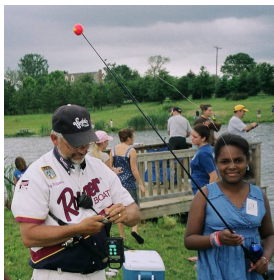


31 May 2008 Family Fishing Day Story by Michael Hall

31 May 2008 at Franklin Park began under gray skies, considerable winds, and scary weather forecasts predicting severe thunderstorms for the Washington DC metro area. As all our volunteers started to show up there was an amazing level of determination and energy. The predicted weather was not going to stop us from having our best fishing day ever. There was a confidence and peace we all felt that this was indeed going to be a special day.



We all knew that we needed to be vigilant as we had already seen weather channel reports of storm damage across the country. Despite the ominous black cloud that moved in from the northwest about 7:30 a.m., the optimistic volunteers worked to set up the various activities for the day. Our volunteers remained fearless and pressed on regardless of the appearance of the sky throughout the morning. As would be the case for most of the day the big black ominous clouds either went north or south of Franklin Park. We thank God for looking out after all of us and allowing us to have our best fishing day ever. Amazingly, all the bad weather missed us until after we had just about wrapped up the day.



Our volunteers, contributors, and sponsors are all very special people. They have taken ownership of our family fishing day and raised the level of energy and enthusiasm for our event. We want to recognize them for their amazing dedication and selfless service for the benefit of others. It takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to plan and conduct such a large event. It is exciting when so many people donate their time, their skills, and money for the sole purpose of providing a fun

filled day of fishing for families. We thank all our volunteers, contributors, and sponsors for helping to put big smiles on the faces of all people that attended our fishing day. Your contributions are noteworthy, highly professional, and a fantastic example of reaching out to help other people. The Volunteers included:

- a. John Britton – Repeat volunteer for the Casting Competition who set up the Casting skills lanes, hung banners, and provided the bow of a Ranger Boat for casting. He also provided the necessary clipboards, pens, and extra coolers. Before the day of the event, he prepared over 80 rods and reels to be used and came out to the park to help with the pre-set-up.



- b. Bobby Williams – Co-Tournament Director at the pond, who helped at the pond with tangled lines, tied on lures, baited hooks, and demonstrated casting techniques. He also provided 200 dozen night crawlers, acted as the



spokesperson, and closed the event with the distribution of the prizes.

- c. Sandi Williams – Registered over 100 children for the tournament, registered over half of them for the Casting Skills contest, and kept track of all the paperwork despite the non-stop wind and the sprinkling rain. She steadfastly worked all day, organized the prizes, and drew the numbers when it came time to give away the prizes.

- d. Rick Whitaker – Co-Tournament Director at the pond, who managed the overall weigh-in, demonstrated his fishing techniques, baited hooks, and tied on lures. Rick had also come out the day before and helped to set up the tables, chairs, and water tanks for the fish.



- e. Casey Whitaker – Information technology support to capture all the results of the tournament in a laptop computer, which meant she didn't move from her spot for almost 4 hours. A special thank you goes to this teenager who gave up a day with friends to help us.

- f. Russ Jewell – A member of OBC Bassmasters who walked the perimeter of the pond providing help to families. He darted at each happy shout to weigh the catch and provide a live release.

- g. Jimmy Porter – Another member of OBC Bassmasters who helped his future competition at the shoreline, baited hooks, fixed rods and reels, and hurried to each happy angler to weigh the fish for a quick live release.



- h. Michael Hall II – Webmaster who provided the behind the scenes web page support before and after the event including advertising and publishing the pictures. Did much of the camera duty at the park and assisted the cooks. See www.Mikehallfishing.com.

- i. Pastor Lewis Holmes – Pastor of Oakton Baptist Church and a faithful volunteer every year. He energized the crowd with the opening prayer for the safety of all the attendees and thanks for all the support of the volunteers and sponsors. He gathered the food, fired up the grills, and led the team that cooked and served all the great food.



- j. Bob Seymour – A member of OBC who faithfully comes out to support us every year, bringing the much loved watermelons. He walked among the families at the pond, helped with fishing poles and baited hooks. He was part of the cooking team and monitored the marine weather band radio since we were under a tornado watch.

- k. Valerie and Norman Reinhart – Members of OBC who came out to help with the grilling and serving of all the delicious food.



- l. The Franklin Park staff – Devon Smith, Mike Winner, Mark McGuire, Donnie Chapman, Allen Keys, Kelly Taylor, Jennifer, and Jim for all the incredible

park set up and support. This included setting up portable bathrooms, two gas grills, three large canopy tents, large coolers with ice, configuring many heavy picnic tables and chairs, providing electrical hookups, and trash cans. Without your faithful support each year, we could not provide such an event.



m. Volunteers from the Orange County High School Bass Club and Piedmont bass clubs did a fantastic job of running the FLW/TBF Casting skills. Kyle McHenry, Stephen Beasley, Kevin Beasley, Randy Beasley,



Randy Beasley Jr., Scott Taylor, Mike McHenry all worked tirelessly to teach many children how to flip, pitch, and cast. They also were a big help to families around the pond. Special thanks go to Ms. Becky Gore who has built a highly competitive bass club of high school students who give up their teenage fun each year to help us.



We want to especially recognize our non-Sponsor Financial Contributors who give from the heart each year in support of this event so that we can provide the activities including food and prizes for free. These included the OBC Bassmasters, Bill Rowe, Gloria and Alan An, Rick Whitaker, and Bobby and Sandi Williams.

We are continually grateful to the faithful support of our Sponsors. Without them we could not provide the numerous prizes for this event each year. Each child went home with a prize because of your generosity.

