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Winning tournament weights fairly predictable

The results from 1998 and 1999 indicate the weights needed to win in tournaments, through May at least, are fairly predictable. While this is by no means a scientific study, the total weights from the last two years are close to a three pound deviation window at most. Significant weather conditions will obviously impact the



Southern Fishing photo
Contestants wait in line at the Lakeside Garden Club Open in 1999. The tournament is the final qualifying event for the All Star Team.

totals of any tournament in 2000. Barring that, the results listed in the chart below should give a pretty good indication of what is needed to take home the first place money. As far as the All Star Bassin' Team competition goes, the top six All Star Team positions are up for grabs through the last event. Tony Datuin and Donny Beck proved, in

1999, you don't have to have fish in all of the events to make the All Star Team. Datuin and Beck ended the competition with 72.7525 actual pounds. They weighed fish in five of the eight qualifying events for a 14.5505 pound average per tournament.

The angler in the 14th position at the end of the year was 16.685 pounds away from the last Team position. Jeff Hargett, the 1998 Top Rod Champion, and Monty Yeager, were less than ten pounds from a qualifying total.

There are six qualifying events for the 2000 All Star season. Using the total pounds caught by Beck and Datuin in 1999, we can divide by 6 instead of 5 to "guesstimate" what it would take this year to take the top two positions on the team - 12.1254 pounds average per tournament. Sammy Mitchell finished in the top Team position in 1998 with 85.715 pounds- a 9.523 pound average. He weighed bags ranging from 2.18 to 18.0625 pounds and fished all nine qualifying events.

Using the same logic we can predict a rough total needed to qualify for the sixth, and final, qualifying position. Jimmy Robb and Randy Jackson, the 1999 Top Rod Champion, qualified for 5th and 6th, or 6th and 5th, with the same total of 42.375 pounds. Dividing by 6, the per tournament average would be 7.0625 pounds. The sixth position in 1998 went to Randy Jackson with 72.1375 pounds. In 1998, Randy fished every event and weighed totals from 2.125 to 21.145 pounds for an 8.0152 pound average.

Keep in mind there were nine events in 1998, eight in 1999 and six for 2000 and figure accordingly. The tournament average for '98 and '99 is 10.824 lbs. per event for first and 7.534 lbs per event for the final qualifying position.

No total is too small to weigh. Remember, when fishing the All Star competition, contestants are fishing two tournaments at the same time. A total far short of placing in the event may qualify an angler for the All Star Team at the end of the season.

Spring 1998 and 1999 tournament totals

MONTH	LAKE	1998 WINNER	1999 WINNER
February	Wilson	17.75 lbs	17.5625 lbs.
March	Wilson	21.17125 lbs.	23.8125 lbs.
March	Wheeler	16.95 lbs.	19.73 lbs.
April	Cedar Creek	20.1875 lbs.	16.5 lbs.
May	Wilson	20.07 lbs.	22.08 lbs.
May	Pickwick	16.25 lbs.	15 lbs.

Ray Scott says boat racing, bass fishing bad mix

Ray Scott, the father of the modern bass fishing industry, warns that the mix of boat racing with bass tournaments is a recipe for disaster. He refers to the fishing/racing event held last August on Rend Lake, Illinois, under the auspices of a Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.) subsidiary, World Championship Fishing (WCF).

Under the banner of BASS Quest, several of the events are scheduled to be conducted this year. The contests pit a select group of anglers against each other in the traditional bass tournament fishing concept, then have them race the clock on a water course similar to a sports car road circuit. The fishing accounts for sixty percent of the final score, the boat racing the other forty percent.

"It's easy to understand the appeal to these guys," Scott said. "At Rend Lake, the winner picked up a \$251,000 paycheck out of a \$525,000 total purse. The entry fee was \$35,000 per boat for twenty-two boats; and if my math is correct, that leaves a cool \$245,000 for the promoter. With that kind of money at stake, you'll always find takers."

It is this made-for-television excitement factor that has Scott concerned. "I understand that bass fishing - even among the very best in the world - can be sort of dull to a TV producer and to those who are not fishermen themselves," Scott said. "But B.A.S.S. and Ray Scott personally have devoted a major part of their energies over the past thirty years to the issue of boating safety. That has always been paramount. Everything else we did was secondary to safety. Unfortunately, I see that changing now with this new format."

