

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Tight Lines: Everyone wins at Catch a Cure

By Brett Prettyman
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I have never been a big fan of competition fishing. Sure, I enjoy the thrill of the weigh-in and the look of a pro angler who just lost the fish that would have put him on top. But at its core, tournament fishing is an individual sport.

I'm much more of a team player, so buddy tournaments, as the team bass fishing tournaments hosted by the Utah Bass Federation are fondly known, appeal to me. I have fished in a couple, including one at Flaming Gorge with Ron Colby - one of four Utahns to compete in the Bassmaster Classic.

The others have all been at the annual Catch a Cure for Cancer bass and walleye tournament at Starvation Reservoir each June. It is one fishing tournament I'd really like to win, just so I can get that emotional rush of handing the first-place check back to organizers Carri and Jerry Schlief.

The Schliefs then hand that check, and all the others turned back to them by other tournament participants, to the people who run Camp Hobe, a summer camp for children with cancer and their siblings.

The sixth annual Catch a Cure for Cancer fishing tournament is June 24. In the five previous tournaments, the Schliefs and anglers have raised \$52,000 to help get children with this horrible disease out of the sterile hospital environments and into the woods, or at least a cabin in the woods.

"The first year it was something new so we got some interest, but as the years have progressed it has become an event that bass and walleye anglers mark on their schedule long before it happens," said Carri Schlief. "People hear about it and they want to be involved. It's raising money for children with cancer. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?"

The inaugural event raised \$5,900 and gave the Schliefs enough success to try again. More than \$15,900 was raised at last year's event.

Here's how it works. A team of two anglers pay typical tournament registration fees of \$120 to fish in either the bass or the walleye side of the contest. They can also pay \$240 to enter both sides of the tournament.

There is also an individual option pot of \$20 for big fish in both species. After the weigh-in, checks are handed to the top five teams in each category and for big bass and walleye honors.

That's when the magic happens.

"It's an amazing feeling. You feel so grateful when someone says the money means nothing to them and that it means more to them to give something to the children," Carri Schlieff said. "It chokes me up every time."

After the awards, volunteers from Camp Hobe, including the families of participants and some of the children themselves, serve up a barbecue.

"There is no winning or losing, everybody wins, especially the kids," she said. "That's what Catch a Cure is all about."

Because there is no pressure to win, the tournament has a laid-back feeling, which makes it all the more appealing. This is a great way for people who have wanted to compete in a tournament before but were anxious about the details to get a taste of how it all works.

Still looking for a Father's Day present? Sign yourself and your father or grandpa up as a team or sign up in honor of a lost family member. Through the years, an increasing number of father/children and spouse teams have competed in the name of supporting Camp Hobe.

For more information, check out <http://www.catchacureforcancer.com/> and I'll see you on Starvation - hopefully when they hand out the checks.

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