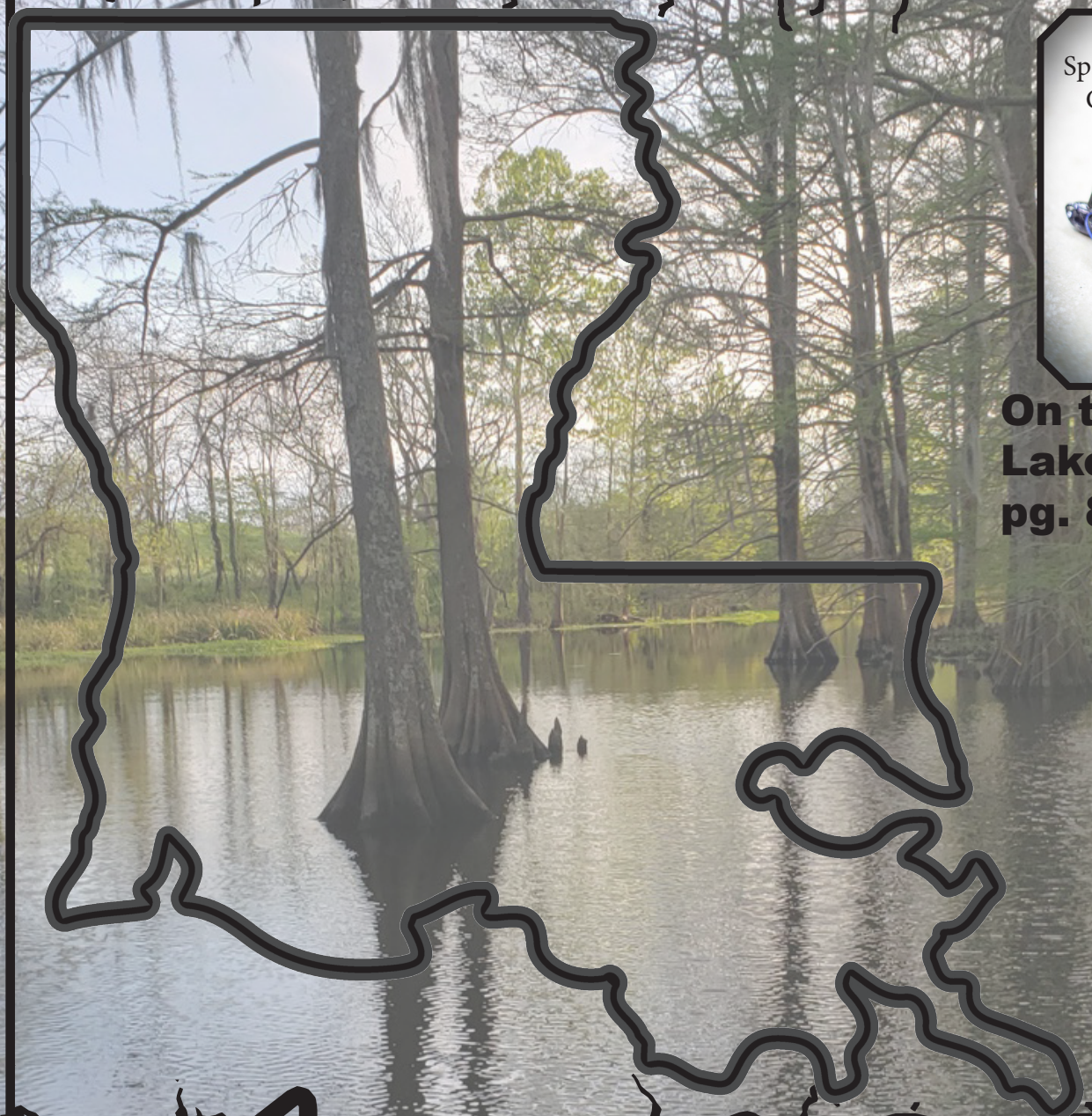


BASSIN IN



**On the Cover:
Lake St. John
pg. 8**

THE BOOT

May 2019
Volume 101

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Bass Candy

“Quality Jigs Catch Quality Fish!”



Driving through curvy roads lined with majestic magnolias and sprawling live oaks, on our way to one of Louisiana's hidden gems, you'd think we were headed to a secret fishing hole, to a land of tight lines and big bites. In a sense that's exactly where we were headed. We had just finished a productive lunch with one of the most knowledgeable gentlemen in the Louisiana fishing industry and were headed to his workshop to see what custom bass candies he had been whipping up.

Alexandria's own Larry Bryant is a soft spoken, easy living, retired educator, now making waves in the \$16-billion a year bass fishing industry. Coming up, Larry was a standout baseball player and an effective game manager. When he wasn't on the water, he put in several seasons behind the plate at the high

school and collegiate levels. He finished his education degree at Louisiana Tech. After baseball he moved into tournament fishing to satisfy his competitive spirit. For years Mr. Bryant was a strong competitor on several tournament circuits throughout our part of the country. From his upbringing bassin' on Kincaid and "CLECO" Lake, to his tournament days across various circuits covering bigger lakes like Rayburn, and Toledo Bend, he has certainly accumulated knowledge over the years. Much of that knowledge he now puts into his current passion, making jigs.

