

Branson, Missouri Federation National Championship March 14, 2009

The final weigh-in of the 2009 Federation National Championship is now in the history books capping a very exciting 3 days of tournament action.

Competitors from The Idaho Bass Federation were co-angler Tony Shuyler of Eagle and the angler contender Brandon Craner of Filer. Both contenders competed in the 2007 Idaho Bass Federation Qualifier series. Brandon fished in the eastern division while Tony participated in the western division. Both anglers achieved state team status by finishing well in their individual division.

In April, 2008 The Idaho Bass Federation team contended at the Western Division TBF Championship Tournament where two anglers from each state qualified to fish the TBF National Championship.

Tony and Brandon flew into St Louis, Missouri on Monday March 9th and due to delayed flights did not arrive until late that evening. After picking up their rental car they drove to Branson, stopping early in the morning for a few hours sleep. Following their arrival in Branson they went through the tournament registration process where they were awarded numerous items from TBF sponsors. At that time they were told who their angler or co-angler draw would be for practice day on Wednesday and the first day of competition on Thursday. They were then treated to a welcome banquet at the host hotel The Hilton at Branson Landing.

Wednesday morning at 4:45 am they were treated to a warm breakfast before climbing into a new Chevy Silverado sponsor wrapped truck pulling their Ranger Z520 fully wrapped boat. After a 9 mile drive to Bull Shoals Lake they were launched and at safe light left the launch area for a day of practice fishing. At 3 pm the anglers and their boat were driven back to the host hotel. Neither of our contenders were especially excited about the results of their practice day. Having arrived in Branson on Tuesday to beautiful sunshine and a high temperature of 72 degrees they awoke on Wednesday to near freezing overcast skies with a 10 to 15 mph wind. Tony's results, for practice day was zero keeper fish while Brandon had boated three small keepers. They were fishing for large mouth and small mouth bass over 15" or spotted bass over 12".

Thursday morning saw both anglers again out of bed and in the breakfast area at 4:45 am and in the boat yard at 5:45 for the ride to the lake. Temperatures and conditions were nearly identical to the previous day.

All boats left the launch area at safe light and returned at 3 pm. Weigh-in on day 1 saw Tony weigh in one fish for 1 lb 10 oz while Brandon weighed a limit of 5 fish weighing 17 lbs 3 oz putting him at the top of the Western Division anglers and in third position overall, 2 lbs behind the leader. Friday morning was a repeat of Wednesday and Thursday with a small increase in the temperature of a couple of degrees. At the conclusion of day three Tony crossed the stage with 3 fish moving himself up in the standings but forcing him to be cut from the tournament since only the highest co-angler from the Western division would be allowed to compete on the final day. Brandon crossed the stage with another limit of 5 for a weight of 12 lbs 9 oz maintaining his position as Western division leader with a total of 30 lbs and guaranteeing his right to fish for the overall championship on Saturday. His weight moved him into 2nd place overall with a 4 lb deficit.

On Saturday the top angler and co-angler from each division again headed for the lake with another increase in the temperature of about 10 degrees, partly cloudy skies and very little breeze. Anglers returned to the launch site at 2:15 pm and entered the hotel convention center for the final weigh-in at 3 pm. Brandon's results on day three were less stellar than he had been able to accomplish on the first two days. With his final two fish of the event Brandon weighed a little more than 4 pounds dropping him to 5th place overall. I am sure it is hard for Brandon to be disappointed with his final over all standings when he considers that he is now the owner of a new 2009 Ranger 198VX. Brandon won this boat by being a registered Ranger cup member and owning his own Ranger boat. Other anglers finishing above him were not Ranger owners and therefore lost out on the opportunity to win this boat. Additionally Brandon was awarded a check for \$2500 while Tony was awarded \$250. Brandon also has a guaranteed no entry fee admission to the BFL All American Championship to fish for 1 million dollars.

The overall winner of this event won a prize package worth \$100,000 which included a check for \$10,000 and a Living the Dream package which includes a wrapped Ranger boat and Chevy truck, entry fees to FLW Series or Tour events and expense money.

If you run into Brandon or Tony ask them about the experience. Both anglers received \$500 from The Idaho Bass Federation which was adequate to cover all of their travel expenses. Rooms for each of

them were paid by TBF at the host hotel. Each boat was supplied with a lunch and bottled water each day. They were supplied with tow vehicles and boats with an onsite maintenance crew from Ranger, Yamaha and Evinrude to assure that they were kept running. Each boat was filled with gas each morning and the anglers only concern was catching fish.

Every TBF angler is encouraged to work toward the goal of reaching this level of competition.

The full presentation of this event will be broadcast on Versus Country on April 26th so set you DVR's and give a cheer for our state's competitors.