Local article by Daniel Sostek

Pair of Chambersburg teens heading to national fishing championship in June

Ever since his pappy first taught him how to cast and reel when he was three, Chambersburg teenager Carson Forrester loved to fish.
What was initially just a hobby for Forrester and his friend Dylan Barefoot became more than that, as, after finding their way into competitive bass fishing this past year, the duo won the Junior PA BASS State Championships on Sept. 30, earning a trip to the Junior National BASS Championships held in Tennessee in June.
Forrester and Barefoot gained eligibility for the Pennsylvania championships earlier this year, after Carson’s mother Missi Forrester helped find a club for them to join, a requirement for anyone who competes in the championships.
Because of the lack of options in Chambersburg, the two 13-year-old CAMS North students joined the **Capital City Bassmasters in Harrisburg,** making treks out around Central PA to fish.
“Fishing is big around here, but we really don’t have any local teams [in Franklin County],” Missi Forrester said. “Carson’s always been interested in it, and it took me a very long time to find me a place to get him in.”
After joining, the pair, who had previously been friends through lacrosse before Forrester got Barefoot to tag along on fishing trips, started competing this year. At first, they didn’t have much success, finishing around the middle or bottom in most of the competitions to prior to the junior championships.
They picked a pretty good time for win number one.
“This was the very first thing that they had won all year,” “So, to be able to win the state championship as their first victory was pretty exciting.”
The competition, which took place at Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County, forbid the use of live bait, and took the average of the five heaviest bass caught and kept in a live well that were over 12 inches.
Forrester and Barefoot had scouted the lake out beforehand.
“We had went the day before and fished the lake, so we had kind of figured out some good spots,” Carson said.  The duo had Missi’s brother’s military friend, Earle Lightner, drive their boat for them. Lightner, an avid fisherman, made the trip all the way from West Virginia to help Forrester and Barefoot out.Missi noted how this one of the many positives of youth fishing: the bonding it allows for younger and older generations to have out on the water.  “The nice thing about this is that in all of these competitions, there are adults that volunteer their time to take these kids out,” she said. “They’re all adult fishermen that belong to some sort of fishing club. It’s kind of like a mentor thing.”  Forrester and Barefoot initially weren’t overly confident that they had won when they were still out on the water with Lightner, who, per competition rules, was not permitted to advise or help the teenagers at all.  But once they got in and started squaring up their competitors, they started to feel more assured. “Once we got in, we felt a lot better, because we started seeing what other people caught,” Forrester said. “They weren’t catching as many big fish.”

Fishing season is drawing to a close now as the weather chills. So Forrester and Barefoot will have to put their rods to rest for the time being. But they’ll start focusing on the national championships, which will be held at Carroll County’s 1,000 Acre Recreational Lake near Huntingdon, Tennessee.  Forrester says he’ll begin to gather intel on the unfamiliar lake, reading up online and trying to speak to others who have fished down there. For him, the exploration of new waters is the most exciting prospect of the berth.  “We’ll get to go down there, and it’s totally different fishing down there” Forrester said. “Just to fish different lakes at places like that [is great]”