

## **QUICKFIRE BASSMASTERS AND DERICK OLSON REPEAT AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN TEAM TOURNAMENT**

**Submitted by: Nick Angiulo**

No other lake in the world produces both the numbers and weights of smallmouth and largemouth that regularly come from New York's Lake Champlain. The lake's charm is not just reserved for what can be caught, but also how. Lake Champlain presents an angler with a plethora of options, from fishing shallow weed areas to fishing rock ledges and humps to just about everything in between. Add those factors to the scenic beauty of the Adirondack Mountains and you have just a few of the reasons why some of the most accomplished bass professionals in the world consider Lake Champlain their favorite lake. Given that backdrop, the New Jersey Bass Federation returned to the lake for the fourth time in the past eight years for its annual Team Tournament. The Team Tournament pits the top six anglers from each participating New Jersey Bass Federation club against one another in a two-day, cumulative weight event, and the event routinely brings New Jersey's best bass anglers out to compete. Aside from the team portion of the event, also at stake were six coveted spots on the 2015 New Jersey State Team for the top five overall finishers and the top Co-Angler. At the 2012 Team Tournament held on the lake, nearly every Federation Team Tournament record was shattered. At this event, no records fell, as the lake was a bit "off." Nevertheless, ample numbers of fish were brought to the scales and the highly competitive event must have seemed to some, in the words of Yogi Berra, like "déjà vu all over again" from the 2012 event with repeat wins from the same team and individual angler.

While this year's winning team could not nearly match its output from 2012, it surely found this repeat win just as satisfying. That team, the Quickfire Bassmasters, rode a big Day 1 weight, and its top angler's impressive two-day weight to hold on to the championship. The team comprised of the following members: Boaters Jason Orecchio; Derick Olson and Brian Calloway; and Co-Anglers Mike Wotanowski; Randy Hutchinson and Bill Spindler. Their two-day total weight was 138.07 pounds, which was enough to win the team portion of the event by over five and one-half pounds. While each of the team's members played their part, one member clearly led the way. Leading the team and winning the individual portion of the event, just as he did in 2012, was Derick Olson. Olson is a multiple-time member of the New Jersey State Team and his top finish in this event places him on the 2015 squad as a Boater. His Day 1 weight of 19.58 pounds was only .01 pounds off the Day 1 lead and helped anchor his team's impressive Day 1 weight of 81.20 pounds. That weight gave the team a nearly 15 pound cushion, and, as Day 2 played out, that cushion was necessary. The squad had a tougher Day 2 with only 56.87 pounds, but their total was still sufficient to recapture the Team Tournament Cup. Of note, ignoring the nearly two hour and fifteen minute fog delay on Day 2, Olson backed up his Day 1 weight with 17.30 pounds on Day 2, for a total of 36.88 pounds. The next highest team finisher was Brian Calloway with

26.91 pounds. Calloway was closely followed by Jason Orecchio with 26.44 pounds. Leading the team's Co-Anglers was Mike Wotanowski with 21.93 pounds; followed by Randy Hutchinson with 13.28 pounds and Bill Spindler with 12.63 pounds.

After Day 1, the second place team found itself in 10<sup>TH</sup> place overall, more than 25 pounds from the lead. However, it found a way to post a Day 2 best weight of 75.80 pounds and seriously challenge for the title. That team, the Warren County Bassmasters, coincidentally also finished in the second place position at the 2012 event. In its Day 2 comeback, most of the heavy lifting was done by the team's co-anglers, who more than doubled their total output from Day 1. Leading the way for the team was Boater Mike McMahon with a two day total of 30.14 pounds. McMahon had a solid Day 1 with over 17 pounds but had under 13 pounds on Day 2. Nevertheless, his overall weight placed him in 5<sup>TH</sup> place overall in the event, and garnered him a Co-Angler spot of the 2015 State Team. Co-Angler Brian Backus was next with 25.50 pounds, including an impressive 16.89 pounds on Day 2. Next were Boater Scott Kirkpatrick and Co-Angler Frank McMahon, both with identical weights of 22.36 pounds. Co-Angler Art Hilliker rounded out the team's weight with 9.85 pounds.

Finishing in third place was the Limiters with 128.01 pounds. Leading this team was Dave Frost with 32.53 pounds, which placed him in 3<sup>RD</sup> place overall and earned him a Boater spot on the 2015 State Team. Close behind was teammate Rob Laufenberg with 29.90 pounds, good enough for 6<sup>TH</sup> place overall, and the first alternate spot on the State Team. The remainder of the contingent was: Doug Peabody with 23.82 pounds; Dan Ardin with 22.50 pounds; Frank Hutchinson with 10.66 pounds and Joe Sodora with 8.60 pounds.

Aside from the team aspect of the event, as previously mentioned, the top five individual finishers and the top Co-Angler made the 2015 New Jersey State Team. Positions one through three get Boater slots, and positions four, five and top Co-Angler receive Co-Angler slots. Aside from the individuals mentioned above who made the team (Derick Olson, Mike McMahon and Dave Frost), three other anglers made the cut. Finishing in second overall in the event, and capturing a coveted Boater spot on the 2015 State Team, was Nick Angiulo with 33.23 pounds. Angiulo, a member of the Big D Valley Bassmasters started with 18.06 pounds on Day 1 and followed it up with 15.17 pounds on Day 2. This was Angiulo's first time qualifying for the State Team through the Team Tournament after having made it four times previously through the points circuit. Finishing in fourth overall and taking the first Co-Angler spot was Federation Vice President Mike Hart. Hart, of the Mega Bass 6, had 15.13 pounds on day one and followed with a strong 17.17 pounds on Day 2 for a total of 32.20 pounds. This season, for the first time, the top Co-Angler not already in the top five was awarded the sixth State Team spot. That incentive provided for an incredible competition with the top competitors finishing within ounces of one another. Ultimately, it was Mike Rinaldi of the Bergen Bassmasters

who captured the last State Team spot. Rinaldi started slowly on Day 1 with only 10.90 pounds, but followed that up with Day 2's best weight of 17.40 pounds. His 28.30 pounds was enough to edge Steve Brinster, of the Greenback Bassmasters, by .25 pounds. Brinster will serve as the Co-Angler alternate on the State Team.

### Tournament Notes

1. The Boater lunger for the event, a 6.53 pound largemouth, was caught by Marty Klapa, of the South Jersey Hawg Hunters on Day 2. The Co-Angler lunger was also caught on Day 2. That fish, a 6.41 pound largemouth, was caught by Mike Rinaldi. One other fish over six pounds was weighed in and many other fish over five pounds were brought to the scales over the two days.
2. While this event did not produce the eye-popping statistics that previous team events held on Champlain have, the results were nonetheless impressive. In this regard, the 124 anglers weighed in 970 fish over the two days. Of those 970 fish, 958 (98.76%) were returned to the lake alive. Kudos are warranted to all the anglers and tournament staff for ensuring that all fish were handled properly and kept alive. The total weight for the event was 2,219.97 pounds, which comes out to 17.90 pounds per angler and a per fish average of 2.29 pounds. Finally, 44 anglers (35.48%) weighed in 10 fish limits.
3. At the event, the Federation raffled off two prizes, a Ranger Boats life vest donated by North Jersey Marine and a Rapsody rod donated by Rapsody Rods. The vest was won by Donny Diggs of the Big D Valley Too chapter and the rod was won by Jason Orecchio of the Quickfire Bassmasters.
4. Special thanks also go to Jeff Cammerino of Jersey Riggs for his donation of baits to all the participating anglers.