

The River News

The Official Newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association

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September-October 2022

Bass Bowl Rankings Are Set, But AOTY Race Comes Down To Final Tournament

With eight tournaments already in the books, the annual DRFA Angler of the Year competition is still a wide-open race among five of the top six anglers in the current standings after the September Bass Tournament. (See current standings and story on Pages 5-6.)

Meanwhile, the final ranking of DRFA qualifiers for the South Jersey Bass Club Association (SJBCA) Bass-Bowl event has been established. Those rankings are based on points earned in the final Bass Tournament of 2021 and the first four Bass Tournaments of 2022.

The actual teams for the October 16 Bass-Bowl event (*two anglers in each of three boats*) are yet to be determined, based on the interest and availability among this year's top-rated DRFA bass anglers. (See article of final standings on Page 4.)

President's Message

Fall, changing of the season. Fish should be on the bite, feeding up for the colder weather. The boat

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traffic on the river should be getting lighter. The fishing should be picking up. With cooler weather and cooler water coming, boat safety is more paramount. To all members, have a safe fall fishing season.

Bob Jack

September Meeting Marks Start Of Transition To 2023

Even with one tournament and several monthly meetings still on the schedule for 2022, it is time to start planning for the next season. To that end, a number of topics are on the September-October meeting agendas. It will be critical to get member feedback and participation to help move our educational, tournament fishing, fund-raising, and member-recruitment goals forward. All members are encouraged to attend the upcoming meetings to weigh in on the following efforts:

Nominations For 2023 Officers.

In order to advance our goals for the upcoming year, it is important that individuals step up to fill our five officer and four trustee positions and contribute new ideas for improving club growth and success. Nominations will be accepted at the September and October meetings, with the actual elections taking place in October.

SLNC Volunteer Hours. At last count, we still needed a few more volunteer hours to complete our requirements for free meeting space in 2022.

Outdoor Shows. The Board of Directors has discussed participation in several outdoor shows this winter – for both member recruitment and fundraising opportunities.

Important Dates

Wednesday, September 28, 7 pm. Monthly Meeting: Silver Lake Nature Center. Nominations for 2023 officers and key decisions for fundraising, new member recruitment, and outdoor shows will be discussed

Sunday, October 9, 7:30 am. Bass Tournament, Bulls Island, NJ Ramp. (See tourney details on pg. 3.)

Sunday, October 16, 7 am. SJBCA Bass Bowl Tournament, Gloucester City Ramp. (See details in story on pg. 4.)

Wednesday, October 26, 7 pm. Monthly Meeting: Silver Lake Nature Center. Topics include elections for 2023 officers and a guest speaker on snakehead fishing.

We will need to know if we can count on member support to fill the related needs for booth setup and coverage.

Fund Raising. The right outdoor show opportunities can create a sufficient volume of support for a productive tackle-bag raffle. We already have a leg up on the prize package but will need member support to supplement the current bag. Also, members will be encouraged to pick up their tickets in person at a regularly scheduled DRFA gathering to save on postage costs. Members who cannot attend will be able to request tickets to be mailed to them.

Holiday Party. If we can get enough early commitments to support our annual holiday gathering at Georgine's, we will be able to reserve a room before all good dates are taken.

Minutes Of The July Meeting

The July meeting was opened by President Bob Jack at 7:05 pm with 11 members in attendance. Minutes from the June meeting were read and approved.

Treasury Report: Eileen Kicinski reported a balance of \$8,235.25 as of July 27. By comparison, the end of July balance in 2021 was \$9,483.22, a difference of \$1,247.97.

Membership: Membership Secretary Rick Mawson reported that membership held steady from the previous month at 53 members.

Youth Fishing Activities: There was nothing new to report on youth activities.

Club Tournaments: Bob Jack reviewed the results from the July Catfish Tournament and announced the upcoming Bass

Tournament out of the Neshaminy Marina Ramp. Rick Gasper was announced as the weighmaster for that tournament. John Pedrick and Rick Mawson will be weighmasters for the late August Catfish Tournament.

Environmental Reports: Rick reported on Lake Luxembourg being drawn down to clear out the silt buildup in the upper reaches of the reservoir. Bob Jack also reported on New Jersey drawing down Stone Tavern and Rising Sun Lakes. River dredging continues in the area around the old Fairless Hills steel plant.

Due to reduced water-flow conditions in the river, peanut bunker were being reported in the lower section of the tidal river.

John Pedrick provided some background on the rise in snakehead populations in the Delaware River dating back 15 years when pet store snakehead fish introduced into FDR Park in South Philly escaped through some storm drains into the Navy Yard basin and river.

Fishing Reports: John Pedrick reported taking his grandson out to fish for bass at Tullytown Cove, where he caught a 3-lb. bass on a Ned Rig. John also reported on a family fishing event in Washington State, where they limited out on salmon up to 40 lbs. Frank Beck was also out with his grandson at a pond in Horsham, where they caught 20 sunnies.

