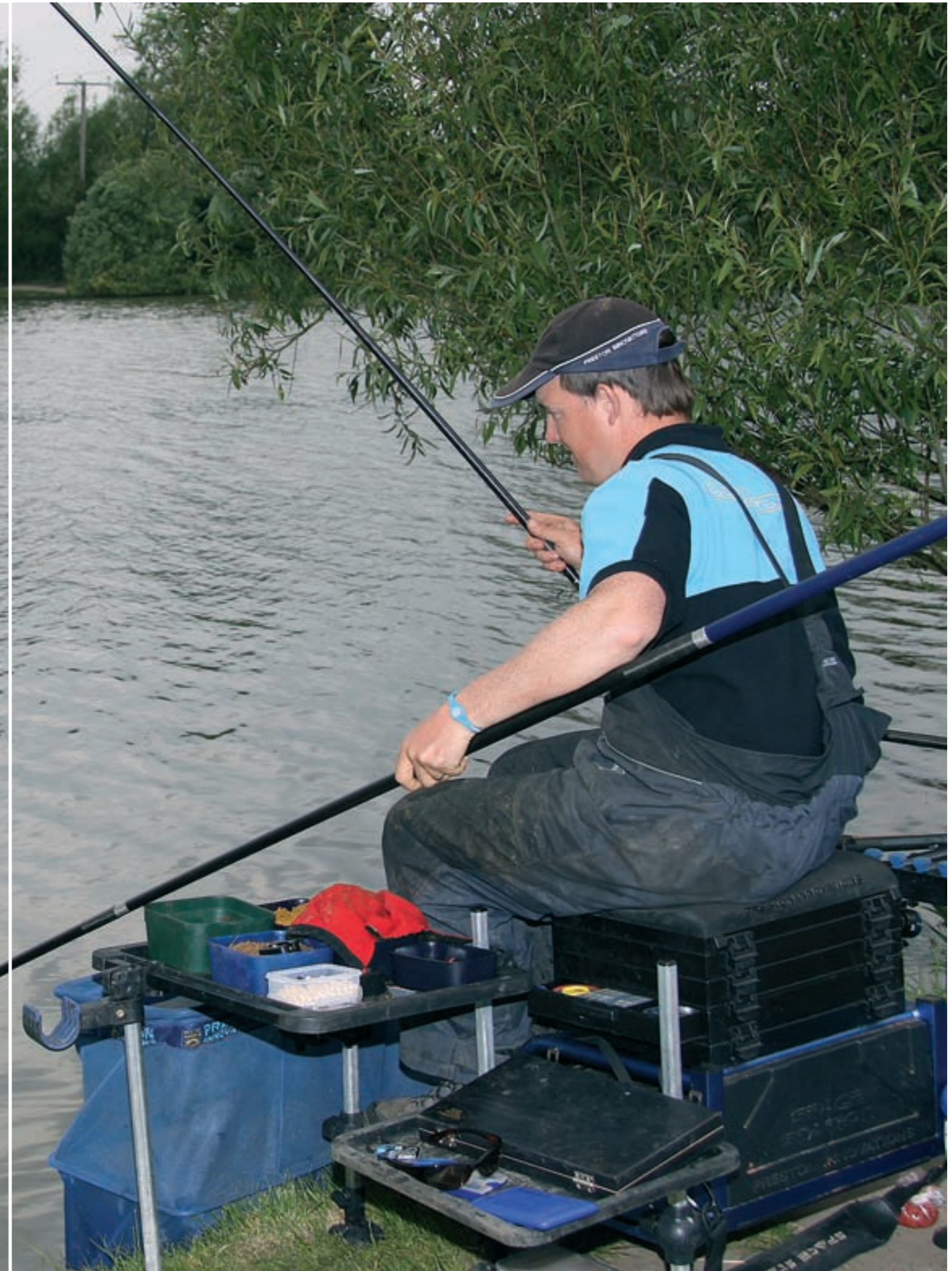


# Kerry's Way

*The Drennan Knockout Cup is a key event for Lee Kerry, and after having a couple of frustrating years he was determined to do well this year. But how does a top angler approach a competition like this?*

**W**ith priorities throughout the year being focused on team competitions, I was really looking forward to what I consider the toughest individual competition on the calendar – the Drennan Knockout Cup. And why is it considered so difficult? Well, not only does it test a range of skills over a variety of venues, but it has an incredibly high standard of competition. I'm not saying all of the best anglers are able to compete in it, but of the 120-plus that do enter there are no weak links!



**KERRY'S WAY**



It was nice to have Peter Drennan on hand to start the match!



Lee has been catching loads of fish over the new Tiger Fish groundbait.



Steve Ringer was just one of the stars in Lee's section at Barston.



