

THE INSIDE LINE...

**THIS WEEK
ADAM
RICHARDS**

FAMOUS figures talk exclusively on matters close to their own hearts. This week we catch up with **Adam Richards**, newly crowned and youngest ever *Angler's Mail* Kamasan Matchman of the Year, aged just 20, from Billingham, on Teesside.

How does it feel to be Matchman of the Year?

Brilliant. I've been looking at all the famous names engraved on it. I'm not bothered about the money, I'd rather have the trophy and the title.

Did you set out to win it?

I had 28 points last year, which put me about 12th, and I've qualified for the Kamasan British Open for the past two years. Early on this season I said to my dad that I wanted to try and win the title. It's been quite hard through the winter with there not being many matches with 50 anglers on, but I managed to get seven points on the last full weekend to take the lead. I signed for Maver Barnsley Blacks the same day, so it was a good weekend in all, and boosted my confidence going into last match.

Were you doing anything different?

I just had two better draws and there were 70 anglers at Lindholme on the Saturday and 55 on the Sunday at Langwith. With winter fishing it's just a case of drawing on some fish, and if you are on them you are half way there. There were better pegs, but the wind was bad and it made them difficult to fish, whereas it was blowing straight over my back and gave me a comfy day.

How did you fish?

On the Saturday I caught trout on worms close in and F1s at 13 m on pellets. On the Sunday I had a bad start fishing pellet to the island, but the last two hours I caught really well down the side against the reeds on pellets.

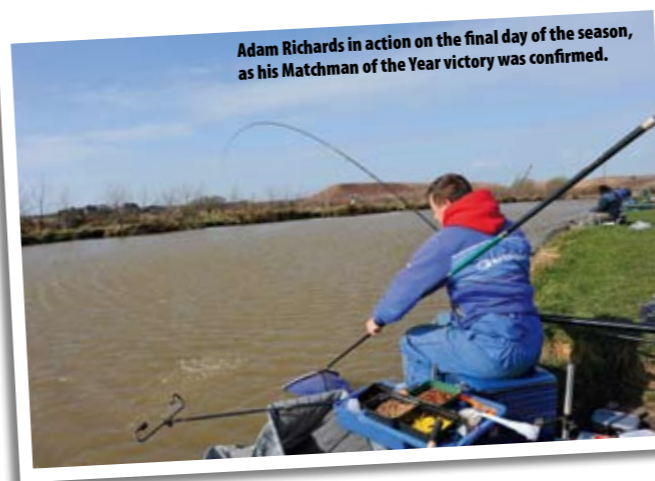
Is it a bit strange fishing for trout in a match?

I've never drawn the lakes that had them in at Lindholme before, so that was first time I had targeted them. They put a lot in two of the lakes for the winter to give people another option.

They leap out when you first hook them, which gives you a shock, and you always lose a few. More and more places are starting to stock them now, as they'll feed all through winter. It means there are more fish to catch, and I think they make other fish feed because there's more competition.



JUST CHAMPION! North East student Adam Richards, aged just 20, is the youngest winner of the long-running *Angler's Mail* Matchman of the Year series, sponsored by Kamasan.



Adam Richards in action on the final day of the season, as his Matchman of the Year victory was confirmed.

Did the milder weather make things easier?

With it getting a bit milder the fish spread out and there were more pegs you could win off. The weekend before that I had a fourth at Lindholme that put me up to 28 points, which meant I was only one win behind, and the week before that I had been second in a match with only 44 on it. In the last few weeks a lot of people have been practising for the Winter League Semi-final at Lindholme, which made them up to qualifying matches, so I decided to go on them.

Was the cold winter the main reason for the low scores this season?

The cold weather has affected attendances. There were four months of the year when I fished only five 50-peg matches. A lot of people haven't had any money lately so they can't afford to go fishing, that combined with the cold winter really hit the match scene. Fewer people were turning up in the cold weather and a lot of venues were frozen.

And the cold made the fishing more difficult.

The fishing was a lot harder. It's always freezing here in Teeside in winter, but I think Sessay, where the Oaks are, is the coldest place I've been. It normally drops four degrees by the time we get there. On one match the car thermometer read minus eight degrees! Matches get cancelled if the lakes are frozen, though they try to keep them ice free with aerators.

Which of your rivals represented the biggest threat?

About a month ago Andy Dargue won a couple of matches on the rivers and came flying up out of nowhere

and went ahead of me. At that point I felt that if somebody was going to beat Gary Skerritt it was probably going to be him. But snow water went into rivers and spoilt the fishing, and even on rivers you need to draw on some fish. No-one can catch what's not in front of them.

What was the early season like for you?

I had a really good start through the summer and there were good attendances at Woodlands. I fished the Preston Festival at White Acres, which I really enjoyed, and came second in the Parkdean Final by 3 lb, which was disappointing. It would have been great to win it, but I've got plenty of time yet. The £25,000 would have been nice, but I don't go fishing for the money; I go because I enjoy it, and just want to win.

