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FISH WRAP

Franks wins bass tourney

A LARGE king salmon may be worth several hundred bucks to a commercial troller, and sport anglers might deem such a fish "priceless." But for Petaluma pro bass angler Chris Franks, a handful of 4- and 5-pound largemouth bass two weekends ago came with a \$10,000 price tag.

On May 16 at Clearlake, the Forest Knolls native and Sausalito crab boat deck-hand took first place in the U.S. Angler's



Photo by Duke Kanaya

Chris Franks, who grew up in Forest Knolls and lives in Petaluma, holds an 8-pound largemouth bass he caught at a tournament.



Choice Western Division bass tournament, a two-day event in which Franks competed against 90 others, all casting fervently for the prize. Franks, who teamed up each day with an amateur angler in a sort of mentor system, weighed in 23.78 pounds of live largemouth bass on Day 1 with a five-fish limit, released afterward, as tournament rules require. An 8-pound largemouth, the biggest bass of the contest, was among those weighed in by Franks.

"I was done by 11 a.m. and we spent the rest of the day scouting for fish for Sunday," said Franks, 24.

Their reconnaissance mission revealed several secluded spawning beds, where big bass were paired up and actively courting each other among weeds and fallen logs by the bank. The two quietly took note of these locations — one of which was occupied by an estimated 6-pounder — and returned to the dock to weigh in their catch. A Northern California pro named Michael Tuck beat out Franks with more than 25 pounds of fish.

At dawn on Sunday, 91 speed boats blasted off from the docks and swarmed the lake in search of lunkers. Franks and his partner caught nothing

6-pound spawner they had located the prior afternoon. Quickly, the pair bagged it. A 4-pounder would come later — a fish prompted to attack a jig in just 6 inches of water — as did a handful of 3-pound fish. For several hours, Franks upgraded, catching larger fish and swapping out smaller bass from the live well, abiding by the rule of keeping only five fish in the tank at once. With just 40 minutes left before his 3 p.m. weigh-in appointment at the dock, Franks blasted away at 70 mph to the north end of the lake. He caught a 4-pounder there and then time was up.

Franks was among the first to weigh in that afternoon, and with his two-day total of 45.81 pounds emblazoned in his brain he watched nervously as dozens of teams lined up behind him and weighed their own catches. Only Tuck's catch came close, however, with his Sunday bag weighing over 20 pounds, and the contest came down to the ounces. Tuck had 45.72 pounds for the weekend. Franks weighed in with 45 grams more of largemouth bass — and secured the first-place prize of \$10,254.

News from upstream

Guide Barry Canavero in Isleton says that the

seen in 20 years. Driving along the levee roads of the Delta he could see spawning stripers boiling, and on the water it was madness, with female fish thrashing the surface and males swarming them from all directions but above. Then the fish disappeared — and Canavero predicts they're coming our way, with an estimated time of arrival as early as this weekend.

Salmon watch

On Monday, New Rayann got in a few hours of fishing just east of the Farallones and collected five kings to 25 pounds for 10 customers. Since then, wind has kept most of the fleet ashore, or in the bay, where almost a fish per rod on bass and halibut are coming from the Berkeley Flats.

Trout plantings

Lake Lagunitas has not seen a trout plant in two months. On Tuesday, Bon Tempe received 1,000 1-pound rainbows. These are stubby snout, ragged fin fish reared in the finest state facilities, and they know good food when they see it — so goop up your hooks and get 'em.

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