

Kids Korner

Day Of Outdoor Adventure Fills Sports Complex

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Believe it or not, it was a day filled with fierce competition and perilous snakes. It was a day where a youngster went fishing indoors to snare the grand prize — a 4½ pound trout — and he's only four years old!

And the adventure happened last Saturday at the Lancaster Sports and Outdoor Show at the Host Resort Sports Complex.

You had to be there to believe it.

Too young to compete in the BassMaster CastingKids competition, Andrew Gory walked away, head down, from the event, which features a prize Zebco rod and reel combination for two age groups. He was simply too young to compete. But Andrew, 4, with his dad, Scott, was determined to bag a fish. So he grabbed a reel and, within moments after dipping it into a large pool, hauled out a whopping 4½ pound trout, measuring about 12 inches long, the largest in the Trout Fishing Demonstration pool at a booth sponsored by Outdoor Marketing Productions, Cortland, Ohio.

Andrew nodded "yes" when asked if he had extensive fishing experience. But, after placing the line back in the pool, he tried his hand again anyway.

(As of presstime, we didn't know if he snared another.)

At about the same time, Joe Sofchek, who manned the booth, brought out a 4-year-old Burmese Python. "It eats rats," Sofchek said, allowing the children to feel the snake's pliable, vinyl-like skid. He told those who petted the snake that it is getting ready to shed.

And wait! Off in the corner,

helping competitors during the CastingKids demonstration, was someone hardly anyone recognized. Who was this man clad in the pearl-white Team Daiwa sportshirt?

It was Scot Neely, youth director of the Capitol Chapter of BassMasters. He was checking out how the Lancaster Chapter ran its show, taking notes, and hoping to incorporate some of the many successful ways the contest is run so the Capitol chapter can stage their own competition.

Sources told us that the Capitol Chapter is going to hold a CastingKids competition just like in Lancaster. The club, in Highspire, plans to stage the competition in Harrisburg in September. If you want to know more, call Neely at (717) 789-4519.

In the CastingKids competition, youth ages seven to 14 held a spin-casting reel fitted with a ¾-ounce Berkley "jig" lure with a plastic Crawly on it that resembles a crayfish. The barb is cut off, for safety's sake. The crayfish is just one of many favorite meals that bass like to eat, according to Bob Oberly, who helped with the competition.

Kids launched the lure to strike the BassMasters target. The center scored 50 points, and the concentric circles scored from 40 on down. Each competitor had two attempts from three separate distances — 10 feet, 20 feet, and 30 feet.

At 10 feet, kids have to cast the lure. At 20 feet, competitors have to pitch the lure to the target. At 30 feet, kids have to flip the lure.

The three highest scores are totalled. The competitors with the highest score from the separate age divisions (age 7-10 and age

11-14) won the special rod and reel prize.

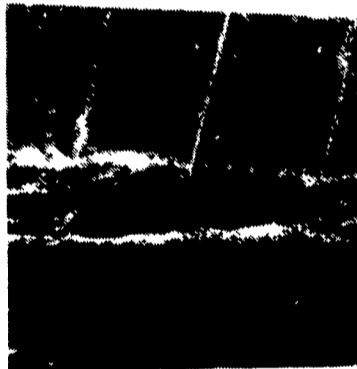
Also, the winners qualify for state competition in March at Stage College. The state winner goes to regional competition in June. The regional winner qualifies for the national competition at the BassMasters Classic in August.

This year, because of good weather, there was a huge turnout, according to Ken Keener, president of the Lancaster County Chapter of BassMasters.

Winners of the Lancaster CastingKids event were, in the 11-14 year old category, Steven Enck, 14, Manheim. There was a tie in the 7-10 year old category between Andrew Buffenmyer and Michael Berzulli. The castoff winner was Andrew Buffenmyer.



Burmese Pythons eat rats! Joe Sofchek, who manned the Outdoor Marketing Productions booth at the sports show, holds on to a 4-year-old python that is "getting ready to shed some skin."



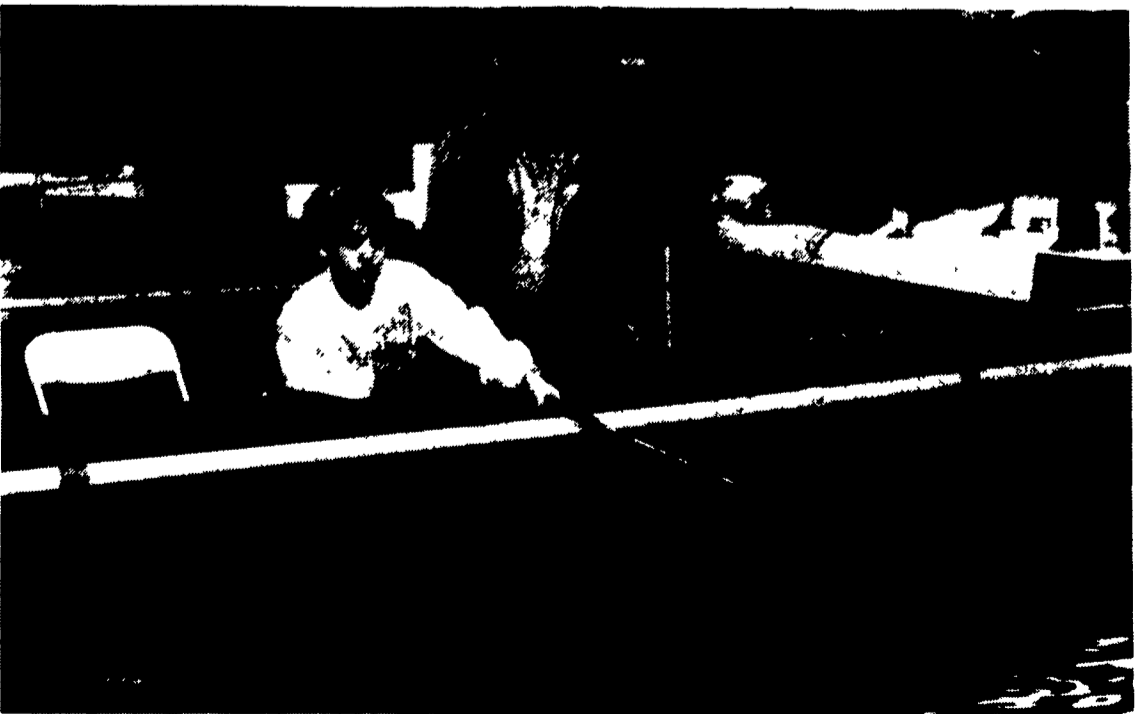
Too young to compete, so go for the fish anyway. Andrew Gory, 4, caught a 4½ pound trout at the outdoor show.



Steve Enck, Manheim, 14, left gets instructions from Bob Oberly at the CastingKids competition. Steve took home the grand prize in the age 11-14 category.



Jake Goodyear, 7, is assisted by Capitol Chapter of BassMasters youth director Scot Neely.



Melissa Wassner, 8, Reading, left, fishes for trout in the big indoor tank at the sports complex. Jake Wilkinson is helping. Melissa says her brother, Matthew, 10, caught a 10-inch trout that day.