

NY State Team Members Fish Hard Under Tough Conditions

The 2007 BASS Federation Nation Eastern Divisional was held on the Connecticut River. Of the 12 anglers each state sends, one will qualify for the Nationals. Of the anglers at the Nationals, one from each division will represent the Federation Nation on bass fishing's biggest stage - The Bassmaster Classic. Only one Federation angler has ever won the Classic and that was Brian Kerchal in 1994. Since then, some have come close, but no Federation angler has been able to repeat to this accomplishment.

The tough bite and low weights were not a surprise on the Connecticut River for the Eastern Divisional; however, there was one surprise that caught the competitors off guard. BASS founder Ray Scott was the guest speaker at the pre-tournament dinner Tuesday night with the event starting on Wednesday. It was there that it was announced the Ray would be weigh-master for all three days of the event. Not everyone can say that they walked across the BASS stage and had Ray Scott call his weight and talk to him.

Ray was in his old form, from the big cowboy hat and leather vest to betting dollars on the weight of fish against the angler who caught it. His biggest talent on stage was being able to make most everyone feel comfortable up there with him. Ray would ask questions about the angler's professional or hometown, things that were easy to answer and got the anglers relaxed in front of the group that assembled at the weigh-in. He also was able to tie in and relate personal stories that were entertaining and kept a flow to the weigh-in.

It is an odd dynamic at the divisional as teams compete both together and against each other. Not only is New York competing against the other state teams in our Division for cash, pride and

prizes, but the top guy on the team moves on to fish the Nationals. This can lead to problems for some teams, but we were, for the most part, able to discuss techniques and let the chips fall where they may.

The first morning's launch was delayed about two hours. But once the haze had lifted and the fishing was done, New York had two anglers in the top three spots, held lunger and stood atop the leaderboard. We held the lead despite



The 2007 New York State Team Placed 2nd Despite Some Tough Fishing

that fact that a third of the team blanked and only three anglers brought in more than one fish. Both Brad Brodnicki and Chris Loftus caught limits; there were only three limits caught that day. John Badman, the team's alternate, fished in place of Tom Luciano who felt under the weather.

On day 2, we weren't ready to let go of the lead, in fact, we were able to build on it. Brad brought in four more fish and found himself in second place in the tournament. Chris slipped a little by only catching two fish, but he still was in fifth place after the second frame. Despite the tough conditions by the second day everyone on the team contributed by weighing in at least one fish. Interestingly, Tom Luciano was able to repay John on day two by fishing for him because John now felt sick. John was no-

ticeably absent from the weigh-in on day two. We would later learn that he drove home and ended up in the hospital with a burst appendix. Our well wishes still go out to John who is recovering well.

We started day 3 with a four pound cushion over the closest team. Having averaged 35 pounds per day the first two days as a team, we hit our mark again on the final day, but the total weight of 108-06 was only good enough

for a second place finish. Our New York Team finished second in the event only due to a heroic comeback mounted by Connecticut Team which had a huge final day and stole the lead that we had held for the first two days. The second place finish was good for a nice payday for the Federation and a plaque and trophies for the team members. Chris Loftus had a great final day coming in with a limit and moving up to finish in second place in the tournament

and first on the New York team. With that finish Chris qualified to fish the Nationals in November. Congrats and good luck Chris!

It only took an average of ten and a half pounds per man for the Connecticut team to blow away the field at the Connecticut River Divisional. That comes out to a mere 3 ½ pounds per man per day. The conditions were tough, but our team gave a great effort and came away with another great finish. I'd like to thank all the team members: Christopher Loftus, Brad Brodnicki, Lee Rogers, Kerry Rice, Noel Good, James Moore, Thomas Luciano, Patrick Miura, Frank Giner, Mike Mapes, Corey DiLorenzo, and John Badman for a great week. I can't wait for the next opportunity to fish as part of the state team. **FL**