Scott said he is speaking out in response to the many anglers, outdoor writers and industry executives who have asked his position in the matter.

"I have all the respect in the world for B.A.S.S. CEO Helen Sevier and her managers at B.A.S.S. If it can be done safely, I know they'll be the ones to do it. I just don't think boat racing and bass fishing can be made safe. I shudder to think what will happen when the copycats get hold of it. I'm afraid there'll be blood on the water," he said.

"We used to start our tournaments with a LeMans style blast-off, where we lined the boats up across a bay, eased 'em onto plane and fired a flare gun, at which point everybody floored it and took off like a pack of scalded dogs. It was very exciting - and very dangerous. Luckily, I came to my senses and recognized the potential risk to life and limb before anyone was hurt or killed. We changed to an 'ooze-off' start that was a lot less exciting, but I sure did sleep better at night," he said.

He noted that when B.A.S.S. changed, so did virtually every other tournament organization. "Unfortunately, they copy the bad along with the good," Scott said, "and that's what will happen with this boat racing gimmick."

Scott said he watched the Fox Sports Network TV show made from last year's event, which aired on Thanksgiving Day.

"Even though I knew no one got hurt, it still took my breath away at times, as these would-be racers flashed around this purposely dangerous course at breakneck speeds. A few of the fishermen are lucky they are still with us," he said.

"Skeet Reese came screaming out of the high speed straightaway and entered the twisting-curving part of the course much too fast. When he tried to make it anyway, his boat spun out, coming within an ace of throwing him overboard. His kill switch cut off the outboard motor, but who knows what would have happened had he not been so fortunate. Luckily, he

came away with only severe bruises, but it could have been much, much worse," Scott concluded.

B.A.S.S. has a long and solid history of promoting boating safety, beginning back when bass boats were flat-bottomed and outboard motors small. One of Scott's first rules was that a Coast Guard approved life jacket must be worn and zipped anytime the outboard engine is running. Then came the kill switch rule, which required that a fail-safe engine kill mechanism stop the engine any time the driver left the steering position, for any reason.

Scott noted that bass fishermen, whether tournament affiliated or not, often receive negative receptions on the waterways they fish for "hot-rodding," for nearly swamping smaller boats, and for otherwise being obnoxious. "To have boat racing actually sanctioned by the country's most prestigious tournament organization is just going to give the complainers more ammo," he believes.

"In addition, as our lakes become more crowded, and as boating injuries and fatalities increase, state and federal authorities are beginning to make more and more rules to curb reckless operations," Scott points out. "Some states have imposed speed limits, and others are considering other means to help make the nation's recreational waters safer for the increasing throngs who use them."

"This new wrinkle flies in the face of this trend, and almost challenges the authorities to do something to restrict the potential hazards," Scott said.

As he points out, the real danger will come as the idea spreads to other tournament organizations and to B.A.S.S.-affiliated local clubs and state federations.

"I can foresee more difficulties with legislative bodies that are attempting to impose speed limits on our lakes and reservoirs," Ernie Daughtery, president of the Central Pro-Am Association, says, "and I can predict increased bass boat insurance rates...sponsor liability and insurance costs. I can visualize the tragedy of serious injury or even mortality of one of the contestants. I am concerned and fearful because bass boats, through these events, may no longer be seen as fishing machines but instead as racing machines...I just do not believe that the two actually mix."

"Call it what it is," Scott said. "It's a horrible example B.A.S.S. is setting, and one that will lead to needless tragedy and suffering. I can't believe we're willing to sacrifice the entire industry to a fleeting romance with thrill television. And take my word for it, this genie will not go back into the bottle after six racing events hit the airwaves, even if the program is later cancelled. Bass boat racing will be a part of bass fishing until, one by one, the states outlaw it".