Frank and Ron Soto landed a nice crappie in deep water while fishing Falls Township lake with Frank Beck the day before the meeting. Ron added a small largemouth bass while fishing the weeds and Frank had a few hits on a drop-shot rig in deeper water. Rick Mawson and Joe Newton also picked up a few

small bass off the weeds and one in deeper water early on the day of the meeting. Both reported plenty of baitfish and spotting fish on their sonar, but the bigger bass were not cooperative.

Frank Beck reported that the old H&L Live Bait and Tackle site in Morrisville was now open under the Shark Bites name.

New Business: Rick Mawson raised the possibility of the club obtaining a debit card for the club checking account to handle online transactions such as website accounts, etc. A suggestion was made to have the Board of Directors investigate the possibilities of an electronic payment method that would provide protection to the bulk of funds in the current checking account.

Rick was still waiting on notification of the Silver Lake Nature Center summer camp fishing events that club members can use to defer our required service hours to pay for our meeting space.

The winner of \$23 in the 50–50 drawing was Rich Hoffman. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Minutes Of The August Meeting

The August 31 meeting was called to order by President Bob Jack at 7:07 pm with 16 members in attendance. Minutes from the July meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eileen Kicinski reported a balance of \$8,032.95 as of the end of August – a difference of \$1,267.80 from the end-of-August balance of \$9,300.75 in 2021.

Membership Report: Membership Secretary Rick

Mawson reported that we were holding steady at 53 paid members as of the August meeting date.

Youth Fishing Activities: There was nothing current to report on youth fishing activity.

Tournaments: Scott McDonough provided a recap of the August Bass and Catfish Tournaments. He also discussed the potential of low-water conditions at the Byram and Bulls Island ramps for the final two tournaments of the year. He will keep an eye on ramp and water conditions as we get closer to those dates.

New Business: Bob Jack addressed the topic of investigating a credit or debit card for transactions on services like Club website hosting and the URL registry that require online payments. Members discussed various options that would provide the convenience needed without exposing the card number to potential cybersecurity risks. The Board of Directors will research options and come up with a recommendation.

It was also suggested that the Board of Directors meet in mid-September to plan for future Club activities and needs.

Environmental Reports: Club members reported on river dredging around the old Fairless Hills steel plant dock, which John Pedrick described as a turning basin for ships going into and out of the dock.

Fishing Reports: Pete Antoniewicz reported on a kayak fishing trip for smallmouth bass on the Lehigh River in mid-August. Cooler water in the early morning (70 degrees) saw a slow start to the day. The bite improved as the day progressed and was associated with large

boulders in relatively deeper waters. TRD Ned Rigs were the primary source of subtle bites, with a modest amount of swimbait activity mixed in.

Pete also reported on a decent day of fishing between Titusville and Yardley the day before the meeting. He and Jim Pocetti caught a dozen smallies between 10” and 15.5” that were unusually fat for summertime fish, probably due to feeding on shad fry moving down the river.

Scott McDonough reported on tough fishing in a recent ABA bass tournament where his two fish took third place out of 10 anglers who weighed fish.

The 50/50 drawing for \$35.00 was won by Harry Wirebach. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

USGS Working To Research ‘Blotchy Bass Syndrome’

Have you ever caught a bass with irregularly shaped black splotches?

It turns out that these *hyperpigmented melanistic lesions* have recently been associated with a [novel emerging adomavirus](#).

Given the increasing frequency of this condition in waters across the country, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is undertaking research to study the situation. While the organization is working with state fisheries departments in a number of states ranging from the Northeast and MidAtlantic to the Midwest and Southwest – including both the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the NJ Department of Fish and Wildlife – there is also a plan to incorporate a ‘citizen-science component’ (i.e., *feedback from bass angling organizations*).

Learn more about the problem and the plan of attack to study it with this [link to the USGS webpage](#) on the effort: <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/ees/c/science/investigating-blotchy-bass-syndrome-black-basses#overview>

2022 Tournament Schedule

All DRFA Club tournaments are free and open to dues-paying DRFA members, with club-funded payouts of \$50, \$30, and \$20 to the top three places. (There are no entry fees, however, ramp, launch, and/or parking fees may apply.) There will also be a voluntary \$10.00 luncheon pool with a 100% payout to pool participants for the three heaviest pool fish – 60%, 30%, and 10% – at tournament’s end.)

Participants also accrue points for the Angler of the Year competition based on their top six finishes among the nine regular Club events. New members may register on the morning of an event before check-in time. Weigh-in is at the time specified. Late entries will not count.

Always check the DRFA website or the Tournament Hotline (267-934-2148) the night before the event to learn about potential rescheduling or relocation due to water or weather conditions.

Date	Event	Time	Location
Sun. 10/9...	Bass	7:30 am–1:30 pm	..Bulls Island Ramp, NJ

NJ Lake Upgrades Could Provide New Temporary Angling Advantage

Frank Beck provided a reminder about new ramp construction at Rising Sun Lake and Stone Tavern Lake in the Assunpink Wildlife Management Area in Central New Jersey.

