



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Families Win Top Prizes at Bass Pro Shops US Open Regional Qualifying Event on Texas' Lake Ray Roberts

Ultimate customer appreciation event benefits conservation

*Cousins from Oklahoma collect \$50,000 first-place check with
Top 40 teams advancing to National Championship on Missouri's
Table Rock Lake this fall*



SANGER, Texas – Cousins Alan Barton and Tanner Barton claimed first place at the regional qualifying event for the [Bass Pro Shops US Open National Bass Fishing Amateur Team Championships](#) – a first-of-its-kind amateur fishing tournament offering the biggest payout in freshwater fishing history – on Sunday, April 18, at legendary Lake Ray Roberts.

After inclement weather postponed the regional qualifying event a day to Sunday, the wait was worth it for the Bartons from Stillwater and Edmond, Okla., who fished from a Ranger Z521 boat and hauled in a five-fish catch weighing in at 22.64 pounds to top the 250-team field. They collect a first-place prize of \$50,000 and are one of 40 teams to qualify for the National Championship on Nov. 19-21 at Big Cedar Lodge on Missouri’s famed Table Rock Lake. The National Championship will be broadcast internationally on NBC and carries a \$1 million cash prize to the winning team.



Easton Munro (right), a 7-year-old angler from Manitou, Okla., fished with father Brandon Munro and won the youth category.



First place winners and cousins Tanner Barton of Edmond, Okla., and Alan Barton of Stillwater, Okla., finished first, with noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris.

“With so many friends and families making memories, we couldn’t have asked for a better day at Lake Ray Roberts,” said noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris. “Congratulations to all the winners, and thanks to everyone who participated and reminded us why we love fishing, conservation and the great outdoors. We look forward to hosting the top 40 teams for the National Championship in Missouri this fall.”

"At 62, your dreams still come true," said first-place winner Alan Barton after winning the first-place \$50,000 prize. "We're going to spend our prize money on fishing! We'll need to work hard and do our homework on Table Rock to do well in the National Championship, but we can't wait to get up there in November."



Anglers of all ages enjoyed the chance to celebrate fishing and conservation during the free event.



Johnny Morris (right) exchanges fishing stories and laughs with families and fishing fans.



Eli Still (left), a 12-year-old angler from Minden, La., fished with father Chad Still and won the junior category.

Proceeds from the Bass Pro Shops US Open benefit local fisheries conservation and the future of fishing thanks to Bass Pro Shops and Toyota. The event is a true celebration of bass fishing, exclusively for amateur anglers with a guaranteed purse value of \$4.3 million.

“It was an honor for us to partner with Bass Pro Shops in hosting this event and also contributing to conservation in our home state of Texas,” said Bob Carter, executive vice president of sales, Toyota Motor North America. “We’re grateful to Johnny Morris for his vision in creating an all-amateur tournament that connects people of all ages and backgrounds to nature, while positively impacting conversation. After seeing all the big bass caught this weekend, it’s evident the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department’s Toyota ShareLunker program continues to be among the best bass management programs in the country.”



Fans enjoyed free outdoor events and activities designed to help families get excited about the outdoors.



Fishing buddies Blake Slater and Eric Starnater from Mansfield, Texas, and Waxahachie, Texas, won \$9,000 and a replica of their 9-pound bass for the Biggest Bass at the event. The duo also won the Hometown Hero category.

Angler Prizes

The top 40 teams received a payout and qualified for the National Championship. Additional prizes were awarded for catching the biggest bass within the following categories:

- **Overall/Hometown Hero:** The biggest bass (9.06 pounds) was caught by Blake Slater from Mansfield, Texas, while fishing with buddy Eric Starnater from Waxahachie, Texas, winning \$9,060 (\$1,000 per pound). Slater will receive a replica mount of the bass, with a replica also going on display at Bass Pro Shops in Grapevine, Texas, earned 8 pounds of Black Rifle Coffee for landing a bass larger than 8 pounds, and was entered into a drawing for a Nitro Z20 boat. Additionally, Slater - a lieutenant in the Pantego, Texas, Fire Department - won an additional \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass among veterans, active military and hometown hero anglers.
- **Youth Angler:** Easton Munro, a 7-year-old angler from Manitou, Okla., fished with dad Brandon and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for the biggest bass (2.73 pounds) among anglers ages 10 and under.
- **Junior Angler:** Eli Still, a 12-year-old angler from Minden, La., fished with dad Chad and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for the biggest bass (2.61 pounds) among anglers ages 11-17.