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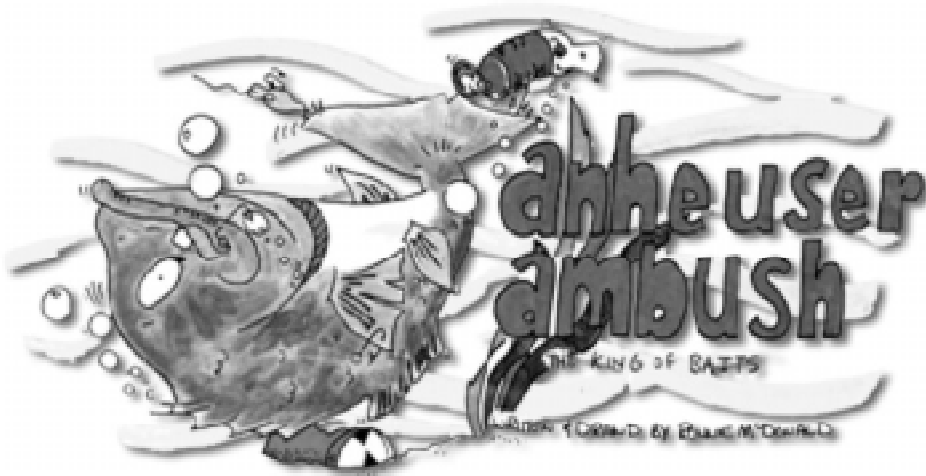
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Well, right-off to begin with, ya gotta understand jest perzactly the situation that's wrapped around this here story of mine. Put down yer discount bait orderin' book and follow along right closely.

Ya see, 'bout a year ago, nope, more liken' a year an a half ago this past spring, I was fishin' 'round in blue creek (one of my non-productive hot spots). I wuz flingin' one perticular plug that I'd kinda got to favorin'. My grandpap had drug it up from the bottom of Cane Creek with one of his illegal trot lines. The printin' is worn plum off by now, but my grandpappy said the word "Ambush" was a painted on the bottom of the bait. He figgered that musta been the name of the plug (one of my grandpappy's brighter deductions).

This "Ambush lure was one of ma favorites 'cause I'd done snagged a 13 pound drum with it a couple weeks before. I figured with my fishin' ability, bien what it twas, I'd be right happy to catch anything with gills. I went so fer as to call this here bait "Anheuser" outa pure gratitude to my grandpappy for a snaggin' it (Anheuser

back. Twas a real purty little cut 'ceptin the fact there were a couple dead carp a layin' on top of the rock pile just a swellin' up in the sun real proud like. Anyways, I'd heard 'bout this big ole snaggletooth smallie (called "Ole Sam" by the local bassin' pros) that wuz kinda fond of a layin' 'round those rocks, logs and ripe carp (ain't nobody been able to explain that single piece of ivory in that scandrel's mouth).

Now this Ambush plug my grandpappy done drug up bound to of led a hard life and seen many a hawg's jaw-bien as beat-up, nicked, scraped-up and faded as it twas. Anyways, I started to just a chunkin' and flingin' 'bout everywhar that wuz wet. My ole standby pro knot (tha local pro charged me a buck and showed me how to tie it) wuz a holdin' onto that Ambush plug tighter than tha glue on my false teeth.

I wuz bouncin' that pore plug offin' might near every dang thang but tha air. Suddenly, somethin' # odd happened. After I had chunked toward this big log, my line commenced to jumpin', tuggin' and all manner of strange carrin' on! I thought I's done got hung and was gonna lose my favorite plug fer sure. I got right miffed about tha whole thang. Shucks, the gitten hung weren't no stranger to me, but the hung a pullin' back shore wuz!

So's I decided to just sit a spell to figure the situation out before I made any rash decisions. I wuz just a sittin' there a ponderin' when the water in amonst those logs where I wuz hung just #exploded. A smallie, the likes of which I ain't never seen, comes a roarin' outa the water like a big diesel with a red hot head of steam! I sat there with ma bottom jaw a hangin' over the side of ma bassin' rig and watched that big gold devil snarl and snort every time he would bust outa the water-that single white tooth just a gleamin'. It was Ole Sam!

Now I figured this kinda carrin' on weren't exactly yore everyday feedin' frenzy (I ain't never seen one but the local bassin' pro done explained it to me real clear like for fifty cents). Ole Sam weren't feedin' on nothin! No sir, he weren't eatin' a dang thang. He was a twistin' and chewin' on some fishin' line that had got wrapped 'round his snout.