"I don't fish anywhere near as much as I used to"...starts Bryant. "I get that same thrill from making jigs, I used to get from setting hooks." That road to bait making has quite a storied past as we would

learn. The idea first struck him to make baits in his early days fishing CLECO lake. He recalls the crawfish there having these brilliant blues and greens that just weren't matched with soft plastics, or jigs, or any baits at the time. Knowing the lake, he knew he could have the upper hand if he could match the colorful hatch. So he set out looking for a custom shop to help match the lime green and blue hues of the CLECO crawfish. Today, he is that go-to custom shop for anglers from all around. One of his latest creations for pro angler Chase Brooks embodies that dedication to detail. Brooks sent Larry a picture of a tilapia and what Larry came up with was nothing short of magic according to Brooks, "the magic man Larry Bryant at Bryant's Custom Jigs has done it again", "It is almost like Larry can read my mind!!



Facebook image courtesy of Professional Angler Chase Brooks illustrating the magic of Mr. Larry Bryant with his custom designed spinnerbait to match the picture Chase sent him of a tilapia bait fish in the waters he fishes.

could get a Trokar hook in there", said Bryant. Ever the perfectionist, Bryant would go through many molds to get the head design he liked. He described his approach by saying "I'll tell you how old school I am, I took out the lead jig head and a utility knife and I started carving down the lead to get the shape I wanted". Admittedly now the times have changed, and his jigs have definitely improved. Nowadays, he has the knowledge and the contacts in the industry to make redesigns occur through computer modeling, 3-D printing, and rapid prototyping.

While it's obvious the times are changing, if it ain't broke don't fix it, right? This was evident with the skill in which we watched Larry hand tie one of his famous jigs. With a custom color mixture of black, red and amber, he skillfully copper-wrapped and snipped the jig in a minute flat.

I come up with these crazy ideas, send him a few pics, and boom, it comes out exactly how I pictured it!!"

Through hours of trial and error, Larry has honed and refocused his efforts, redesigned, recrafted, and then all over again remade jigs until he has undoubtedly gotten them right. It all started just a few short years ago when he suffered an injury to his heel and Achilles tendon, tearing the tendon, and ripping the tendon from the bone, while taking with it part of the heel bone. During these three months while recovering from this

injury, he needed a distraction and pastime. He convinced his wife he was only going to spend \$250 in startup materials and he was going to start making jigs. That's Bassin' on a budget! He bought molds and hooks, skirts and lead, and setout tinkering. His goal? To make a quality jig with what he considered the best hook on the market, the Trokar Hooks by Eagle Claw. Unfortunately "nobody made jig molds for Trokar hooks back then, so I had to modify them." Out came the Dremel® Tool and off to work he went. "I'd grind it down to the shape I wanted and open it up so you

The jig was wrapped with a head and hook he had poured and painted that morning before meeting us for lunch. Explaining the finer points of his craft along the way, he exhibited the expertise of any pro, and the creativeness of a skilled artisan. It is truly a craft approach he takes that makes his jigs special. “I could mass produce, but if I did, I would have to cut down on my color offerings.” BCJ offers over 40 standard colors along with an unlimited amount of custom-color combinations per client’s requests. While margins are thin in the custom market, and while he could make more of a margin off of his other baits, he still prefers to make custom jigs.

We had a candid discussion about the industry these days, and the level of quality some in the industry are trading for their mass production quantities. That’s a sacrifice he’s just not willing to make. The components that go into jigs have to be sourced individually. His hooks are some of the best in the business with jigs made of Trokar, Owner, and Mustad hooks. His skirts are color-customized to the client’s liking, chosen from over 400 colors of skirting, in materials of silicone, living rubber, and bioflex. His lead is sourced and hand poured



The artisan at work. Top picture is of a skirt selection. Lower left of the wire tie process. Lower right of the final skirt trim to maximize action.

in his workshop, and his jig heads powder coated and baked in two ovens on the counters in his shop. BCJ’s production team is a family affair comprised of him, his wife, two sons, and their wives. He is the worker, the manager, and the quality control that exemplifies his brand where “Quality Jigs Catch Quality Fish!” Jigs are his passion, his obsession, and that passion’s offspring is tremendous success; the tremendous success he hopes his sons, Cole and Ross, can continue to have in the business

for years to come. Leveraging that success Ross Bryant, Larry’s son, is making waves himself with a recent 14th place finish in the Bass Champs tournament on Sam Rayburn in early April. This clearly demonstrates the effectiveness and success of the family’s custom baits.

