



Syracuse Convention & Visitors Bureau  
A Division of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce  
572 South Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202  
(315) 470-1910 • Fax: (315) 471-8545  
[www.VisitSyracuse.org](http://www.VisitSyracuse.org)

For Immediate Release  
Tuesday, August 4, 2008

Contact:

Doug Grassian  
BASS Communications  
(407) 566-2216  
[doug.grassian@espn.com](mailto:doug.grassian@espn.com)

Anthony Bartkowski  
BASS Communications  
(407)-566-2135  
[anthony.a.bartkowski@espn.com](mailto:anthony.a.bartkowski@espn.com)

## **Bassmaster Elite Series' 2008 Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year Battle Will Play out on Oneida Lake**

\*\*\*

**SYRACUSE, NEW YORK**— The Bassmaster Elite Series will bring its 11th tournament of the season – the Champion's Choice presented by Ramada Worldwide – to Oneida Lake as the 2008 Bassmaster Elite Series season comes to a close.

As part of the celebration of crowning the Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year, BASS' outdoors expo Saturday and Sunday will include performances by national recording artist Heartland and local musical group The Custom Taylor Band. At the conclusion of the final weigh-in Sunday night, BASS will host a fireworks display at Oneida Shores, set for approximately 8:40 p.m.

Along with the Angler of the Year, the Advance Auto Parts Rookie of the Year and the Junior Bassmaster World Championship winners will be crowned. In the race to qualify for the 2009 Bassmaster Classic, set for Feb. 20-22 on the Red River out of Shreveport-Bossier City, La., Davy Hite of Ninety Six, S.C., is on the bubble in 36<sup>th</sup> place with 1,649 points in the Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year standings. Virginia's Rick Morris (1,644 points) and South Carolina's Britt Myers (1,639) are lurking in 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup>, respectively. The top 36 in the AOY standings qualify for the Classic. The top 84 in the AOY standings receive berths into the 2009 Bassmaster Elite Series.

Fishing fans can watch the on-the-water action from the Aug. 7-10 Champion's Choice on *The Bassmasters*, which airs Saturday, Aug. 16, at 9 a.m. ET on ESPN2. Additionally, fans can check into Bassmaster.com for live, streaming video of the weigh-ins, real-time leaderboards, analysis, photo galleries and more.

While the pros angle for the first-place prize of \$100,000 at the Champion's Choice, the climactic Trail to the Trophy will come to a conclusion on Oneida Lake. Heading into this week's Empire Chase on Lake Erie and the Niagara River out of Buffalo, three-time Angler of the Year Kevin VanDam of Kalamazoo, Mich., is leading the 2008 Toyota Tundra Bassmaster Angler of the Year points race. Others among the top pros in the heated race for the title and the \$250,000 top prize include Todd Faircloth of Jasper, Texas, who is 16 points behind VanDam before the Empire Chase; Mike McClelland of Bella Vista, Ark., in third place, 115 points back and reigning AOY Skeet Reese of Auburn, Calif., in fourth, 136 points back.

Launches Thursday-Saturday for the Champion's Choice begin at 8 a.m. ET and weigh-ins at 5 p.m. at Oneida Shores County Park, 9400 Bartell Road, Brewerton, N.Y. Sunday's final-day launch begins at 10 a.m. and the final weigh-in begins at 7:30 p.m.

Known as the "thumb" of New York's Finger Lakes, Oneida is 21 miles long and 5 miles wide, with shelves and shoals formed by glaciers. The natural body of water features plenty of shoreline vegetation and an abundance of rocky offshore structure.

Elite pro Dave Wolak of Wake Forest, N.C., has been consistent at Oneida Lake, finishing in the top five among the pros in the last two BASS tournaments there. The 2005 Advance Auto Parts Rookie of the Year finished 41<sup>st</sup> in the 2003 Northern Open, his first professional BASS tournament on Oneida, but he eventually figured out the fishery, tying for fourth in the 2006 Bassmaster Elite Series Empire Chase and finishing fifth in the 2007 Bassmaster Memorial.

In 2006, Elite Series pro Tommy Biffle won the Empire Chase with 63 pounds, 10 ounces of mostly largemouth, but mere ounces separated the rest of the top five, which included Wolak's fourth-place tie with Ken Cook, at 60 pounds, 7 ounces.

"Out of the top 10 guys you'll probably see seven who are smallmouth-oriented," Wolak said. "The smallmouth is the predominant fish there, but I've targeted both species when I've gone there in the past, and depending on what the day is presenting me with, I fish for one vs. the other. But there will be guys who just target largemouth shallow, such as when Tommy Biffle won in '06. It was kind of an oddball scenario for what he did, but it was also a good move because the largemouth tend to get a little bit bigger, and that's why he won the tournament."

Wolak said he expects an average of about 15 ½ pounds per day in the four-day tournament to make the difference for the winner. He also expects the winner to rely mostly on smallmouth.

"In lakes with grass that are big flats like that you can catch them mixed together; any of the lakes up north, that's usually what you end up dealing with," said Wolak, who originally hails from Warrior Run, Pa. "There's so many fish in the lake in general, you can tell what you should be fishing for by the amount of bites you get. I've gone in with an open mind every time I've had a tournament there and had a game plan for either one.

"It's a numbers game there, and to get yourself around 15 pounds a day, you have to play the numbers and have your game plan based on efficiency, just utilizing every minute of every day trying to capitalize on a 3-pound average. It's more about working as hard as you can than it is about anything else."

Fans can meet the Elite Series pros at Angler Alley presented by OPTIMA Batteries from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 6, at Oneida Shores County Park.

Weekend activities at the Champion's Choice include a Berkley Beginner fishing class at 3:30 p.m. and a "Boat Performance with Skeeter" class daily at 4 p.m. On Saturday, fans can talk to the Elite pros during "Ask the Experts" at Bassmaster University, set for 4:30 p.m. on the weigh-in stage.

Sunday's activities include the live taping at 6:35 p.m. of *Hooked Up*, hosted by ESPN Outdoors personalities Mark Zona and Tommy Sanders. The show will preview the final weigh-in. Live, streaming video of the Champion's Choice daily weigh-ins begins at 4:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and at 7 p.m. Sunday on [Bassmaster.com](http://Bassmaster.com).

For more information, contact BASS Communications at (407) 566-2208 or visit [Bassmaster.com](http://Bassmaster.com). Visit [ESPNMediaZone.com](http://ESPNMediaZone.com) for ESPN's latest releases, schedules and other news, plus photos, video, audio clips and more.

## **About BASS**

For 40 years, BASS has served as the authority on bass fishing. With its considerable multi-media platforms and expansive tournament trail, BASS is guided by its mission to serve all fishing fans. Through its industry leading publications *Bassmaster Magazine*, BASS Times and Fishing Tackle Retailer and comprehensive web properties in [Bassmaster.com](http://Bassmaster.com) and [ESPNOutdoors.com](http://ESPNOutdoors.com), the organization is committed to delivering content true to the

lifestyle. Additionally, television programming on ESPN2 continues to provide relevant content from tips and techniques to in-depth tournament coverage to passionate audiences.

The organization oversees the prestigious Bassmaster tournament trail which includes the Bassmaster Elite Series, Bassmaster Opens, Women's Bassmaster Tour and the Bassmaster Classic, the ultimate celebration of competitive fishing. Through its grassroots network, the BASS Federation Nation, BASS sanctions more than 20,000 events annually.

BASS also offers an array of services to its more than 525,000 members while spearheading progressive, positive change on issues related to conservation and water access. The organization is headquartered in Celebration, Fla.

###