- ☆ Dick's Sporting Goods
- ☆ Ranger Boats
- ☆ Pack-Rat Temperature controlled storage containers
- ☆ Grandt Rods
- ☆ U.S. FLW National Guard Fishing Team
- ☆ Scott Taylor of Piedmont Bass masters
- ☆ Mikehallfishing
- ☆ Mare Marine



We had a really lively crowd of people by our start time. Many families were there by 8:00 a.m. Due to the ominous weather predictions, we decided to open up our



casting skills area early thanks to Scott Taylor and all the Orange county High school volunteers. The idea was a big success as many people were able to learn some new casting skills early and then used them during the tournament.

To keep track of all the fish weights and sizes, Sandy assigned all the children a number that Casey Whitaker programmed into her laptop. A number was stuck to each child's shirt at the registration table so the shoreline volunteers could correctly identify each catch. Russ, Jimmy, Rick, and Bobby weighed each caught fish on hand held scales and then used walkie talkies to pass the weights and numbers to Casey.



At 0900 we had our opening ceremony that included a brief overview of the fishing guidelines by Bobby Williams, Invocation by Pastor Lewis Holmes, and the pledge of allegiance led by Noah Trone. It was exhilarating to watch all the people saying the pledge of allegiance as the American flag rippled in the strong morning breeze. Then the volunteers stepped back as everyone took off to the pond to begin fishing. It was time to go try and catch the big ones!



Soon after the fishing started, Franklin Park specialist Devon Smith was the first to hear that Franklin Park was included in a tornado watch that included many counties in Virginia. The skies had become noticeably darker and we had a couple hundred people spread around the Franklin pond. Should we pull everyone off the pond and cancel? After consultation with the Franklin park Staff and our pro bass fishermen we decided to be very vigilant and continue on. As a safety precaution a weather band radio was set up so we could monitor all incoming weather warnings and get people to safe shelter if a tornado was spotted.

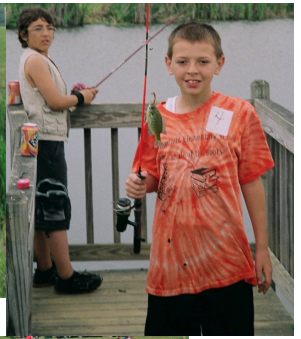
Thanks again Lew for praying for the hedge of protection that covered us all day.





In the 2 ½ hour period allocated to fishing, the children participating in

the tournament caught 132 fish. The total weight was 43.89 lbs. There were 103 bluegill and sunfish, 10 catfish, and 19 bass caught. Many of the sunfish caught were the beautiful redear sunfish or shell cracker that we had stocked a few years ago. We congratulate all of our families for the impressive catch they all made in only 2 ½ hours of fishing in windy stormy weather.



Our top catches from the fishing included:

1. 3 year old Ethan Crawford caught the largest bass with a weight of 1.71 lbs. See what happens when you practice casting skills at a Casting Kids Competition first!
2. David Arbogosi caught the largest catfish with a weight of 4.45 lbs.

3. Jack Darby caught the largest sunfish with a weight of .8lbs.

4. Joshua Thorpe caught the most total weight overall of 4.52 lbs.

By 1130 Pastor Lew and the Reinharts had cooked up several hundred hamburgers and hotdogs. The hungry crowd lined up and filled piled their plates high with burgers, hot dogs, baked beans, chips, watermelon, and the big Costco cookies we all love. We always seem to have the most fun when people are eating and this year was no exception. There were plenty of extra hotdogs, hamburgers, baked beans, chips, and cookies to allow our hungriest fisherman and fisher ladies to go for seconds.



To the true fisherman, bait and tackle are way more important than food!



During lunch Scott Taylor and the Orange County High School volunteers took a few more children through the FLW/TBF Casting skills. We also prepared our awards ceremony and drawing for prizes.



The



menacing skies led us to accelerate our event and we began the awards ceremony and prize give away before everyone had finished their lunch. As our 2008 TBF Virginia State Mr. Bass Champion Bobby Williams so expertly stated, "This storm is not going to miss us and we better get moving." All the families gathered around as Sandi drew the numbers and Bobbi called them out over the noise of the excited crowd. There were many rod and reel combinations provided by Dick's sporting Goods sponsorship, Wal-Mart Tackle boxes provided by Mikehallfishing, A big hit with the children and the adults were the flashy Red Ranger pro bass hats and tee shirts. And a happy choice for the youngest of the crowd and some of the young ladies were the packrat stuffed animals provided by PackRat. There were more than enough gifts for all the children. It was quite a scene to see all the smiling faces as we wrapped up the event in the rain that had finally caught up with us.

A beautiful Grandt All American bait casting rod was presented to Scott Taylor and the Orange County High school bass masters for their great support as we stood under the canopy tent as the rain, wind, thunder and lightning really got going. By now most of the families were safely on their way home and another day of memories was coming to a close.

As the thunder boomed, the bright yellow lightning flashed, the wind howled, and the rain came down in buckets, our fearless volunteers cleaned up. We all felt confident and a joy that comes of giving of yourself to help others. Even above all the noise from the storm, you could hear our soaking wet volunteers already talking about next year, "Hey we are going to make this bigger, better, and keep this going for years to come." We already have 21 trophies that Bobby and Sandi Williams are going to have engraved for the 2009 Family Fishing Day.



There was one last job to be done. John Britton walked around the pond in the storm to pickup any remaining trash and collect any left behind loaner rods and reels. Teresa and Michael Hall bagged up the remaining trash from the picnic area and emptied out the loaner coolers.

Hey this was fun, let's do it again!

