

LIMITERS IN A SQUEAKER

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The Potomac River is renowned as a reliable fish factory. However, when considering the variable spring weather and fish just pulling out of their spawning doldrums, along with a 15 inch size minimum, the 14 teams that participated in this season's May 20 and 21 New Jersey Bass Federation's Team Tournament faced significant challenges. Regardless, this year's event was noteworthy for its incredibly close finish at the top of the team standings, as well as what could be termed as an "upset" at the top of the individual standings.

Upon arriving for practice, the participating teams were welcomed by unseasonably hot and humid conditions, along with calm winds. The final practice day, while warm, produced heavy northwest winds, an omen of the front that was ready to arrive just in time for Day 1 of the tournament. Day 1 arrived with morning temperatures nearly 20 degrees less than the previous morning and cloudy and rainy conditions. The rain continued on and off during the day and the air temperature never warmed to above 60 degrees. Regardless, the fish bit for many in the field. Day 2 started cold and clear, but warmed up during the day. However, the previous day's front dropped the water temperatures as much as five degrees in most locations, making it difficult for many anglers relying on the weed pattern to reproduce their Day 1 success.

Nevertheless, the weather could not detract from a scintillatingly close finish in the team portion of the event. In fact, this year's winning team took the event by a scant 0.85 pounds (14 ounces). That team, the Limiters, amassed a two-day total of 112.87 pounds. The team comprised of the following members: Dave Frost; Bill Kanwisher; Al "Froggy" Kolasa; Rob Laufenberg; Doug Peabody and Joe Sodora. While the team did not place any member in the top five of the overall standings, all of its members placed between 7TH and 18TH place. Leading the team was Bill Kanwisher who posted two limits weighing a total of 23.79 pounds, putting him in 7TH place overall. Rob Laufenberg was next in 13TH position with eight fish weighing 19.10 pounds; followed closely behind by Doug Peabody in 14TH place with seven fish weighing 18.97 pounds; Joe Sodora in 16TH place with seven fish weighing 17.11 pounds; Froggy Kolasa in 17TH place with eight fish weighing 17.08 pounds; and Dave Frost in 18TH place with seven fish weighing 16.82 pounds.

Finishing in second place with 112.02 pounds was the Quickfire Bassmasters. Similar to the Limiters, this team generally had consistent, but not spectacular, results. However, one of its members put enough together over the two days to finish in the top five and secure a 2016 State Team spot. That member, Derick Olson, finished in 4TH place overall with a two day, 10 fish weight of 25.93 pounds, securing a Co-Angler spot on the State Team. Finishing in 8TH place was Jason Orecchio with 10 fish totaling 23.75 pounds. Co-Angler Mike Wotanowski was next in 15TH place with seven fish weighing 17.12 pounds. The next two anglers, Brian

Calloway and Bill Spindler, finished in 20TH and 23RD place, respectively. Calloway had seven fish weighing 16.40 pounds and Spindler had six fish totaling 15.64 pounds. The team's remaining member, Donny Diggs, finished in 32ND place with six fish weighing 13.18 pounds.

Finishing in a distant third place was Blazin Bass with 90.28 pounds. Leading this team was Darren Pincus who finished in 3RD place and secured a Boater spot on the State Team with 10 fish for 26.20 pounds. Pincus was followed by Mike Keller in 9TH place with 10 fish weighing 21.02 pounds; Akira Okuyama in 30TH place with six fish for 13.85 pounds; Joe Fleischman in 34TH place with five fish weighing 12.26 pounds and Dan McGarry in 63RD place with two fish weighing 5.23 pounds.

Aside from the team aspect of the event, the top five individual finishers and the top Co-Angler made the 2016 New Jersey State Team. Positions one through three get Boater slots, and positions four, five and top Co-Angler receive Co-Angler slots. As indicated earlier, the winner of the event, while mainly unknown to many in the Federation, is well-known by his club mates as a tremendous angler and fierce competitor. Additionally, in winning the event, and making his first State Team, this angler bested four anglers directly below him in the standings who, cumulatively, have been on nearly **40** State Teams. That angler, Bruce Stearn of the Big D Valley Bassmasters rode a consistent Day 1 and spectacular Day 2 to win the event by nearly 1.50 pounds. Stearn posted a Day 1 limit of just over 11 pounds, placing him just outside of the Top 10 for the day. Returning to the same area on Day 2 and tweaking his bait choice, color and presentation slightly proved to be the winning combination. Stearn reported that he had his more than 16 pounds on the day by 9:00 a.m. His Day 2 limit proved to be the largest of the event and propelled him to a total weight of 27.68 pounds and the top spot. Finishing in second overall in the event, and capturing a coveted Boater spot on the 2016 State Team, was perennial State Team member Rich Schneidereit of the Clearwater Bassmasters. Schneidereit's 10 fish over the two days weighed 26.21 pounds. Third place, and a Boater spot, as mentioned earlier, was captured by Darren Pincus of the Blazin Bass chapter. Finishing in fourth overall and taking the first Co-Angler spot, as mentioned previously, was Derick Olson of the Quickfire Bassmasters. Fifth place and a Co-Angler slot on the State Team went to John McAloney of the Essex County Bassmasters with 10 fish weighing 25.71 pounds. The top Co-Angler not already in the top five was awarded the sixth State Team spot. Ultimately, it was Brian Snowman of the Hawg Heaven Bassmasters who easily captured that last spot. Snowman posted nine fish weighing 20.32 pounds to outdistance the next-nearest Co-Angler by over three pounds.

Tournament Notes

While this event did not produce eye-popping statistics, solid numbers were attained. In this regard, the 73 anglers weighed in 370 fish over the two days. Of

those 370 fish, 367 (99.2%) were returned to the river alive. Kudos go out to all the anglers and tournament staff for ensuring that the fish were handled properly and kept alive. The total weight for the event was 891 pounds, which comes out to 12.20 pounds per angler and a per fish average of 2.41 pounds. Only eight anglers (11.0%) weighed in 10 fish limits.