Presently, that success also shows in his daily production and his shipping logs. “There are currently only a few states we don’t regularly ship orders to” Larry said, not as a brag but as a testament to his



Images this page: Left - shop decor showcasing some of the custom jigs hand tied by Larry Bryant. Right Top- Close up illustrating the exacting characteristics of a BCJ, including the weedguard angle maximizing limb deflection for increased fishability in heavier cover. Right Bottom - Jigs and merchandise ready to go.

passion. On a good day he can churn out 100 or so completely custom jigs. From custom hooks and paints, to hand tied skirts, and an exacting 36 degree weedguard, his creations of craftsmanship sell as fast as he can make them; all the while still making and delivering custom spinnerbaits, punch skirts, sourced tungsten, bladed jigs, and much more. In fact, we should all look for more great things to continue to be churned out of the BCJ custom workshop for years to come!

Mr. Larry Bryant is an example of one of the many sleeping giants in the bass fishing industry we have here in the Bayou State. From the logo design by his wife [right] that pays homage to his tendon injury that led him to producing jigs, to his humbled and passionate approach to making jigs, this guy exemplifies the Louisiana character we hope to bring to you in every publication of *Bassin’ in the Boot*.



MADE IN LOUISIANA

Scenic St. John

From Oxbow to Bass Haven

If your idea of a bass fishing paradise is moss-covered cypress trees, grass-lined shores, points, canals, docks and piers, and the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets, then look no further than Lake St. John. St. John is located in the east central part of the state, just miles outside of the small town of Ferriday, Louisiana, which claims to have more native famous people per square mile than anywhere else in America. A town that gave birth to Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swagger, Mickey Gilley, Campbell Brown, and Leon "Pee Wee" Whittaker, can also boast about majestic outdoors and abundant wildlife awaiting you along the 16 miles of shoreline encompassing over 2100 acres of beautiful water. In an area full of fisheries, where over thirty fishable bodies of water are within an hour's drive, the jewel of the area is perhaps none other than Lake St. John.

The oxbow lake once a channel swing of the Mighty Mississippi became cut off from the main flow when the river changed course many years ago. The lake is now protected from the river flow entirely with the construction of the world's longest system of levees by the Army Corp of Engineers following the great flood of 1927. The State of Louisiana owns the lake, yet there is no public boat launch available. Three privately owned boat launches, all on the west side of the lake with one at each end and one near the center provide adequate access to the lake. Limited bait and tackle can be purchased at Spokane (center of lake) and Lake St. John Grocery on the northwest end of the lake. Once in the water the bass are hiding in many areas.

The north end of the lake with a flooded cypress forest offers the bass fisherman a limitless number of cypress trees to flip a jig, Texas rig, or weightless plastic, hoping for that huge bite. Winding a spinnerbait, chatterbait or crankbait through the cypress may prove a touch more difficult but can yield big returns. It is here you will encounter numerous "Yo-Yos" hanging in the trees searching for other species of fish, so watch out for those. The bend of the lake on both sides are speckled with boat houses, piers, and docks extending from the grass-lined banks out into the lake. The piers extend out to the edge of the cypress trees in some cases more than a hundred feet from the bank. The western side of the lake tends to have a more populated and developed environment making it

an attraction for those who are looking to fish artificial cover, docks, and piers. The eastern side of the lake has a more natural landscape with long stretches of cypress trees, lay-downs, and grass-lined banks. Although plenty of artificial cover exists, in the many piers and docks, the south end of the lake offers perhaps the most diverse fishing opportunities on Lake St. John. There's a near island peninsula (only connected to land by a driveway and swamp), canals, flats, points, along with piers and other manmade structures. This end of the lake is truly a bass hunter's prime target for locating quality bass. The lake splits at a point on this end. The area to the east the point is a huge flat with ample targets for locating fish year round and the west side of the point slowly funnels into a canal leading to the

This page: Anglers approaching several cover options, including grass lined shores, cypress trees and knees, and submerged cypress trunks.

Opposite page: Southern cove in the afternoon during a recent Casting for Kids Angler Appreciation Tournament.

boat launch located at the end of the lake.

Lake St. John holds tremendous numbers of bass often giving up fish in the 6-8 pound range. The lake also has great amenities on the shore at Spokane where any Bassin’ In The Boot reader could enjoy time on and off the waters of Lake St. John. Located on the banks of Lake St. John, Spokane Resort has plenty to offer. Affordably priced, the resort can be your destination for tournament lodging, a lake vacation with swimming and boating, or a place to call home while you fish the areas’ waters, including Lake St. John.

