



TRIPPED-UP TOURNAMENT

Well, ol' Larry finally did it! Can you believe Larry has been banned from any tournament fishing on Table Rock Lake for a YEAR?!?!? Well, he is.... I hardly know where to start!!! About a year ago, Larry figured he should join a bass fishing club. He figured that he could win a few of their little tournaments, and use the money to buy that new Daiwa rod and reel like mine... (He thinks that my equipment is what makes me catch more fish than he does.) So he joined the "Greater Ozarks Frog Giggin' and Master Bassers Club". Now, I mean to tell you, these club members are really from down in the hills....If you walk into a club meeting, and say "hey Bubba", about 6 people will turn their head....These are folks who think that a gourmet meal consists of a box of Macaroni & Cheese, a burrito, and a quart bottle of Budweiser, and a moon pie for dessert! And to make a long story short, Larry blended into that crowd just like a gopher blends into soft dirt! I mean he was at home!

The problems started for Larry when it was announced that the 7th annual Redman/Wal-Mart tournament set it's date for July 3rd. All the Frog Giggin' and Master Bassers club members started selling firewood, and taking on local painting jobs to raise the 100.00 per boat entry fee, and folks were getting really excited.

The day before the tournament, folks set up this great big tent for the weigh-in scales and the first prize Chevy Blazer, and the 2nd prize ranger bass boat. The plan was for the tournament weigh-in to be held at 4 in the afternoon, then everyone would barbecue and drink beer and swim and water ski and such till about 9:30 in the evening, then the folks from Wal-Mart had arranged for a really big pre-fourth of July fireworks display that was to be set off from a specially built pontoon out in the middle of the launch site cove. And if that guy from Wal-Mart hadn't stashed some rockets in a paper sack to take home for his son's 4th of July celebration, things probably would have went off just as planned!

250 boats had paid the entry fee, and on the morning of the 3rd, they filled the launch cove. It was 6:30 in the morning, and fog was rising in wisps from the lake. The smell of 2 cycle oil and gasoline filled the air, and the rough choking idling sound of 150 horse mercury engines was impressive. Larry had his 40 horse going, and when our turn to take off came, we took off like a raging water slug! With all the rain that we'd had this year, Larry figured to take us to his "secret spot" that you could only fish when the lake was high. It took us almost 45 minutes of fishing time to get to this "secret spot", and when I saw this place, I had to admit that Larry just may have had a good idea for once in his life. It looked like it might have even been the lair of old Mugwump. (Or maybe one of his relatives) The problem was that the cove entrance was clogged with logs and timber. But Larry motored up to a horizontal log that was about 6 inches above the water, and eased the boat right up on it and gunned the motor briefly. We just went right over that log, lifted the motor, and we slid off just as pretty as you please into some of the best looking bass water that I'd ever seen.

Larry flipped down the magnifying glass attached to the bill of his ball cap, and tied on his favorite triple jointed super flutter splutter bug buzz bait, and went to casting. After four hours of fishing, we were just one fish short of our limits, and we figured we had it made! That was when the fog started to burn off, and I noticed that the lake level had dropped by almost a foot! I looked at Larry, and said "We gotta leave NOW! Look at the water level!" He took one look, and we stowed our gear and motored in a hurry back to the log that we had climbed over so sneakily earlier in the day. Now it was a foot and a half out of the water, and there was no other way out! "We gotta get over this log" I said. "Larry looked at me and said, "We'll get over this thing if it kills us!" Darned near did too. He backed up, gunned the motor, and actually got almost half the length of the boat up on the log. I was scared to death! The front end of the boat was probably 5 feet out of the water, and the back end was wallowing around so bad that I thought we were gonna tip over sideways! Water was sloshing into the back of the boat, so Larry turned on the bilge pumps, and VERY VERY carefully, we started to make our way to the front of the boat taking anything that weighed anything with us. After about an hour, we had everything including ourselves perched on the front of the boat. We were just a few pounds short of being able to teeter totter the boat over the log, with nothing else to move forward! "I got it!" said Larry, and hit the livewell drain switch. And that did the trick! As the water drained from the back livewell, the motor end of the boat rose and rose till finally the boat slid down the log and hooked itself on the motor that Larry hadn't raised.... Could have been worse, I figured. And it was. The power tilt on the motor went out, and the only way

