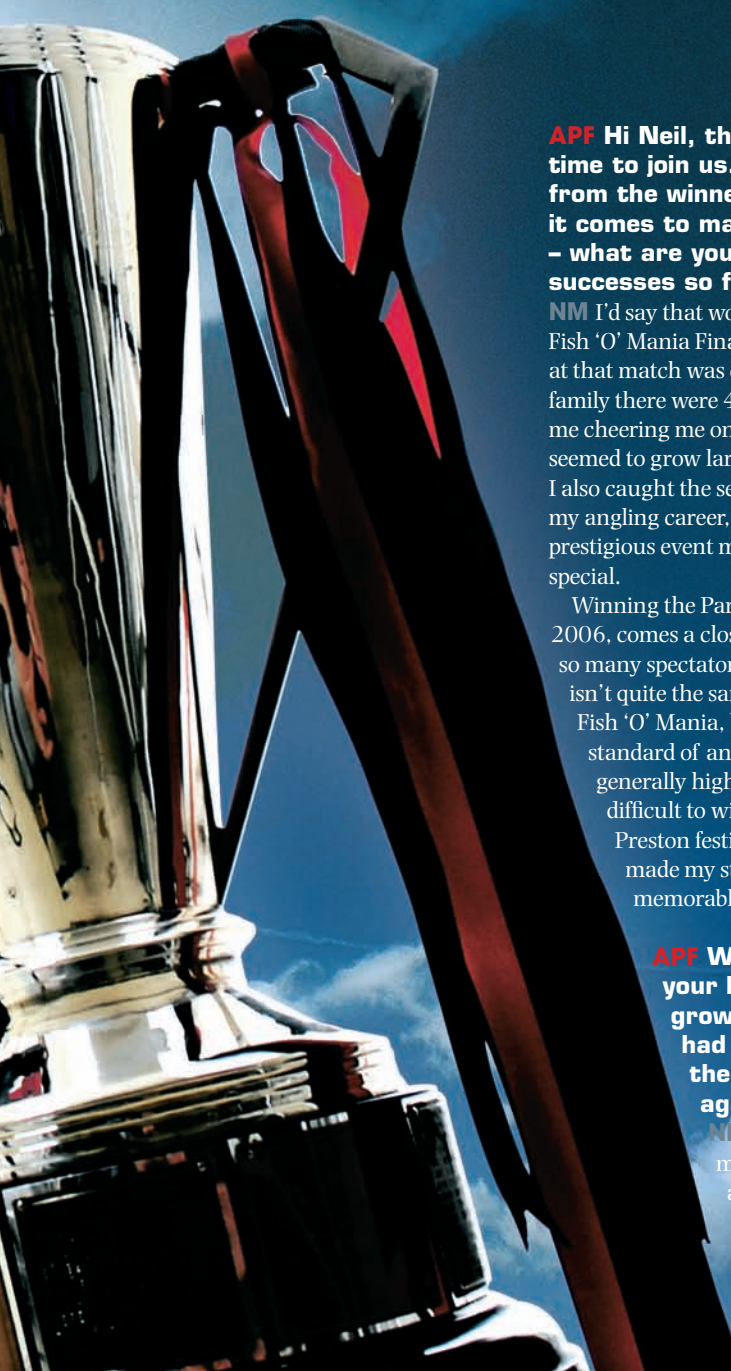


NEIL MACHIN





Recently crowned as the Kamasan Matchman Of The Year, **Neil Machin** is one of the most respected and popular anglers of modern times, and it's his way with the pole that's brought much of his success. APF tracked him down to find out what makes the UK's best match angler tick. . .

APF Hi Neil, thanks for taking the time to join us. You're never far from the winner's podium when it comes to major angling events – what are your most memorable successes so far?

NM I'd say that would have to be winning the Fish 'O' Mania Final, in 2006. The atmosphere at that match was electric. As well as my family there were 40 of my mates behind me cheering me on, and a huge crowd that seemed to grow larger as the day progressed. I also caught the second-largest weight of my angling career, and to do that in such a prestigious event made the day all the more special.

Winning the Parkdean Masters, also in 2006, comes a close second. There aren't so many spectators at this match, so there isn't quite the same buzz that you get with Fish 'O' Mania, but personally I think the standard of anglers in the Parkdean is generally higher, which makes it very difficult to win. Winning that and the Preston festival in the same week made my stay at White Acres very memorable.

APF Which anglers were your heroes when you were growing up, and have you had the chance to meet them or, better still, fish against them?

NM I guess that my dad was my first-ever angling hero as he took me fishing with him from the age of two, almost every week. He always made sure we had an endless supply of hot, buttered toast wrapped

in foil and a hot flask of coffee. When I was very young, about four, I used to cry if I got my wellies dirty, so he'd carry me over any muddy areas.

My second hero was Ivan Marks. I used to love watching his videos when I was younger but, to be honest, it wasn't until I read about his angling achievements in the press after he died that I realised just how good he was. I was lucky enough to meet Ivan a few times at Lakeview, and we'd chat over breakfast. I drew next to him once on the Harbour Lake – the oxygen had gone down that day and we both struggled to get a bite. Ivan spent most of the match on the phone to his bookie. He also got a call halfway through the match from his mate, asking him how many fish he'd caught. Ivan told him: "One." He then asked how many I had, to which Ivan replied: "Two." Then he turned to me and said: "My mate says if I'm only one fish behind you I'm doing okay!"

APF The northwest traditionally sees anglers sticking to their local scene but you've found success all around the country – is there anything that puts you ahead when travelling around?