'Bout then I realized that every time that hawg jumped so did my Super Pro Stick Hawg pole-that dang

continued on page 5



was tha ole fellers middle name). ***A smallie, the likes of which I ain't never seen, comes a roarin' outa the water like a big diesel with a red hot head of steam!***

Well, I knowed this here little cut whar some big ole rocks and logs were a piled up real smart like near the

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smallie weren attached to my reel! I started crankin' an pumpin' and all that professional stuff that the local pro let me sit in his bassin' rig and practice in his backyard.

I finally realized that all my line wuz just a floatin' on the water in front of me leavin' me none on ma reel. Bein the intelligent feller I am, I stopped all my hawg landin' an crankin'.

'Bout that time I smelled the ripe carp again and that brought me back to ma senses. Then I started worrin' 'bout gettin' ma favorite plug back. You ain't gonna believe what I is 'bout to tell you next-that blame Ambush bait had done got a loose from my pro bass knot and wuz just a swimmin' around my boat flippin' his tail spinner and grinnin like a bride on her honey-moon!

I figured that wuz 'bout as common as a snaggletooth smallie but I ain't never been one to ques-tion stuff I don't quite understand. I packed up my empty reel and Pro Bass Stick and commenced to put distance 'tween me the the oder of those there carp.

Evry now an then I'll see that doggone Ambush bait just a zippin' 'round in this slough an another, smilin' whilst chasing some bewildered bass what don't know what to make of this strange change of events. I kinda figure that Ambush bait musta got tired of being flung to



...just a swimmin' around my boat flippin' his tail spinner and grinnin like a bride on her honeymoon!

and fro. I'm gonna be keppin' an eye out for that little feller cause I'm a guessin' that the ole fishin' hole is in store fer some mighty strange happenins.

(Editor's note: There will be more wacky adventures of Anheuser Ambush in future issues.)



Alan Hill, The Point Restaurant, has a whopping 7 lb., 1 oz. smallmouth he caught fishing below Wheeler Dam on January 12. What a way to start off the new year.

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Southern Fishing photo

Quad-Cities Bassmasters club members discuss club business at their January meeting at Bass Plus. Four new members joined the roster of over two dozen during the meeting.

Quad-Cities Open set

The Quad-Cities Bassmasters have set the date for the club's annual open bass tournament. The date for the second All Star qualifying event is Saturday, March 11. Wilson is the lake and Fleet Harbor is the ramp. Fliers will be out soon.

Cold water survival

When in cold water, don't swim unless you can reach a nearby boat, fellow survivor, or floating object. Even good swimmers drown while swimming in cold water. Swim-ming lowers your body temperature.

If a nearby floating object is large, pull yourself up on it. The more your body is out of the water, the warmer you will be. Keep your head out of the water to lessen head loss and increase survival time.

Always wear your PFD. Even if you become helpless from hypothermia, your PFD will keep you afloat.

Fish two tournaments at once - the All Star Bassin' Team 2000 qualifying events.

Big River Bassmasters Open-Wilson/February 26
Quad Cities Bassmasters Open-Wilson/March 11
Bulldog Bassin Open-Cedar Creek/April
Shoals Youth Bassmasters Open-Wilson/May
Shriner Open-Pickwick/May
Lakeside Garden Club Open-Pickwick/October

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Bassin' basics

Pro secret-Weighted Jerkbait

Jerkbait is popular floating/diving hard plastic or wood lures. The floating or unweighted models float at rest, dive when twitched or reeled, then float to the surface again when you stop reeling. Fished as is they are effective around shallow cover in water warmer than 68 degrees. But pro anglers add weight to these lures to allow them to be fished more slowly in cold water. By varying the amount of weight used, you can make jerkbaits rise more slowly after twitching, suspend, or sink very slowly.