The ever reliable Preston Power is Lee's choice for rig line.

**Rather than target big carp I decided to keep the small F1s and barbel coming.**



Most of Lee's plans have revolved around catching enough smaller fish to qualify.

I have reached the final eight in the past, but I have always felt that I could do a little better in each of the rounds I have fished, so this year I was determined to put some extra effort in. The first round was at Lindholme lakes, which was great for me as, although I don't fish there as much as I would like, it is a local venue so I can keep track of results and catches.

In the weeks leading up to the competition I fished a few open matches with varying success and felt really prepared come the day of the match. There were to be five lakes in for the competition and one thing that I like about these matches is that, without taking it to the extreme, the pegging is done in a way that tries to make it as fair as possible for all competitors. This is not always the way elsewhere, as I'm sure we have all experienced.

I drew Peg 19 on Laurels Lake. This isn't a flier by any stretch of the imagination, but with 10 anglers from 18 going through on my lake I knew I was capable of progressing to the next round from the peg if I got the tactics right. I could reach the margin to my right where I had around 18 inches of water in among some reeds. Here I decided that, rather than targeting big carp, I would keep fish such as small F1s and barbel coming. This may sound a little negative, but I expected 50lb to get through, and with the fish at around a 12oz average I knew it would make a nice banker line.

To catch fish of this size, however, I

felt that I needed to sacrifice my strong tackle for something a lot more balanced, so my 4x12 PB Carp 3 was matched with a 0.10mm Reflo Power hooklength and a size 18 PR 490 hook. I kept the shottig simple by having a bulk and one dropper, all No10 shot, above a 4in hooklength, matched up with a light 9h Hollo elastic. This setup may sound really light when fishing among reeds, but I have found that the fish swim away from the edge most times, so the light tackle guides them from the swim rather than pulling them out. Well, that was the plan anyway.

In open water I felt that shallow fishing was my only option in the bright sunshine, but the lack of a ripple made me opt for casters to catch everything rather than pellets or meat for bigger fish. Rigs for this line covered a range of depths, from three feet to 10 inches, and once again all were matched with 9h elastic. The final rig was for fishing down the edge towards the platform to my left. The depth was around three feet here, which is a little too deep for big carp in my opinion, but I was still going to feed it with meat and Tiger Fish groundbait and only look on it in search of a big 'un.

Speaking of baits, fishery micro pellets were soaked up ready for using on the smaller-fish line, with 4mm Fin Perfect expanders prepared for the hook. My way of preparing expanders comes in really handy for this sort of fishing. This is because you are likely to get many bites and indications, so you can't have your

bait falling off all the time. All I do is take a handful of expanders, pump them so they sink, then put them in a bag with only just enough water to cover them. I then tie the bag down tight on to the pellets, so they have no room to expand. I leave them overnight in the fridge and the next day you have soft pellets which, because they haven't expanded properly, are denser than usual. This means they stay on the hook better, but the longer they are in the water the softer they get, perfect for this type of fishing.

*I knew that even from a good peg I would have to fish well to get through.*

On the whistle I went straight out to 16 metres, and with a single 4mm expander I was straight into small F1s. The first hour was great and I thought I might have caught around 10lb. I was feeding with a small Cad Pot and found it better to feed after every second fish so the fish didn't go too crazy on the bait, giving me false bites, and sometimes I would catch three fish from one feed. Just because you have a small pot on it doesn't mean you have to feed every chuck.

Throughout this time I had also been loose feeding casters on the shallow line and decided to have a quick look, which also meant I could rest the small F1s. A 15-minute spell shallow threw up



Pellets were Lee's starting bait at Barston...

... but a switch to worms made all the difference.



Lee's team-mate James Dent won round two at Barston.

three nice ide apiece, but they came quite early and I felt I was starting to wait too long for bites so dropped back onto the F1s. It didn't take long to get them going again and this pattern set the tone for the next two and a half hours of the match.

The only thing that was starting to be a concern was the lack of bigger fish. I had hooked one that I got to the net, before a last-gasp run caught me out and broke my light line. But that had been a loner, which with odd bigger fish starting to get caught elsewhere meant it was time to look down the edge. I caught a couple of nice F1s on meat before the peg went quiet and I felt I might be in for a carp. I wasn't disappointed and after a one-sided battle on 0.17mm Reflo Power and a size 14 PR 456 hook a 10lb common was staring at me from the landing net. I re-fed with some meat and groundbait and went shallow for a couple of fish. This line really didn't want to play ball, but it was best to keep the swim ticking over.

In the last 40 minutes the margin gave me two other carp around 8lb and a couple of F1s. As they shouted time I was happy that I had done my best and felt I would have at least my target weight of 50lb to get through. As the scales came round, 64lb was winning the lake so I was delighted when my fish pushed the scales to 76lb. This wasn't beaten around the lake, so a lake win and a spot in the next round meant I went home happy.