NM To be honest I've travelled around for a few years now, and on every new venue I fish I tend to pick up new ideas. Some come from other anglers on the bank and some are those that I, or my travelling partner Andy Moors, work out.

Most anglers tend to fish different methods on different fisheries and the fishery regulars tend to fish the same methods week in, week out. By travelling to all these venues I see ideas and methods on one fishery that may work on another. I think sometimes this gives me an advantage.

APF Like many other notable anglers you cut your teeth on natural venues – do you think that this helped you to perform well on the commercial scene?

NM It's true that I did fish on natural venues when I was younger – there were no commercials around in those days. My dad had a punt on a reservoir called Stanley Pool and we used to fish for pike and bream. I also spent a lot of time on the rivers Blythe and Dove. Whether that's helped me on commercials I'm not sure, but I don't think it's done me any harm.

Border Fishery is a bit special because it was there that my match angling career really took off.

APF Pole fishing plays a major part in your success, but when did you start and what was your first pole?

NM I think it was about 20 years ago when I bought my first 'pole' – it couldn't really be described as such, it was more like a telescopic whip and I think it was made by DAM. It was

Neil has made venues like Cudmore and Border his own by using the pole.



fibreglass, about eight metres long and I could hardly lift it.

A few years later I brought my first proper pole, from a Kays catalogue and paid for in monthly instalments. Strangely enough it was a Garbolino (Neil's current sponsors) – a Scimitar I believe – and at the time I thought it was the bee's knees.

APF You've long been associated with fisheries like Border, Heronbrook and Cudmore – all canalised commercials – but do you have one all-time favourite venue?

NM I'd say I haven't got one specific favourite, as I enjoy fishing most venues too much. I suppose Border Fishery is a bit special, because it was there that my match angling career really took off. I've fished Heronbrook and Cudmore for a few years now and enjoy fishing them both, but one of my more-recent favourites has to be White Acres, and to be more specific, Bolingey and Porth Reservoir. I reckon Bolingey has to be one of the best match-carp venues in the country.

On one particular match at Porth Reservoir, two years ago, it was a really hot day without a breath of wind or a cloud in the sky. After setting all my gear up before the start of the match I looked around and couldn't believe how picturesque it was – so much so that I picked up my phone to take a photo. Unfortunately, it slipped out of my hand and dropped in the lake! Maybe I should

stick to fishing and leave the photography to the journos?

APF You've figured highly in the Kamasan Matchman Of The Year competition for several years, and you've won it again this year – is this a key event for you?

NM It's always nice to do well in the Matchman Of The Year race, because I see it as a measure of how consistent an angler is over a season. To be fair I haven't really

This winter has proved to be a bonus time for Neil, especially where F1s are concerned.



chased points this year, and there was a period in the season when I didn't fish a match for five weeks and then spent two weeks at White Acres. It was about October when I realised I had a good chance of winning it again, so I decided to go for it.

APF Sometimes top sportsmen and women forget where they came from, but you seem to be heavily involved with the grass roots of angling, especially coaching. Do you enjoy this aspect of fishing?

NM I am doing some coaching but haven't passed my qualification yet. However, I think most people would agree that I'm more than qualified to teach people to fish at the highest level. It's something I've been doing for about 12 months now, and I do really enjoy it.

APF For the past few seasons you've been involved with Garbolino – do you think it's important for anglers to aim for sponsorship to make them better?

NM I think it is important to have a sponsor, as it's getting more and more expensive to match fish these days and a good sponsor can help make things a little easier.

I have a great relationship with Garbolino and Dynamite Baits (Neil's bait sponsors) and between them they make sure I get everything I need to continue match fishing at the highest level.

APF Despite your 'King of Commercials' tag, you still seem

to like approaching carp waters with what many would class as traditional baits – worms, casters and maggots. Do you prefer baits that will catch you a mixed bag?

NM I do like to use the more traditional baits where I can, although pellets dominate many venues nowadays. The problem with worms and casters is that they are an expensive option for some anglers but on certain venues at certain times of the year they outscore other baits, so it would be a waste not to use them.

Maggots are a bait that I've had a lot of success with this winter, especially for F1s. In cold weather, the beauty of feeding them as opposed to pellets is that there's far less chance of overfeeding your peg. Everything that swims eats them, so even if you feed too many in your swim at the start it's not long before they're eaten.

APF Finally, what's in store for you over the

coming months? Are you gearing up for any major events specifically, or is it just business as usual 'Machin-style'?

NM No-one has ever won the Matchman Of The Year title and the British Open in the same year, so that's one match I'll really be gunning for. Another is the UK Champs – I've finished in the top four for the last three years, so it would be great to win that. Other than that I'll be having a go at the Maver pairs again, Fish 'O' Mania, the Match Fishing Cup and taking a few trips down to White Acres.

So yes, basically it's business as usual.

Neil in familiar pose – wherever he goes, he's rarely far from the fish.

Quick-Fire Q&A

APF First fish you caught?

NM I think that would have been a stickleback from the brook near my parent's house.

APF Best weight in a match?

NM 225lb on the waggler shallow at Lindholme Lakes in the North Vs South match

APF Most memorable session?

NM The 2006 Fish 'O' Mania final.

APF Worst piece of tackle you've bought?

NM That DAM pole – it was a bag of sh*t!

APF Favourite species and why?

NM Cod, because I just love the taste

APF Best pole you've ever used?

NM The Garbolino Super G11... now that'll get some tongues wagging!

APF All-time favourite bait?

NM Casters fished shallow.

APF Best piece of advice received?

NM Never buy sausages from a butcher with a high-pitched voice.

APF Goals for 2008?

NM To finish decorating my kitchen and to keep on winning.