Weighting methods: 1. Until recently, weighting jerkbaits was a slow hit or miss process. One weighting method involved drilling a hole(s) in the lure body, filling with lead, sealing with cement, and then testing and reweighting until the desired depth/buoyancy was attained. 2. An alternate method, again no longer necessary, involved wrapping varying amounts of lead solder around the lure's leading treble hook to weight it. 3. Today, virtually all pro anglers use stick on weights. These weights let you modify the buoyancy and balance of floater/diving lures much more quickly and precisely, and do not permanently alter the lure. Under most conditions, place the stick on weights on the lure's belly, between the leading and second treble hooks. This will keep the lure in a horizontal presentation, like a swimming baitfish. For a more erratic presentation, shift the weights to the tail of the lure. After adding stick on weights, test the lure to see if it's properly weighted. If not, add or remove weight as needed.

Weighting by water temperature: Pro anglers fish weighted jerkbaits in cold water, usually from February through April. They vary the amount of weight to make the lure perform differently in various temperature zones. 1. In extremely cold water (mid 30s to low 40s), baitfish often die off and float slowly to the bottom. A slow sinking jerkbait presentation is highly effective in this temperature range. Start by applying weight then fine tune by adding a little weight at a time until the lure sinks slowly. 2. In water from approximately 45 to 55 degrees, use less weight so the lure suspends. 3. In water from 55 to 65 degrees, the lure can be weighted to either suspend or rise very slowly, depending on the mood of the fish. 4. Above 68 degrees, do not add weights to the lure.

Where to fish weighted jerkbaits: Pro anglers use weighted jerkbaits in cold, clear, relatively open water with a visibility range of at least 18 inches and preferably 3 to 5 feet. Here are some places to try them: 1. On bluff walls in deep highland lakes. 2. On shallow gravel banks. 3. Over submerged rockpiles. 4. Around rock bank transitions (example: where fist size rock shifts to gravel). 5. Inside or outside of weedlines. 6. Over main lake points or humps. 7. Over submerged grassbeds.

Weighted jerkbait retrieves: More than most lures, weighted jerkbaits demand the right cadence (retrieve timing) to draw strikes. This is because they're being used to tempt sluggish bass in cold water. Here are some retrieves to try: Sinking Retrieve. Use when fishing extremely cold water. a. Make a long cast to the

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target zone. b. As soon as the lure hits the water, jerk the rod tip sharply so the bait dives. c. Stop. Hold the rod parallel to the water and to the side. d. Twitch the rod tip, reel up slack, and twitch again, much as when fishing a plastic worm. Repeat. e. When properly weighted, the lure will sink slowly between twitches like a dying shad.

...pro anglers add weight to these lures to allow them to be fished more slowly in cold water.

f. Most strikes occur as the lure sinks slowly. Watch your line. If it jumps, set the hook hard. g. Remember that bass will be extremely sluggish in cold water. *Do not overfish the lure!* Start by allowing at least 5 seconds between twitches. Vary the cadence until you contact fish. Suspend Retrieve. Use this retrieve in water 45 to 55 degrees. a. Repeat steps a through e for sinking retrieve. When weighted properly, the lure will suspend between twitches, like a living baitfish. b. Begin by pausing 3 to 5 seconds between twitches. Experiment until you find an effective cadence. c. Watch for the line to jump, then set the hook hard. Ripping Retrieve. Use this retrieve in water 55 to 65 degrees. This retrieve works when the lure is weighted to either suspend or rise very slowly after being twitched. a. Make a long cast to the target zone. b. When the lure hits the water, sweep the rod tip from 3 to 4 feet to the side. This will cause it to dart and flutter like a fleeing baitfish. c. Pause 3 to 5 seconds while reeling up slack, then sweep the rod again. d. Most strikes occur on the pause, when the lure either suspends or rises slowly. Watch your line and set the hook hard if it moves. e. Again, vary the cadence until the fish react positively. Some pro anglers report waiting 10 seconds or longer between twitches at times.

Jerkbait size and color: 1. These lures usually come in 4 1/2 inch and 6 inch sizes. In clear, cold water, most pros use the smaller lures. Try the larger sizes in lakes where bass run big, and where water visibility is at the low end of the preferred range. 2. Because they're best used under high visibility conditions, lure colors should simulate baitfish. Try shad, gold, chrome, and bone patterns. Reflective colors work best on sunny days. 3. On overcast days, whenever the water has visibility around 18 inches, and anytime your fishing for smallmouths or spotted bass, try fire tiger.

Tips courtesy of the Bass Lure site, <http://users.1st.net/basslures/lures.htm>.

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