The main frame places all came from Bonsai, with Simon Willsmore taking the honours with over 130lb, so I really felt I couldn't have done any more from my draw. Job done and it was on to the next round at Barston Lakes.

As practice I fished a UK Champs qualifier on the venue the day before the second round and managed to qualify with just short of 40lb on the Method feeder. The lake was won with 57lb, and it seemed clear to me that although it was fishing well for the time of

year, the big weights of summer were not yet materialising. I didn't have a particular draw in mind but Peg 60 stuck in my hand, which was the end peg (for a change - Ed) in the deeper pegs on the river bank. I was happy with this draw, as Peg 57 had been a great end peg on the pole in recent matches.

The format for this match was that the

**KERRY'S WAY** top four from each section would go through to the next round, and with good anglers everywhere including commercial god Steve Ringer and England star Darren Cox in my section, I knew that even from a good peg I would have to fish well to get through. As I set up I found around seven feet on the pole line at six metres, which is where I felt I would catch most of my fish. I also set up two Method-feeder rods just in case.

With around 25 minutes left before the start of the match, team-mate James Dent came round to discuss my draw. He commented that I had a lot of room, and upon inspection I was actually sitting on the wrong peg – disaster! I had seen 61 on the peg next door and naturally assumed I was on 60. However, with power cables in the area these pegs are left out, so I was actually supposed to be three pegs further up! Frantic moving of tackle resulted before I settled down to re-plumb up again.

It was around one foot shallower on this peg, so my two rigs of 0.4g and 0.8g PB Inter 3s were still okay. I had set both rigs up with 0.11mm hooklengths and size 18 PR 434s. These were matched with 11h elastic, which I felt should be perfect in the deeper water to catch a mixed bag of fish. The peg was towing strongly, so the 0.8g was likely to be best, but I wanted a lighter rig in case the flow dropped. I fed an edge line too, but with so little time to plumb it up I did not have much confidence in it. The Method rods were still good to go, but with the peg being good on the pole and only 57lb winning the match the day before I felt that the pole would give me the best chance of getting through, so I wanted to concentrate on that.

Bait choice on the pole would also be critical because the bottom was very soft in my peg, getting a lot firmer as it shallowed up to my left. With this in mind I wanted a light bait so settled on 4mm Fin Perfect expanders for feed and hook bait. I also mixed up some F1 groundbait and had a selection of hook baits in case my approach wasn't going to plan. Something else I prepared was some soft groundbait with yellow dye in it. This has worked for a few at Barston recently, so I had it ready just in case, although with such a strong tow I felt it might be counterproductive to feed a dye, which could draw fish out of the peg.

After all the rushing about I tried to calm down a little by chucking out the Method feeder for 10 minutes, but with no bites I decided to focus on the pole. The first hour passed slowly with only five or six small F1s to show for my efforts, then suddenly my peg started to fizz heavily. Although this was a clear sign the skimmers had turned up, I knew they would be hard to catch.



I was right, as although I was steadily feeding with soft expander pellets it took quite a while to catch just two skimmers and two F1s. So, two hours in and the lake was apparently fishing hard, and although my match wasn't going very well I kept going.

I felt a change was required at this stage so I stopped feeding pellets and started to cup in small balls of groundbait. Bites started to come more frequently and a change to worms on the hook kicked it up another gear going into the fourth hour. I was now picking up small F1s and the odd skimmer regularly and decided that a ball of groundbait every chuck would speed things up. It did the trick and in the last hour I emptied it with F1s and skimmers to finish the match quite happy. I am sure that by cutting out the particle feed the fish could single out my hook bait quickly.

One disappointment was that I only hooked one carp, which soon came off, with no signs of any others. I don't think my feeding was right for carp, but with things being hard I just wanted to keep

putting fish in the net.

The scales gave me around 32lb of F1s and 26lb of skimmers for 58lb 13oz. I was very happy and was again comfortably through to the next round. Roly McEneaney beat me by 2oz for the section and he'd caught two carp in the last 15 minutes short, which is good angling in my opinion, so well done to him.

When I look back at my match, I wish I had done more to catch a carp in the last hour, but I made my decision to keep putting fish in the net to ensure qualification and was only ounces from money, so I think in hindsight it was a safe decision. The other option on this peg would have been the Method feeder, but again I was happy with the pole to get through. Team-mate and good friend James Dent won the match on the Method, with big carp for 85lb. Not bad, I guess...

The next round is at Gold Valley, which is miles from home, but I will be putting in some time both there and locally to make sure I give myself the best chance of getting through to the following round.