The landing at Spokane includes lakefront cottages with a picturesque deck, a private cottage with its own patio, cabins, and RV hookups. With recent upgrades to the facility, and a spacious outdoor pavilion, complete with grills, picnic tables, fans, and fish cleaning stations nearby, the area promises to provide any amenity a fisherman would need. The waterfront features a newly built pier, complete with boat slots, and an extended boat ramp for on-site launches. Just in case you forgot something the facility rounds out its amenities with a convenient store stocked with

Top Image: Boathouse and dock during a rare high water event in April 2019. In an unheard of spring, St. John was closed to boat traffic numerous times.
Below: Scenic fishing can be had all across Lake St. John. Here anglers prepare for a day on the water.



beer and ice, lures, live baits, snacks, groceries, and onsite fueling to keep your motor running. They even offer adult beverages to enjoy with friends old and new at Spokane Frozen, the onsite bar. With spacious parking and nearby dining, the location is sure to provide a convenient

and enjoyable getaway.

Overall the waterbody is managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), with local lake authority granted to the Lake St. John Recreation and Water Conservation District. The lake is primarily comprised



Top Image: Anglers with the Concordia Bass Club prepare for an early blastoff just moments after a beautiful sunrise on Lake St. John.
Bottom: Sunrise through cypresses on the morning of a recent tournament held on Lake St. John.

of open waters ranging in depth from an average depth of 12’ to a maximum depth of approximately 28’. The lake has a small contributing watershed, a drawdown structure, and an adjacent fixed weir spillway providing water level management, rarely resulting in waters above pool stage.

However, with seasonal dry weather, water may fall around 2’ below the pool elevation of 54’ MSL, as set by the two structures. The majority of the lake structure is natural shoreline, or man-made structures, but there are also artificial reefs placed at the mouth of Buckner Bayou by the LDWF. This reef is marked with a buoy and is located at (31.0 42’ 31.9” N x 91.0 27’ 36.4” W).

While the predominant natural cover in the lake will be cypress trees, knees, and limbs,

there are extensive grass-lined shores. During large portions of the year flooded aquatic vegetation can be probed for holding fish in approximately 5% of the water area, according to the latest vegetation survey by LDWF in 2013. Some floating vegetation in the form of hyacinth and common salvinia may be found on approximately 1% of the lake area. Overall, aquatic vegetation is not problematic on the lake, and therefore, few drawdowns have occurred in recent years. Recent years of stable water levels have seen no impacts to the black bass population, excepting small kills resulting from high temperatures and low dissolved oxygen. Yellow bass have seen impacts from trematode gill worms. Further aiding in the stable population of black bass are the incremental restocking of the Florida Largemouth Bass (FLB). Between 1999 and 2013, just shy of 180,000 FLB were stocked. While FLB stocking began in 1999, DNA testing showed little to no influence as of 2004, but with the larger numbers stocked this has undoubtedly changed by now.

The bass population has an ample supply of forage including various species of baitfish, small game fish, crawfish, and others.

Year	Hybrid Striped Bass	Florida Largemouth Bass	Year	Hybrid Striped Bass	Florida Largemouth Bass
1977	21,875	-	1994	200,000 (fry)	-
1978	10,000	-	1999	17,754	21,614
1979	10,462	-	2000	19,740	-
1980	10,000	-	2002	22,510	21,995
1981	10,000	-	2003	6,384	22,002
1983	10,000	-	2004	31,396	22,110
1984	10,000	-	2005	20,226	22,261
1985	20,000	-	2006	23,000	1,001
1986	30,400	-	2007	22,002	22,072
1987	21,775	-	2008	-	841
1988	20,000	-	2009	19,117	23,462
1989	20,000	-	2010	36,969	-
1990	10,000	-	2011	-	21,616
1991	20,010	-	2013	20,020	-
1992	20,000	-			



Numerous baitfish in the Minnow, Killifish, and Silverside families, and small game fish in the Sunfish family (Sunfish, Crappie, Bluegill, other bass) provide a near endless supply of year round forage. Crawfish and other incidental forage are prevalent in the lake’s watershed. With ample ways to match the hatch, the diverse forage gives any Bassin’ in the Boot reader an opportunity for a big mouth greenback.

Next time you’re looking for an ideal waterbody to host a tournament, a quick fishing destination, or a relaxing spot on the water, consider one

of Central Louisiana’s most diverse waterbodies. When stopping by the area, consider some of the off-the-water destinations such as the Delta Music Museum in downtown Ferriday, or venture back in time and take in lunch in the historic district in downtown Natchez, Mississippi, and tour one of the many civil war era plantation homes. While you are there be sure to check out the local cuisine at The Duck’s Nest, and enjoy the picturesque sunrises and sunsets from the Spokane Resort. We think you will find Lake St. John to be an ideal destination for any Bassin’ in the

Boot reader looking to take in some of the best fishing Louisiana has to offer.



Left: Table outlining the most recent available data on the Hybrid Striped Bass and Florida Largemouth Bass stocking numbers as reported by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries since 1977.

Below: The sun sets on another day of Bassin’ in the Boot on Lake St. John.



It’s a beautiful overcast day, light breeze with temperatures starting to warm. I’m headed down the lake to a favorite point of mine. There’s not another boat in sight as I lower my speed and stop sixty yards out. I drop the trolling motor and open the rod locker electing to go with a spinnerbait to cover the point quickly looking for fish. I love this. This is my passion. Casting and reeling, casting and reeling, just searching for that strike by a big bass.

