

ANGLING

By Daniel Jones

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ONE aspect of a sports journalist's job is to occasionally go out and take part in the activities that we write about.

The idea is to give the reader a little insight into the sport and to offer something slightly different to the match reports and interviews that make up the majority of our copy.

Generally, it is one of the more enjoyable parts of the job. During my time at the Surrey Mirror Series I have played golf with a professional, been driven around Brands Hatch in a fully-tooled Touring Car and fired a rifle at the same range used by competitors in the 2002 Commonwealth Games. All of which were highly memorable experiences.

However, occasionally you will be asked to do something that you really don't fancy. For instance, when the boss asked me to try my hand at carriage driving I spent a whole year making excuses and trying to avoid the issue.

This had nothing to do with the charming folk at Brockham Harness Club, where the suggested feature was due to be staged, far from it. It was just that the thought of getting flung around corners in a small box, powered by a two-ton stallion was not my idea of fun.

So, when I finally managed to farm the carriage driving off to another colleague, I felt obliged to accept the next challenge the sports editor threw my way.

When I was told it would be to take a day's angling tuition with our resident fish guru Russ Evans, I was feeling particularly smug. I've always enjoyed Russ' weekly column and the



Gone fishing: Daniel Jones and Russ Evans brave the elements at the picturesque Bury Hill fisheries (above). A small roach is landed by the novice (below, left) 280308A-01/03

prospect of a relaxing session at the picturesque Bury Hill Fishery, where our Russ works as tackle shop manager, was right up my street.

I had been fishing a few times before, but not for several years. While not always the most successful of anglers I had always enjoyed the sport and was genuinely looking forward

to brushing up my skills. That was until I saw the weather forecast.

Perhaps I should have predicted it, it had not been the best of months weather-wise after all, but the downpour and wind that engulfed Bury Hill last Friday was something else.

Russ did his very best to make the experience enjoyable, and for large parts it was.

Bury Hill is one of the most well-known and respected fisheries in the country. Its four lakes are located in picture-perfect countryside, just outside of Dorking. People have fished there since the 19th century and the calm, serene setting is a sight to behold.

The beautiful lakes have featured in many angling magazines and television shows and last year even made it onto the big-screen. A short film called *Gone Fishing* was shot at Bury Hill and is a hopeful for the 2009 Oscars.

Russ has been working at the fishery for just over a year, but has only recently started his tuition classes.

"Things are going really well," said our regular columnist. "The fishery offers four very different lakes and all standards of angler are welcome."

"The tuition classes are a good way to get novice anglers into the sport and are also useful for people who used to fish but haven't for a number of years. I've got a few booked in, but we're expecting things to

really take off in the summer.

"During that part of the year it's very busy up here and almost every single peg can be taken."

"Ah yes, the summer, that's when I should have come," I think to myself as I stare at the grey clouds above.

We fish on Milton Lake - Russ' favourite as it's got a wide ranging variety of species - and my teacher for the day explains exactly how to set up the rod and where to place the float.

"There's crucian carp, roach, perch, tench, bream and rudd in here," says Russ. "It's the one I like to fish the most when I get a chance."

It's about 9.30am when we begin our session and while the rain is steady, it's bearable and the wind not too breezy.

We fish close to the banks where Russ had already landed several little roach and perch as well as a handsome 3lbs tench.

As we watch the tiny orange tip of the float, bobbing around on the wind swept ripples of the lake we talk about angling, football and most other sports.

I discover that our angling expert was a player at his beloved West Ham for a couple of years in the mid-seventies. Indeed, he was an 18 year-old reserve striker at the club when the Hammers beat Fulham 2-0 in the 1975 FA Cup Final. We're enjoying chewing the fat, at the same time as

What a beauty: The pair show off a beautiful tench

280308A-06 by Alec Kingham



landing the odd small fish.

All the while, the skies darken and the weather really begins to take a turn for the worse.

Now, dreaming of the warm solace of my car, my thoughts begin to turn to the cold and I'm not concentrating on the float. I miss several "nice bites", but Russ is a patient teacher and tells me not to worry.

The rain is now coming down sideways and hitting me in the face at quite a speed.

"I'll fish in anything, rain, snow, it's not going to stop me from doing the thing that I love," says Russ, with admirable dedication to his sport, as I turn the conversation to the bleak conditions. "Life's too short and I enjoy it too much to miss out," he adds.

Russ has been fishing since he was two years old and ran a bait shop for

years before landing the role at Bury Hills. While his love for angling may over power any inclement weather conditions, I'm afraid mine does not.

I'm worried that hypothermia is now setting in and decide to make my excuses. It's gone midday and we have been fishing for nigh on three hours.

I ask Russ how much longer he plans on spending out here in the wet and he assures me that he'll give it another few hours yet.

"Rather you, than me," I think to myself as I head off to the car, struggling to feel my hands and feet.

Would I go angling again? Absolutely. Would I be sure to check the weather forecast before I go? You better believe it.

TUITION classes at Bury Hills can be booked through the tackle shop. Visit - www.buryhillfisheries.co.uk - for more information.

