

Tied on top

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — They attacked Lake Maumelle in different ways, but the result was the same for Secret York of Benton, Ky., and Melinda Mize of Ben Lomond, Ark.



Larry Towell

Secret York (Tied 1st, 10-9)

Both had Day One weights of 10 pounds, 9 ounces to share the lead in third event of the 2009 Academy Sports + Outdoors Women's Bassmaster Tour season.

The pros tied for first place said they aren't fishing near each other, nor are they sharing water with other pros on the 8,900-acre reservoir. Mize stuck to one pattern, while York tried everything the lake seemed to offer.

"I'm doing three different things — I'm shallow, I'm deep, I'm in between," York said.

She declined to be specific, but whatever her secret was, it yielded a 4-12 largemouth, one of the day's largest fish. Mize said she believes her lure and technique are different than what others in the field are using, but she's sticking with one pattern that repeats perfectly in different spots.

Both leaders said opening day was markedly different from their practice days.

"I changed my lures up quite a bit because we had cloud cover today," York said. "We had sun all week, then today it was 25 degrees cooler on the water than it was yesterday. Even the water temperature is about 8 degrees cooler than it has been."

Mize said Maumelle produced about 25 keepers for her.

"All during practice, I had not caught anything of size — but then again, I'd been shaking them off," she said. "I found my area yesterday, the last day of practice, and hit it today. After 8 o'clock this morning, I went practicing. Then I only culled up one time, and only by a few ounces."

Despite the lake's relatively small size, territory issues didn't seem to come up.

"I thought this lake was going to fish really small today," Mize said. "I didn't have any pressure on my spots all day long."



Larry Towell

Melinda Mize (Tied 1st, 10-9)

In third place with 10 pounds, 0 ounces is Paula Alexander of Lincolnton, Ga., who attributed her success to one pack of worms she bought on impulse because she liked the color. She declined to disclose more details.

She said concentration helped, too, because the bite has been light.

"On this lake, if you're not paying 100 percent attention, you're going to miss the bite. It's so subtle, you think it's grass," she said.

York, Mize and Alexander lead the pack that's after the top pro-division prize of \$1,000 and a fully rigged boat-and-motor package valued at \$55,000. Pros are also fishing for points in the Toyota Tundra Women's Bassmaster Tour Angler of the Year competition. The AOY winner will earn a Toyota Tundra and a berth in the 2010 Bassmaster Classic, Feb. 19-21 on Lay Lake out of Birmingham, Ala.

The AOY points leader going into the Maumelle event was Pam Martin-Wells of Bainbridge, Ga. She was in 20th place after Day One in Arkansas with 6-13. Juanita Robinson of Highlands, Texas, second in the standings, placed seventh at Maumelle on Thursday.

In the co-angler division for the first-place prize package of \$500 and a boat rig worth \$25,000, Denese Freeman of Lawton, Okla., led Diane Smith of Fayetteville, Ga., by 1 ounce. Freeman, who won in the co-angler division in 2008 on Texas' Lake Lewisville, posted 9-4 to Smith's 9-3.

In third place with 8-2 was Brande Branine. The 18-year-old from Haysville, Kan., is competing in her first WBT event.

The tournament will continue Friday and wrap up Saturday. Anglers will launch daily at 6:45 a.m. ET at Jolly Roger's Marina, 11800 Maumelle Harbour Rd. in Roland. The weigh-ins are scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. ET at Academy Sports + Outdoors, 6100 Warden Rd. in Sherwood. All WBT events are free and open to the public.