Then it happens. This “guy” hauling tail down the lake goes flying by out in the main lake and wouldn’t you know it he starts to decelerate and turn. I thought he must live close by, maybe headed to his boat house or to a dock in a little hurry and didn’t see me setting thirty yards off this point. I was wrong. He’s looking to fish this point as well. He idles up within a few hundred feet and kills his engine. Drops his trolling motor and starts heading my way all while casting nothing less than a very

similar spinnerbait. This guy not only continues fishing towards and around the point but actually gets within talking distance and asks me “Having any luck today?” Needless to say, I didn’t answer. I simply, replaced my rod in the locker, raised my trolling motor, and settled in behind the steering wheel all the while thinking “This guy is a BASS-HOLE!”

Here at Bassin’ in the Boot we want to hear about your stories and encounters with rude, unsportsmanlike fishermen on the waterways of the state. Heck, send us a picture even (no identifying boat numbers or faces) to raise awareness to everyone. While on the water have fun, enjoy the great outdoors, catch some fish and make some memories but don’t be a BASSHOLE!



Ever a favorite of Bassin’ in the Boot Bassholes are tubers that post up about 150-200 yards out and just do donuts. There is a whole lot of lake out there, and I am all for sharing, but could you share maybe a little further out and make long passes around the lake, not donuts next to your nearest angler?

Tame Your Inner Spinnerbait

Organizational Tip of The Month

Try as I may, I can never find a good way to store spinnerbaits. They don't fit in standard tackle trays. They get bent in the flat spinnerbait boxes with the lockdown grooves. They rattle around in the hanging boxes. They don't always fit in the bags for the coffin style or page/binder style boxes. If I am fishing a spinnerbait I really only need a couple of color selections anyway, so why do I need all 357 spinnerbaits? Well first its more like 50-60, but that is still too many to lug around. I try to condense my selections to a couple colors and blade combinations and use these handy and cheap crayon boxes. They latch and can hold about 4 spinnerbaits per box, depending on size of blades and weight. I can load 2 or three of these with the chartreuse pallet, the naturals, and of course my whites and shads and that's all I really need. These pack neatly in most open style flat tackle trays from several different brands. I usually have other items that need to be stashed in an open style box anyway and this keeps them divided



Top picture shows the crayon style boxes fitted inside an open Plano Elite 3700 Spinnerbait Box. Lower left shows the spinnerbaits packed into the crayon boxes by color type. Lower right image with box lid closed, keeping all the gear organized and securely stored.

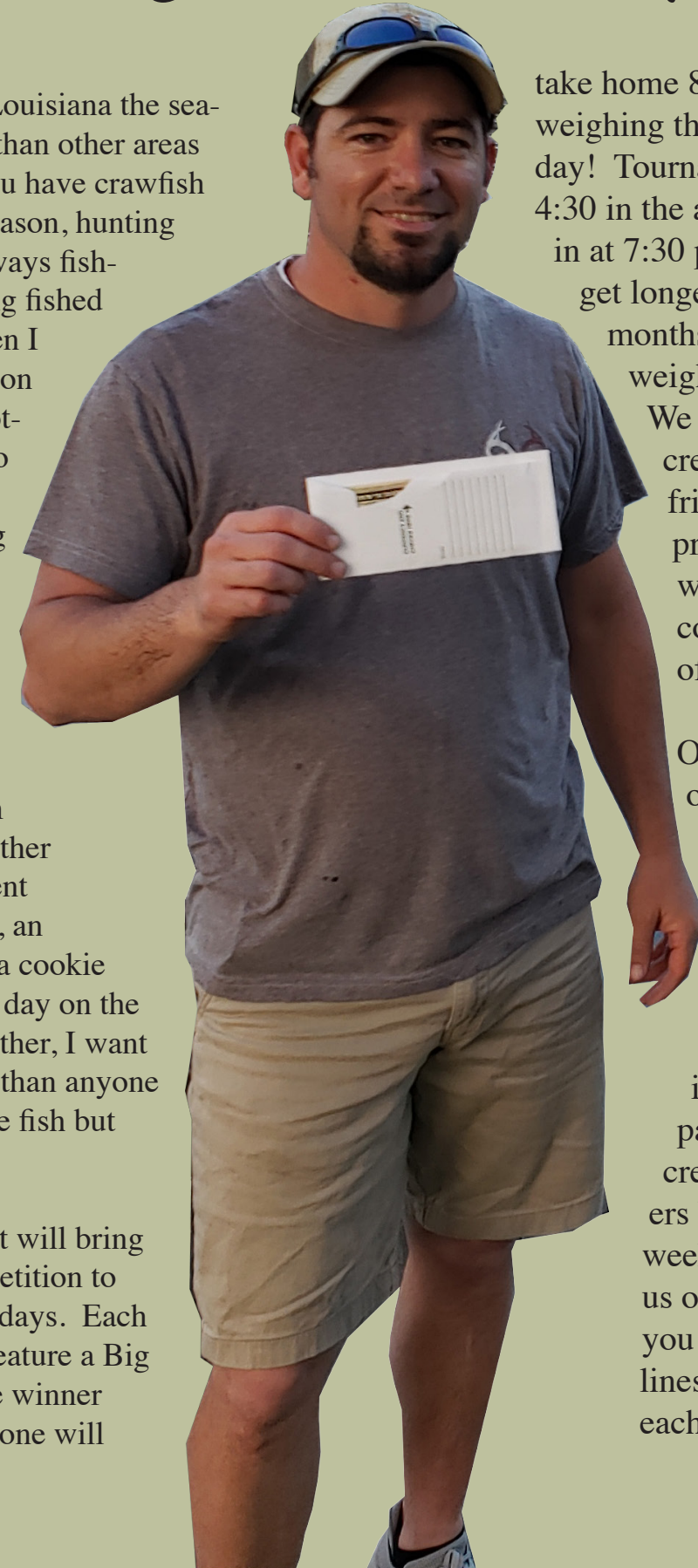
and easy to grab. Next time you run through the office supply section pick up a few of these boxes and see if they meet your needs. They also make boxes of this style in a slightly different shape that will fit within standard tackle trays that I find helpful in organizing smaller terminal pieces and weights that may want to migrate from bin to bin in your tackle tray. And finally, the fresh breath solution for this is to keep your Tic-Tac cases and use them for holding those pesky terminal pieces in place.

