

Well Winter is coming to an end, and as promised here is my update to my barbell quest so far this year with its ups and downs.

I first got the rods out at the end of January; the river was cold, just over 4c and was showing its mighty side. The water level was up by 1,5mt and was rushing through like a steam train in its chocolate brown colour with white foam on top. My feeder just managed to hold bottom a few yards out from the bankside, or in the dead space behind submerged bushes, even then I had to clear the line every few minutes from the debris which were catching up in the line and eventually moving the feeder out of its place. The end of January, and the first three weeks of February was hard core fishing, with the river not changing from its winter rage, and needless to say no fish on the bank.

Towards the end of February, the water temperature started to rise and on the 27th of February had reached 11,5c. The river was still high and coloured and full of debris, but I decided to give it ago. Again the feeder could only hold the bottom a few meters out, and I had to constantly retrieve the feeder and clean the line from a thousand tonnes of dead weed, but I persevered. To my surprise after a few hours the tip moved, tap, tap. Just as I was thinking was it debris hitting the line the tip whipped round. I picked the rod up into a powerful fish that immediately shoot of upriver ripping a good 15m line from the reel. After three more powerful runs the fish was tiring, and slowly but surely I managed to retrieve more and more line, as I saw my feeder for the first time in the murky brown water I dipped my net into the water in anticipation, and then I saw him a huge barbel, I reckoned with at least 10/11lbs (a new PB flashed in my mind). I slowly brought him to the net, and needless to say upon seeing the net he rocketed of again, stripping another 5 or 6m of the reel. This happened two more times, but each time his runs were shorter and shorter. As his mighty head and shoulders slipped over the rim of the net he started to thrash from side to side as if he was possessed by the devil himself. The rod sprang back, all pressure was gone. The line had broken at the hook knot, I just stood there rod in one hand net in the other, I didn't know whether to cry our shout, I shouted. I used every swear word I have learnt in both English and German. I returned home in a sorry state, not only had I lost a new PB, I had left a hook in its mouth.

The beginning of March the water temperature dropped again down to 6c, and for the next three weeks all my short sessions where in vain, towards the end of March the water temperature was climbing, and the river had dropped by a meter, my hopes where rising. On the 28th of March the water temperature had hit 11c and I decided to do a short session, which resulted in two fish, two chub couldn't resist my pellets, a small fish of around 2lbs and a cracker at 4,9lbs. Things where looking up, and three days later I was out on the bank again, the river was now 11,5c and I was hoping that Mr Barbel would come to play. He didn't but a lovely 5lbs chub did, I was to catch My first Barbel of the year the day after, a lovely 5,5lbs bar of gold. Obvious to say, I was on the bank again the next day, now that the prince of the river had made an appearance. It was a cold and windy day. I had decided to put one rod out into the main flow, and the other I had decided to fish close to the river bank, where a small tree was hanging into the water forming a crease, I would place my bait directly on the crease where the fast flowing water met the slower flowing water. I had been fishing for a few hours, slowly building the swims up with my mix of Sonubaits pellets and was feeling confident. I was on the phone talking to my friend when the tip gave a tap, a few seconds later came a second tap, BAMMM the rod tip whipped round, my phone flew as I reached for the rod and the line ripped off the reel. I was into a good fish, who after many runs and a good and powerful fight slipped down deep into the net (I must say I was really happy that I was using the Korum Power Telescope Handle at 3m as the river was 1m below the bank on the spot I was fishing, and the long