- **Family Teams:** Craig and Chris Sanders, a husband-wife team from Oklahoma City, Okla., earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for the biggest bass caught by a Family Team (8.18 pounds).

Families and Veterans Among the Amateurs Competing for \$1 Million

The Lake Ray Roberts qualifying event featured anglers ranging in age from 6 – 84 years old. The amateur field of 250 two-person teams consisted of a cross-section of families and active military/veterans adding to the fun of the tournament, including:

- 59 military veterans
- 3 active military
- 35 father-son teams
- 10 mother-son teams
- 14 husband-wife teams
- 11 brother-brother teams
- 2 father-daughter teams
- 20 female anglers

Benefiting the Future of Fishing in Texas & Beyond

The Lake Ray Roberts event benefits local fish habitat with proceeds supporting [The National Fish Habitat Partnership](#). Thanks to Bass Pro Shops and Toyota, 100 percent of all entry fees – over \$1 million throughout the tournament – will benefit conservation.

Under the visionary conservation leadership of Johnny Morris, Bass Pro Shops has made significant contributions to the future of the outdoors in the Lone Star State as a longstanding conservation partner of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD). From fisheries management to restoring Eastern wild turkey and cutting-edge bobwhite quail research, Bass Pro Shops and TPWD are working together to find solutions for critical conservation needs including the restoration and enhancement of native wildlife, public education, and nationally-recognized research programs.

Johnny Morris and Bass Pro Shops are proud partners of TPWD's renowned [Toyota ShareLunker](#) program, a national model for trophy bass management that encourages angler participation in producing bigger, better bass for Texas lakes. Now in its 35th year, the program enables anglers to donate bass greater than 13 pounds to TPWD Inland Fisheries biologists for a selective breeding program and genetic analysis, spawning bigger, better bass that will enhance fishing in Texas lakes for years to come.

To honor Johnny's contributions and those of fellow conservationist Richard M Hart, TPWD established the [Richard M. Hart and Johnny Morris Conservation Center](#) at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, Texas, which stands as a centerpiece of the campus and a lasting legacy of the partnership. The 14,000 square foot facility provides unparalleled educational opportunities for Texans and a place to celebrate Texas' rich fishing heritage.

In keeping with its longstanding commitment to conservation, Johnny Morris and Bass Pro Shops partnered with TPWD to help ensure all fish caught during the Bass Pro Shops US Open regional qualifying event on Lake Ray Roberts were released responsibly following a fish-friendly weigh-in.

Remaining Regional Qualifying Events

April 24 – Lake Mead, Nevada (*registration closed*)

July 17 – Chesapeake Bay, Maryland (*registration opens May 12*)

Aug. 21 – Lake St. Clair, Michigan (*registration opens May 12*)

Sept. 11 – Old Hickory Lake, Tennessee (*registration opens July 14*)

Oct. 16 – Grand Lake, Oklahoma (*registration opens July 14*)

Nov. 17 – Bull Shoals Lake, Arkansas (*registration date TBA*)

To learn more about the Bass Pro Shops US Open and how to register for remaining regional qualifying events, visit

www.basspro.com/usopen.

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About Bass Pro Shops

[Bass Pro Shops](http://www.basspro.com) is North America's premier outdoor and conservation company. Founded in 1972 when avid young angler Johnny Morris began selling tackle out of his father's liquor store in Springfield, Missouri, today the company provides customers with unmatched offerings spanning

premier destination retail, outdoor equipment manufacturing, world-class resort destinations and more. In 2017 Bass Pro Shops acquired [Cabela's](#) to create a “best-of-the-best” experience with superior products, dynamic locations and outstanding customer service. Bass Pro Shops also operates [White River Marine Group](#), offering an unsurpassed collection of industry-leading boat brands, and [Big Cedar Lodge](#), America's Premier Wilderness Resort. Under the visionary conservation leadership of Johnny Morris, Bass Pro Shops is a national leader in protecting habitat and introducing families to the outdoors and has been named by Forbes as “one of America's Best Employers.”

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