They also store easily within standard tackle trays. A minute prepped is a minute saved on the water, and could make the difference in your next tournament. Stay organized to save time and catch more fish!

Big Bass Mondays

Growing up in Louisiana the seasons are different than other areas of the country. You have crawfish season, football season, hunting season, but it's always fishing season. Having fished my whole life when I wasn't competing on the baseball or football field I, grew to love being on the water. My playing days are far behind me and now I realize encompassed in my love of fishing is the competitive atmosphere I miss from playing ball. Whether fishing a tournament with my bass club, an open tournament, a cookie jar derby, or just a day on the water with my brother, I want to catch more fish than anyone else; not only more fish but bigger fish!

Bassin' in the Boot will bring that spirit of competition to our Big Bass Mondays. Each Monday we will feature a Big Bass, one fish, one winner derby where someone will



take home 80% of the buy-in by weighing the biggest bass of the day! Tournament will start at 4:30 in the afternoon with weigh in at 7:30 pm. As the days get longer into the summer months, we will push the weigh in back to 8:00 pm. We are just looking to create fun fishing with friends and co-anglers, providing time on the water ripping lips with competition at the core of each event.

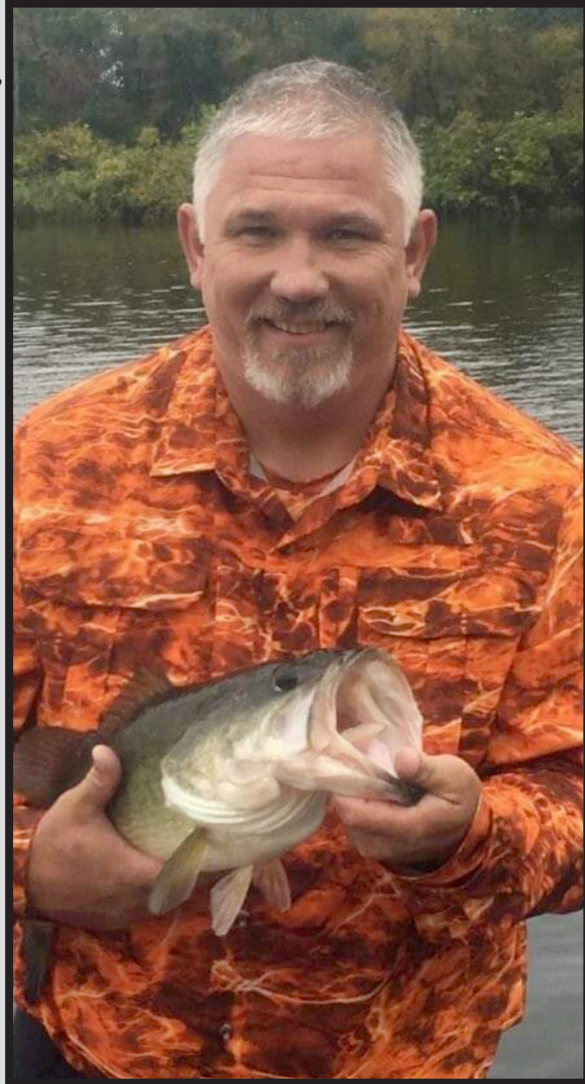
Our first event was held on April 22, 2019 and Sean Maples (pictured here) of Vidalia won the big bass with a 1.9# green-back on beautiful Lake St. John. As it was the first event, participation will increase as area bass hunters become aware of the weekly event. Look for us on a body of water near you and until then tight lines and bent poles to each of you.

