



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma Fishing Buddies Win Top Prizes at Bass Pro Shops US Open Regional Qualifying Event on Grand Lake

Ultimate customer appreciation event benefits conservation

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



GROVE, Okla. – Amateur fishing buddies James Wayne and Creston Harrel 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, October 16, on Grand Lake.

Wayne from Vinita, Okla., and Harrel from Claremore, Okla., fished from a Ranger boat and hauled in a five-fish catch weighing in at 17.06 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.



Diesel Everest (center), a 10-year-old angler from Hobbs, N.M., fished with father Richard Everest and won the Youth category.



Brody Hardaway (right), a 17-year-old angler from Broken Bow, Okla., fished with father Eric Hardaway and won the Junior category.

“We are thankful to everyone at Bass Pro Shops for putting this on,” first-place winner James Wayne said. “We look forward to seeing everyone on Table Rock.”

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 (5.46 pounds) was caught by longtime fishing buddies Steve Ortiz and Scott Melton from Lawrence, Kan., and Lake of the Ozarks, Mo., respectively. Ortiz and Melton earned \$5,460 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 Broken Arrow, Okla., and was entered into a drawing for a Nitro Z20 boat.



Longtime fishing buddies Steve Ortiz and Scott Melton, respectively, landed a 5.46-pound Grand Lake whopper to win the Biggest Bass category and take home \$5,460.



Fishing buddies James Brock and veteran Allen Matlaock (right) from Tulsa, Okla., won the Veteran category with a 5-pound bass.

- **Youth Angler:** Diesel Everest, a 10-year-old angler from Hobbs, N.M., fished with dad Richard Everest and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (3.02 pounds) among anglers ages 0-10.
- **Junior Angler:** Brody Hardaway, a 17-year-old angler from Broken Bow, Okla., fished with dad Eric Hardaway and earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (3.07 pounds) among anglers ages 11-17.
- **Veteran Angler:** Marine veteran Allen Matlaock and his best friend and longtime fishing buddy James Brock both from Tulsa, Okla., earned a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops gift card for catching the biggest bass (5 pounds) by a Veteran team.

Benefiting the Future of Fishing

The Grand Lake 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.



Anglers and fans enjoyed meeting fishing legends Edwin Evers, Roland Martin and Jimmy Houston, as well as free activities designed to help families get excited about the outdoors.

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

Remaining Regional Qualifying Event

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

To learn more about the Bass Pro Shops US Open, visit www.basspro.com/usopen.

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About Bass Pro Shops

[Bass Pro Shops](#) 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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