we could get free was to remove the boat prop. We did. Larry dropped it in the water. It was about 15 to 20 feet deep, and murky. We took turns diving, and after another ½ hour, I got it. We managed to get the prop back on, and fired up the motor. Then we shut it down again, and put the prop on frontwards, and headed down the lake to the weigh in. We figured we'd have 20 minutes to spare. And we did.

We got back to the weigh in cove, and while we were taking a few last minute casts, Larry caught a 7 lb bass on a jig, right under the boat. Talk about ecstatic!!! He was gonna have a shot at the 500\$ cash prize for "big bass"! You could see the Chevy Blazers in Larry's eyes. He opened up the livewell to put the bass in, and just stared at all the dead bass. Each dead fish would cost a 1 pound penalty, and the Chevy Blazers went out of Larry's eyes....But we ran the boat on the bank, bagged up our fish figured we'd see what happened. Maybe we'd get lucky. It was 4 in the afternoon, and hot, with the sun fairly high behind us. We were standing in the weigh in line, and Larry took off his hat and tossed it over on a table full of stuff. He didn't like to be seen in it anymore than necessary, ever since he put the flip down magnifying lens on the bill..... Well, we just stood in line, happy as a hillbilly with a bean burrito and a Dr. Pepper, watching our chances get better and better! I got a little whiff of smoke, and I glanced around behind us, and I saw a little wisp of smoke coming up from a paper sack where Larry had tossed his hat. His magnifying lens just happened to be positioned so that the sun was burning a hole in the bag. Turns out it was the bag that belonged to the Wal-Mart guy. All of a sudden, I saw sparks start to fly, and a rocket came out of the bag and screamed right over our heads! There was quite an assortment of fireworks in that bag, and it took about 60 seconds for all of them to go off. It surely did get everyone's attention. Now it really wouldn't have been all that bad, 'cause it was just a small bag of fireworks, but one of the last rockets to go flying out of it, took off in a large arc, and landed right smack dab in the middle of the pontoon that had all the fireworks for the big display that night on it, that was anchored about 20 ft off shore. There were some serious pyro technics on that thing!!!! After it hit, there was about 5 seconds of silence, and then there were rockets and explosions going off everywhere! It was like a battlefield for about 5 minutes! Folks were running every whichway, and taking cover wherever they could. When all the explosions stopped, the big tent was on fire, and only took about 3 minutes to burn completely to the ground. And about 20 or so boats along the shoreline had smoke coming from them from where rockets had landed in them and exploded. Bass were flopping around everywhere, and a group of kids began to try and save as many as they could by scooping them up and tossing them back in the lake. And one of the more observant youngsters was even kind enough to show everyone how it was Larry's "really neat hat with the magnifying glass" that started all the action.

The upshot of everything was that Larry was kicked out of the Greater Ozarks Frog Giggin' and Master Bassers club, and was told by President Bubba, (as he pulled his smoking boat out of the lake) that if he ever saw him entered in a tournament that he was in, he'd use his boat motor for target practice! To make matters worse, Larry's wife surprised him with one of those "Big Mouth Billy Bass" things that sings "Be Happy" when he walked in the door that nite! And later that evening, one of Larry's understanding buddies from the Bass club brought what was left of Larry's hat back to him. Looked like Bubba had gotten to it. And there was what might have been a bullet hole, right smack dab in the center of it!

Well, they re-scheduled the tournament. What a hassle. Then a cold front came thru, and the fish just shut off. Some guy with about 9 lbs of fish won the thing, and big bass was 3 lbs.....Larry's would have won easily. All in all, I think Larry will be just fine, once they let him out of his room at the Ozarks Temporary Home for the Stressed.....

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