What other big wins did you have?

I won the individual event of the Maver Pairs final this year with 113 kg, fishing with my dad. I enjoy fishing Maver Larford, having finished fourth individual on the second day the year before, and hopefully I'll be there again this year, with my friend Joe Carass, who fishes for Maver Barnsley as well.

You've travelled around a fair bit this season?

I've fished a lot of venues on Fish'O'Mania qualifiers and the Maver Pairs, and scored points at four different venues. I applied for 13 Fish'O'Mania tickets and got on eight. I've always wanted to qualify for the Fish'O'Mania final and hopefully I'll make the Parkdean again.

In 2007 I came second in a Fish'O'Mania qualifier, and had a few other frames.

WHAT I LAST CAUGHT

A 12 lb mirror carp at Woodlands that I landed with about two minutes to go that won me the match, on pole fished corn at 16 m in open water, landed on grey Hydrolastic through a match top with the number one section removed.



WHAT I LAST BOUGHT

I bought my dad a hoodie today because he got accused of looking like a scruff by photographer Ian Chapman when he was taking the pictures after I won. He made him take his jumper off, so I thought I'd better buy him a new one, a Preston Innovations one for £25 from The Tackle Box, in Billingham.



When did you first start fishing?

At about five or six years old, when my dad first took me with him. He still takes me now wherever I want to go and comes to matches with me every weekend. I started fishing on a local stillwater, Charltons Pond, and then on a few rivers with my dad. He was a member of a club that I joined and I had quite a bit of success in matches there when I was younger.

“ At the moment match fishing saves me having to get a job to fund my studies... ”

How often do you fish?

Through the winter, just at the weekend with the odd weekday, but in summer I fish four times a week with the odd afternoon pleasure session. I'm in my second year at Teesside University, studying sport and exercise. I want to be PE teacher.

Is it difficult finding the money for match fees?

I've been lucky. My dad supports me a lot, and if I need money to fish he will pay for me. At the moment match fishing saves me having to get a job to fund my studies, and I'm living at home, which helps.

Has it helped not being a team angler until now?

You can concentrate on doing what you want to do instead of having to chase around practising, though I fished the Drennan Super League matches at Woodlands with local team The Tackle Box, at Billingham, and scored points by doing so.

Are you looking forward to fishing for Maver Barnsley?

There are a lot of people in the squad who are really well known, and it's good to be alongside them. When Andy Oldham rang me he said he was trying to build a team to compete with anyone, so hopefully that's what he will be able to do.

When did you have your first match wins?

My first club match win was when I was about 13, and my first Open match win probably at 15, which is when I stopped fishing club matches and started going to Open matches, mostly at The Oaks and also Woodlands. I remember that first open win at Woodlands, on Kestrel Lake. I caught about 70 lb of chub and carp, and it felt good to beat people a lot older at the time.

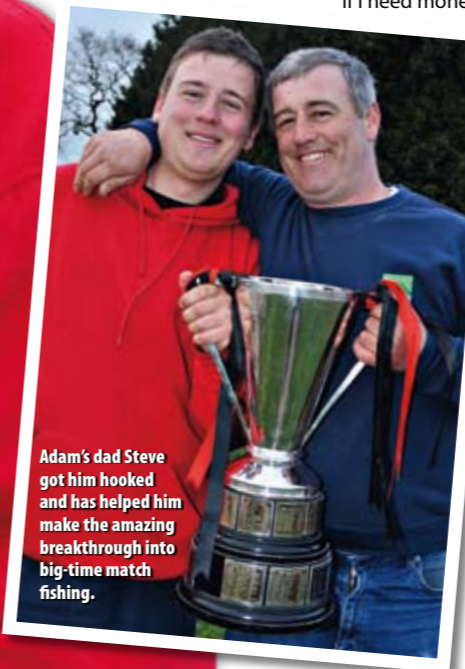
Who do you admire most in fishing?

My dad, Steve. If he hadn't taken me I might never have ever gone into fishing in the first place. He was there when I won the title the other week and got his picture taken with me with the trophy. He fishes most of the Open matches, but for that final one he said he'd rather sit and watch.

Do you still do any river fishing?

I fished a couple of Drennan Super League rounds on the River Tees with The Tackle Box, at Billingham, and through the winter in the week I had a go on some local becks catching grayling, just for something different to do. It's nice sometimes to be able to walk down the river with just a rod and some maggots and have a go in whatever swims take your fancy. It makes a nice change, especially when it's cold and the fishing on commercials is all about drawing right and not being able to move if there are no fish in your swim.

■ Adam Richards was talking to Greg Meenehan. There's more on the Kamasan British Open in our Matchmail section in page 62.



Adam's dad Steve got him hooked and has helped him make the amazing breakthrough into big-time match fishing.