Angler Profile:

Each month in Bassin' In The Boot we will be looking at the Louisiana Bass Fishing Industry and bringing to you several features on the people, products, lakes, and supporting service industries. The key resource in the industry that truly makes it unique for Louisiana are the people. As such, we will aim to bring you angler profiles from your average "Joe" to those pursuing careers in the professional bass fishing industry. Additionally, we will focus on the people that make the products and provide the services for those looking to geaux Bassin' in the Boot. In order to see their perspectives, the first profiles should be theirs. This way you know where Bassin' in the Boot is coming from. And hopefully you can see from their profiles, where they want it to go. "We are not aiming to be the go-to expert publication to teach you the ins-and-outs of technical fishing." "We are clearly still learning that ourselves." "Rather, we want to provide you with the insights to make the most of your time on the water by benefiting from all that Louisiana, and the people in the Louisiana Bass Fishing Industry has to offer." "As two Louisiana boys ourselves,

fishing played an important role in our upbringing, and plays an essential role in staying connected as adults living our own lives on two ends of the state."

Charles (pictured at right) is Co-Owner of Bassin' in the Boot, the only magazine devoted to covering all things bass fishing in the State of Louisiana. Between living in Central Louisiana and working as an educator, he has the opportunity to fish over 200 days a year on nearly 30 different bodies of water within an hour's drive from home. Recognizing the opportunity available to fish in Louisiana, Charles says "I try very hard to take advantage of this blessing as often as possible." For him, it all started as a kid paddling around in an old jon boat, exploring every nook and cranny in the Old River Vidalia complex with it's many bayous and bar-pits. He has been fishing for catfish, bream, and white perch/sac-a-lait (crappie) his whole life, but about 3 years ago he acquired the itch for bass fishing. Starting with local tournaments and a few



big bass tournaments on Lake Fork, he's currently trying to expand his knowledge and increase his competitive edge as an angler. Combining his two passions of education and fishing, he is working with a colleague to start a bass team at his local high school. Hoping to help others, he says: "Eventually I would love to use the sport of fishing to give back to my community helping children with exceptionalities and childhood illnesses."

Bassin' In The Boot

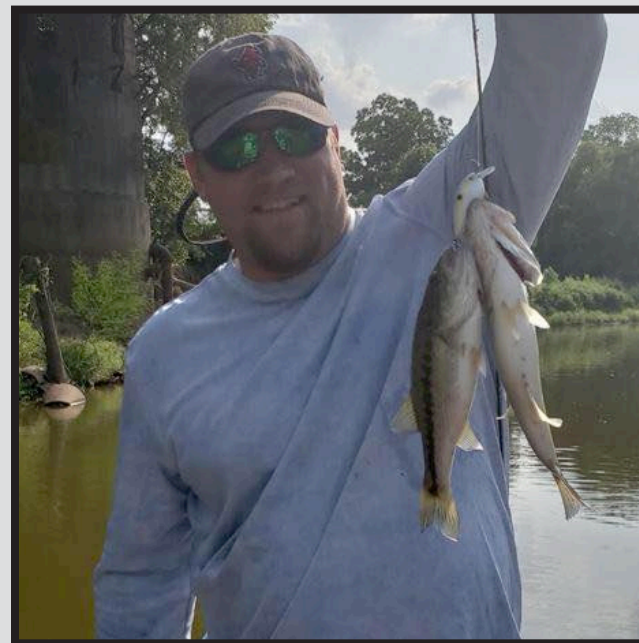
Charles has been fortunate enough to have secured spots on several prostaff teams and looks forward to broadening his alliances with great products to improve his fishing. Summing it all up for him, he is "simply a father, husband, school principal and avid fisherman who loves enjoying life in the outdoors."

Likewise, Jeffery grew up fishing mainly for bream and perch (white/black crappie) in the lakes and rivers of east-central Louisiana. Though he never fully committed to fishing growing up due to heavy involvement in baseball and football. After finishing school and starting a family he began to spend more time with hobbies (when time was available), but missed the competitive nature

sports had always supplied. Of course his brother Charles had always had a passion for fishing but had recently gotten the bass bug. Turns out it's contagious! Expressing his view on bass fishing, Jeffery feels "the hunt, the competitive nature, the mental and physical aspects are alluring for anyone who's ever had a passion for sports." Now bass fishing for about 2-3 years he simply loves it. "It's a compelling game, the more facets of the sport I dig into the deeper the game gets." While he still likes to run the occasional trot line or jerk some perch for dinner, bass fishing is where he spends most of his time on the water. Jeffery has a growing family and a fairly time demanding job but is blessed enough to spend several days a month on the waters of Louisiana.

