

FEAST or FAMINE on the FLATS

Submitted by: Nick Angiulo

The New Jersey Bass Federation's first point event of its newly restructured tournament program shaped up to be a slugfest of epic proportions. With reports of giant fish being caught and huge tournament winning weights on the river systems that make up the Northern Chesapeake Bay (also known colloquially as the Susquehanna Flats), Federation anglers were licking their chops awaiting the April 24, 2016 event. However, as is often the case in fishing, the predicted massacre did not occur for various reasons such as the cold front that dropped water temperatures the night before the event and the incredible pounding the fish had taken due to other large early season tournaments. Nevertheless, while many anglers found the fishing to be just average or worse, the event did produce a new Federation one-day tournament winning weight record of 26.40 pounds, along with two other weights breaking the 20-pound mark. The event also marked the largest payouts to the winners of the Boater and Co-Angler Divisions in recent memory.

Boater Division

Winning 1ST place in the Boater Division in record shattering fashion was John Carpenter of the K.O.B.A. chapter. Carpenter, who is from Marmora, New Jersey, is no stranger to victory on the Flats, having last won there at the Federation's May 18, 2014 event. However, this time he made it a victory for the ages. In this regard, Carpenter's 26.40 pounds crushed the previous Federation one-day tournament weight record by nearly a full three pounds. The prior record was 23.49 pounds held by Dave Frost. Carpenter's five-fish limit was made up of two "book-ends," namely, 6.54 and 6.49 pound largemouths. That means the rest of his limit merely weighed an additional 13.37 pounds. In fact, his winning creel had a per fish average of a remarkable 5.28 pounds! It is fitting that a record weight took the event, as Carpenter's Boater Division guaranteed minimum first prize of \$2,000 is among the largest cash prizes ever awarded in a Federation event.

Surely, if anyone asked 2ND place finisher, Rob Laufenberg, before the event began whether a 23.17 pound limit would be enough to win the event, he would have likely stated "yes." However, in this event, that weight was only good enough to secure Laufenberg's spot in 2ND place. Laufenberg, from Dover, New Jersey and a member of the Bucketmouth Brigade, had a weight that would have won all but two other events in the Federation's history. However, while the unfortunate timing of Laufenberg's great day may not have been enough to secure him the top at this event, he still earned every penny of his \$870 2ND place Boater Division prize.

The 3RD place Boater Division finisher, Derick Olson, also broke the 20-pound barrier with five fish for 20.12 pounds. Olson, from Honey Brook, Pennsylvania and a member of the Quickfire Bassmasters, also weighed in the Boater Division lunker winning fish, a massive 7.22 pound largemouth, which

ranks as the 4TH largest lunker weighed in at a Federation event. Olson received \$635 for his 3RD place finish and an additional \$125 for his lunker. Finishing in a distant 4TH place, but nonetheless in the money, was Skeeter Lloyd. Lloyd, from Edgewater Park and a member of the Big D Valley Bassmasters weighed in four fish for 12.26 pounds, worth \$150.

While not in the money, the 5TH and 6TH place Boater Division finishers received “Free Entry” certificates into future events. Those certificates were awarded to Jason Orecchio, who finished with 9.70 pounds, and Mike Keller, who finished with 9.50 pounds.

Co-Angler Division

Co-Anglers in this season’s Federation events are vying for a minimum guaranteed one-day first prize of \$1,250. That incentive, as well as the chance to move on to a TBF National Semi-Final event, has Federation Co-Anglers registering in droves. Such an influx makes for keen competition. This event was no exception, as the top spots were separated by less than one-half pound on a day where the Co-Angler Division was marked not by numbers of fish, but rather, by size of fish.

The winner in the Co-Angler Division was Michael Lee. Lee, from Riverdale, New Jersey and a member of the Essex County Bassmasters rode a big fish bite to victory by placing two fish on the scales that totaled 10.42 pounds. One of his two fish, a 5.71 pound largemouth, was also big enough to capture the Co-Angler Division lunker prize. Lee is making a habit of winning, as this victory makes two in a row. In this regard, Lee won last year’s final event of the season held on the Delaware River. Lee was more than happy to accept the \$1,250 Co-Angler Division first prize check as well as the additional \$100 he earned based on his lunker.

Second place went to newcomer Logan Fitzpatrick who is from Pennsville, New Jersey and a member of the Castaway Bassmasters. In his first-ever Federation event, Fitzpatrick brought three fish to the scales weighing 10.06 pounds. That result, while just short of capturing the top prize, was still worth \$560. The 3RD Place Co-Angler Division winner was Ken Gremli with three fish weighing 8.53 pounds. Gremli, from Long Valley, New Jersey and also a member of the Castaway Bassmasters, received \$370. Finishing in 4TH place was Chris Ferry who weighed in two fish for 7.50 pound. Ferry, from Frenchtown, New Jersey and a member of the South Jersey Hawg Hunters received \$100.

Similar to the Boater Division, the next two highest finishing eligible Co-Anglers received “Free Entry” certificates into future events.¹ Those certificates

¹ Terry Stevens finished in 5TH place with 7.25 pounds, but is not eligible to receive a Free Entry certificate.

were awarded to Armando Lugo, who finished with 5.70 pounds, and C.J. Tuite and Pete Longo, who were tied with 5.26 pounds.²

Miscellaneous Notes

1. Only three anglers brought five fish limits to the scales and 66 fish totaling over 236 pounds were weighed in. The per fish average weight was an impressive 3.58 pounds. Additionally, in the Boater Division, two fish over seven pounds and two fish over six pounds were weighed in; and in the Co-Angler Division, three fish over five pounds were weighed in. All fish were released alive.
2. As winners of the event, John Carpenter and Michael Lee are eligible to compete at New Jersey's district 2016 TBF National Semi-Final event so long as they compete in the remaining two Federation events.
3. By virtue of being the highest placing eligible Ranger Boat owner in the event, John Carpenter will receive \$250 in Ranger Cup bonus money.

² Both anglers received the equivalent of one-half of a free entry into a future event.