

Chain O Lakes PWT Wrap-Up



The In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail (PWT) tournament held last week on our Fox Chain of Lakes is history. By most accounts, it seems to have been very successful. Did you hear how I did as a co-angler?

The weather was a big part of the story. On Wednesday, Day One of the tournament, precisely at 10a.m., a cold front blew in. It didn't sneak in. It roared in. I felt it on the back of my neck and instinctively looked at my watch because I figured it would become a factor.

Fish don't like cold fronts, especially in shallow lakes like the Chain, where the surface water temperature can cool rapidly. Fish are cold blooded and react almost instantly to changes in their immediate environment. Sharp drops in water temperature slow down their metabolism, make them less aggressive and sometime shut off their

mood to feed.

Just when I thought the fishing weather couldn't get any worse, it did on Friday, Day Three. It was colder, windier, and it also rained. The dampness of it all was chilling to the body core, and on days like that one, no matter how much clothing one wears, eight hours of that kind of weather in a boat ain't no picnic.

After a couple of hours, your fingers stop working. Tying knots with four-pound test Fireline or six-pound test monofilament becomes a chore that takes five times as long as normal, and you still wonder whether you've tied a good knot that will hold up to a big fish.

And inserting a hook through the jaws of a slippery little fathead minnow? At times, it's laughable. The lively fathead, wiggling and squirming, wants no part of the hook, and squirts out of your hand onto the floor of the boat. You have to bend down to pick it up, a task hard enough already because you've got on tons of clothes plus a rain suit.

Of course, the fathead finds a nook or cranny in the deck of the boat in which to hide and refuses to cooperate. After all, nobody, not even a fathead, wants to be impaled on a hook and presented as a meal for a bigger fish that has teeth. Why you try to grab it, it feels like you have two catcher's mitts for hands.

Swearing and cussing at the minnow usually doesn't help too much, either.

Okay, back to my tournament finish. I caught a bunch of sheepshead, a couple of catfish, some undersize walleyes, a white bass, and a carp. Had it been a multi-species tournament, I would have placed well.

The truth be known, I finished well down in the standings, a miserable 112 out of 120, having plummeted from 65th place after Day One. But I've got real good excuses! After all, like most honorable fishermen, I know when to brag and when to carefully explain.

The first day, I caught a nice walleye a little over 16 inches, a very good tournament fish. It put my pro partner, Dave Andersen, and me on the leader board. We were on a roll, I thought. I actually had visions of toting home the first place amateur prize a Lund boat.

But, it wasn't to be. My three pros zeroed each day, and caught not one walleye. The PWT uses what's called a boat approach: the total boat weight for each day counts for both the pro and the amateur in their

respective tournaments. I couldn't possibly do very well with such dismal output from my three different professional partners.

Now, I'm not suggesting that my one single fish puts me in the skill category with Al Lindner. But, it was the pro's responsibility to put the boat on fish, so we both could catch them.

In any event, my one nice 'eye was one fish more than what some pros and amateurs caught all three days, so, at least I didn't embarrass myself. Hey, even Tiger Woods has bad tournaments.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

In the final analysis, regardless of where I finished in the standings, the tournament was a terrific experience. First, it was fun. Second, I made some good friends with pros I had not known before. And third, I learned some new techniques that will be valuable for future fishing trips.

I know that I will enter another PWT event in the future. Why? Well, if the three foregoing reasons aren't compelling enough in and of themselves, this one is: My goodness, I want to finish better than 112th.