He says the more he fishes, the more he wants to fish, and to him that is the most frustratingly satisfying aspect of the sport. Offering his take on the industry, he says he has "simply been blown away by the fellowship and the growth of

this industry and I hope to become more a part of this fantastic sport and industry as time goes on." Having recently gotten into fishing tournaments, he enjoys the opportunity to compete. Becoming a student of the sport, he has also gotten into the nuts and bolts of the tackle used and even started making some custom baits lately. He feels blessed to "have been fortunate enough to align myself with some of the brands in the industry, making my love for the sport a bit more affordable." As he grows as an angler, he hopes to help grow the industry, particularly the Louisiana industry. Combining several hobbies, including photography, fishing, and dabbling in the written word, he hopes to spread the word for all the dedicated individuals who make Bassin' in the Boot the epitome of living in a Sportsmen's Paradise. Here's to more time on the water; Geaux Fish Louisiana!





To Louisiana by way of Centerville, Mississippi, fishing is in the DNA of Sinister Fishing's Austin Battistella. From his days fishing with his mom and step-dad at his grandpa's lake in Woodville, Mississippi where he first learned to dangle a plastic worm, to custom rod builder and owner of Sinister Fishing, fishing is a way of life for Austin. With a newly revamped day job schedule, where he works as an industrial electrician, Austin is looking to grow Sinister Fishing and open to new rod building projects. Over the past couple of years he has built quite a few rods from his base in Walker, Louisiana, and their popularity continues to grow. He recently had to turn down a large rod order from Ohio because he felt he "couldn't give all my time to that project when I have local guys that ask for rods. I cut my teeth on these Louisiana waters and I feel that's where my attention belongs for now." With his focus of Bassin' in the Boot, Austin's goal for Sinister Fishing is to keep his local customers supplied with "high quality fishing gear with no cut corners." But he isn't planning to stop there.

Looking to grow Sinister Fishing, Austin has more products in the works. With an eye keen to quality Austin says "all of the products we have made or have in the works are the best you can get as far as components go." With further goals in mind, he'd even "like to eventually work my way into local bait and tackle shops and ultimately have a

line on tackle warehouse, I think that'd be pretty cool." To explore the growth of his company, we should also explore the origins. When first toying with the idea, the logo was the first thing on his mind, but even that consideration included an intent to grow the brand. In his logo he "wanted to incorporate an evil looking fish into the design. I had just got done watching the movie sinister and it was far too perfect to pass up. Originally it was going to be Sinister Customs but I felt as if that kept me to a smaller field to play with so I decided against it. Sinister Fishing was more suitable for the vision I had dreamed up for this company." His vision continues today with a growing product lineup. He currently

sources MHX Blanks and American Tackle guides, and says he stands behind those products.

Offering more cus-

tomization, Austin also does "marbling which I think is pretty unique form of art [but] I don't get too fancy with the decorative butt wraps as I see some awesome rod builders use, they have a wow factor but at the end of the day I don't believe they make the rod any better performing."

To produce a beautiful rod with the purpose of performance, Austin invests significant time in each project. From his first build that he says "seemed like it took 10 hours" to his labor of love that he says now takes about 5 hours, not including drying time, his "biggest lesson [has been] patience, this is not a fast process by any stretch of the imagination." He has produced rods for more than just bass fishing as well. He has built other freshwater rods, including panfish and trout, and also some in-shore rods. As far as advice for those looking to get into a custom rod Austin says "the best tip I can give is follow some guys who do jam up work find what you like and pull the trigger." Acknowledging that fishing is what got him into rod building to begin with he says "fishing custom has made me a better fisherman, I have gear I can rely on." Looking to improve his fishing game led to custom building his own rods because he "got tired of store bought eyes falling off, or rods snapping in half because they weren't spined right", but with custom rods and quality components those are problems of the past.

When not working on a custom built rod Austin still spends plenty of R&D time out on the water chasing bass. Austin says he tries "to go every chance I get which is generally 1-2 times per week" and he even fishes competitively. "I fish local tournaments with a couple of clubs Bayou Bandits, and Mid-south bass club, and a few big charity tournaments." He even found time to squeeze in our interview with him leaving "this week to fish top 6 ALBC tournament for the state on Toledo Bend." While fishing is still what it's all about, Austin continues to look to up his game in the business world and grow Sinister Fishing. Looking to expand out to fill in some of the growth room provided in the name Sinister Fishing, he says "I'm bringing a buddy of mine in, he makes awesome bladed baits. We also have apparel, stickers, and I'd like to get into more bait production."

At Bassin' in the Boot, as we look to help provide focus on the people and brands growing within the Louisiana bass fishing industry, we certainly share Austin's sentiment here where he says "Who knows In this industry it's ever evolving and the sky's the limit." The sky is indeed the limit for our industry in the Bayou State. Check out Sinister Fishing as they continue Bassin' in the Boot! ◆



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