

Haysville girl is state's top teen bass angler

BY MICHAEL PEARCE

The Wichita Eagle

Bass fishing has always been one of Brande Branine's passions. Monday she caught more than a dozen bass to 4 1/2 lbs. at a Wichita sand pit.



Patience and the ability to fish an area slowly and thoroughly are two of the reasons Brande Branine is the current Kansas senior youth bass fishing champion.



Brandy Branine, 17, is the current BASS senior youth champion for Kansas. She was the only female to compete in the three tournament circuit.



Brande Branine, 17, recently won the title of Kansas' BASS youth champion for the senior division. She was the only girl amid 20 entrants on the three tournament tour.



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Kansas has a new teen bass fishing champion. Brande Branine outfished 19 bass anglers to earn the title. She was the only girl in the senior division (15-18) of the Kansas BASS Federation youth tournament circuit.

Later this month she'll compete against other Midwest state champions in South Dakota. A win there and she goes to the November national championship at Milford Reservoir.

She's not worried she'll probably be the only girl at the competitions.

"I don't look at it like it's me against a bunch of guys," said Branine, 17, of Haysville. "I'm just out there fishing, doing what I love to do."

She's loved it a long time.

The daughter of David Branine, a successful tournament angler, she's fished tournaments since she was 5.

She made the Kansas team several years when competition was in a team format.

This year's win came as the format changed to send one angler from each state to regional competition.

Youth from six Kansas clubs sent young anglers to qualifying events at LaCygne, Eureka and Yates Center city lakes.

Branine is a member of Wichita's Kansas Highway Patrol Reel Deal team.

At season's end, the entrant's top two tournaments were totaled for championship placement.

Branine's third-place finish at Yates Center and first-place finish at Eureka earned her the championship.

"It wasn't luck. It's talent," said Brad Burns, Kansas BASS youth tournament director. "She's got very, very good skills."

Anglers from the junior (10-14) and senior divisions were paired in a boat with an adult BASS volunteer at the tournaments.

Rules say each young angler decides where they'll fish half of the day. Branine usually has a sound game plan going into each day.

At Yates Center, that was to fish in the grass on a shallow flat. At Eureka, she fished a black and blue jig with a rattle.

"They'd just had about six inches of rain and the fish were really mud sick," she said. "You had to fish very slowly."

Such a pattern fits her perfectly.

"Basically I'm a slow fisherman," she said. "I can work an area very thoroughly and get the bigger bass. That's what I'm best at."

Some appreciate her more for her personality than angling ability.

"Brande's done a lot to help a lot of other people," said Tom Spencer, Reel Deal club director. "Anytime we need someone to work at (an educational) event, she's there. She's amazing with children."

Branine plans on fishing the senior division next spring while a senior at Campus High.

Eventually she hopes to fish the BASS women's national tour as an adult.

Until then, she's hoping to get a college degree in business and keep fishing assorted tournaments.

"I might go to school at K-State," she said. "They have a bass fishing team up there."

Youth fishing opportunities

Children wanting to fish in bass tournaments, or just learn more about fishing, are welcome to join Wichita's Kansas Highway Patrol Reel Deal fishing team.

Tom Spencer, team director, said the team welcomes anglers of all skill levels and teaches them more than just about angling.

"We have kids from (state youth champion) Brande Branine down to some still fishing with a bobber," Spencer said. "We also teach them about the environment, how to get involved in conservation and ways they can give back to the community."

Spencer can be reached at 316-258-6207 or tom@castforkids.org.