



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2021

Fishing Buddies Win Top Prizes at Bass Pro Shops US Open Regional Qualifying Event on Lake St. Clair

Ultimate customer appreciation event benefits conservation

Michigan team collects \$50,000 first-place check with Top 40 teams advancing to National Championship on Missouri's Table Rock Lake this fall



HARRISON TOWNSHIP, Mich. – Amateur fishing buddies Neil Vande Biezen and Jakob Zona 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 Saturday, August 21, on Lake St. Clair near Detroit.

Vande Biezen and Zona, from Ostego, Mich., and Sturgis, Mich., respectively, fished from a Nitro boat and hauled in a five-fish catch weighing in at 24 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.



Logan Craft (left), a 4-year-old angler from Mason, Mich., fished with father Josh Craft and won the Youth category.



First place winners and buddies Neil Vande Biezen (left) of Ostego, Mich., and Jakob Zona (right) of Sturgis, Mich., at weigh-in on Saturday, August 21.

“We had a lot of success catching these fish deep and guessed we had around a 23-pound limit,” said first-place winner Neil Vande Biezen after winning the first-place \$50,000 prize. “We didn’t know how that would stack up at weigh-in, but we’re excited and honored to win our home state event and advance to the National Championship.”

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:

- **Biggest Bass:** The biggest bass (6.15 pounds) was caught by fishing buddies Joshua Barr and Jeff Thomson from Louisville, Ohio, and Birmingham, Mich., respectively. Barr and Thomson earned \$6,150 for the massive catch (\$1,000 per pound), will receive a replica mount of the bass with a duplicate going on display at Bass Pro Shops in Auburn Hills,



Fishing buddies Joshua Barr and Jeff Thomson, from Louisville, Ohio, and Birmingham, Mich., respectively, landed a 6.15-pound Lake St. Clair whopper to win the Biggest Bass category and take home \$6,150.



Brothers and firefighters Mark Regina and Larry Regina from Mishawaka, Ind., won the Hometown Hero and Family categories with a 5.34-pound bass.

Mich., and was entered into a drawing for a Nitro Z20 boat.

- **Youth Angler:** Logan Craft, a 4-year-old angler from Mason, Mich., fished with dad Josh Craft and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (5.51 pounds) among anglers ages 0-10.
- **Junior Angler:** Hunter Gillies, a 16-year-old angler from Union City, Mich., fished with dad Timothy Gillies and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (4.63 pounds) among anglers ages 11-17.
- **Hometown Hero/Family:** Brothers Mark Regina and Larry Regina, firefighters from Mishawaka, Ind., earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (5.34 pounds) by a Hometown Hero team. The brothers also scored another \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass among all family teams.

Benefiting the Future of Fishing

The Lake St. Clair qualifying event benefits conservation 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 fund critical fisheries conservation and habitat projects nationwide.

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



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

Remaining Regional Qualifying Events

Sept. 11 – Old Hickory Lake, Tennessee (*registration closed*)

Oct. 2 – Lake Havasu, Arizona (*registration closed*)

Oct. 16 – Grand Lake, Oklahoma (*registration closed*)

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

To learn more about the Bass Pro Shops US Open and how to register for the final qualifying event at Bull Shoals Lake, visit www.basspro.com/usopen.

###

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.”

Media Contact: press@basspro.com, 417-873-4567