The following [link to a press release](https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/news-2022-09-14-water-lowering-boat-ramp-improvements-assunpink-wma-lakes/) on the NJ Fish and Wildlife (NJFW) website provides details on the projects: <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/news-2022-09-14-water-lowering-boat-ramp-improvements-assunpink-wma-lakes/>

The 6-foot to 8-foot drawdown to allow for concrete boat ramp installation will concentrate fish in the remaining deeper areas of each lake, which could prove advantageous to anglers. Access to each lake is still open as the lakes are being lowered, although that could change once the projects get into full swing. Cartop boat, canoe, or kayak launching should provide access throughout the construction period. Anglers should keep an eye on the NJFW website to monitor any changes in access during the projects. Once construction is complete, (scheduled for December 1) water levels will be returned to normal.

Bass Bowl Qualifier List is Finalized

With the completion of the September Bass Tournament, we have our list of qualifiers for the annual SJBCA Bass Bowl being held this year on October 16 at the Gloucester City Boat Ramp.

VP/Tournament Coordinator Scott McDonough will be in contact with this year's leading bass anglers to put together three

teams of two anglers each to represent the Club in the annual SJBCA event.

Here are the top qualifiers for this season (including the final Bass Tournament of last year, which occurred after the 2021 Bass Bowl) and their point totals:

1. Scott McDonough (498)
2. Pete Antoniewicz (484)
3. Rich Hoffman (382)
4. Casey McDonough (295)
5. George Hoffman (291)
6. Rick Mawson (286)
7. Frank Beck (195)
8. Gregg Southrey (191)
9. Joe Newton (98)
10. Ron Soto (98)
11. Rick Gasper (97)
12. Shane Seliga (96)
13. Bryan Malkiewicz (96)
14. Chris Hoffman (96)
15. Mike Nucero (95)

Bass Tournament Results From August

The August Bass Tournament challenged anglers with an incoming tide for much of the morning, but 7 of the 14 participating anglers still managed to bring a legal fish to the scales.

Not unsurprisingly, Team McDonough took top honors despite a slow start to the day, with dad Scott weighing in a 2.32-lb., 16" largemouth and son Casey entering a 1.94-lb., 15.25" largemouth. Ron Soto was close behind with his 1.84-lb., 15.50" third-place fish.



Scott McDonough, 1st



Casey McDonough, 2ⁿ



Ron Soto, 3rd

#	August Bass Results	Weight	Length	Points
1	Scott McDonough	2.32	16.00	100
2	Casey McDonough	1.94	15.25	99
3	Ron Soto	1.84	15.50	98
4	Rich Hoffman	1.73	15.00	97
5	Frank Beck	1.66	13.75	96
6	George Hoffman	1.19	13.25	95
7	Pete Antoniewicz	0.92	14.25	94

August Catfish Tournament Results

The August 20 Catfish Tournament saw hot weather and hot fishing for most of the 14 participants in that day's event. Of the 10 fish brought to the scales, more than half of them were over the 5-lb. mark – a relatively good showing for a late-summer DRFA event.

The top three places saw a near repeat of the top finishers in the Bass Tournament held earlier in the month. Only this time Casey McDonough bested his dad Scott for first place with a 10.07-lb., 28.00” catfish. Once again, Ron Soto finished close behind Scott's second-place fish.

#	August Catfish Results	Weight	Length	Points
1	Casey McDonough	10.07	28.00	100
2	Scott McDonough	7.77	26.75	99
3	Ron Soto	7.21	26.50	98
4	George Hoffman	6.94	26.75	97
5	Rich Hoffman	5.87	25.00	96
6	Frank Beck	5.52	24.50	95
7	Pete Antoniewicz	4.95	23.25	94
8	Gregg Southrey	3.85	22.75	93
9	John Pedrick	3.01	21.00	92
10	Rick Mawson Sr	2.93	20.00	91



Casey McDonough, 1st



Scott McDonough, 2nd



Ron Soto, 3rd

AOTY Standings As Of September 18

With just one tournament left to go, the race for the top three cash prizes in the Angler of the Year competition is far from over. (See current standings on Page 6.)

Because only the top six tournament results are compiled for each angler, any angler who enters more than six fish will be able to eliminate their lowest previous tournament finish(es). So even if two anglers appear close in the current standings, one can leapfrog the other by replacing a significantly lower score from a previous tournament. This makes it extremely difficult to handicap the final standings until the October 9 weigh-in is completed.

While Rich Hoffman currently holds a small lead over brother George, he also must contend with Scott and Casey Hoffman who can overtake him with a first-place finish. Frank Beck could also slip into second place depending on how he and his closest competitors do. Here is a rundown of the maximum potential scores attainable by each of the five anglers still in contention – assuming that they can take first place in the October 9 event:

Scott McDonough (597)

Casey McDonough (592)

Rich Hoffman (590)

George Hoffman (588)

Frank Beck (584)

Pete Antoniewicz could match Frank Beck's current third-place total of 579 points but would lose the tiebreaker based on total weight.

Of course, not everyone can finish first, so how many places these anglers finish above or below their closest current competition will have a big impact on determining the final standings.

Best of luck to all our top-tier competitors!

#	Standings as of 9/18/22	Points	Weight	Length
1	Rich Hoffman	585	36.74	130.25
2	George Hoffman	583	27.01	123.25
3	Frank Beck	579	22.29	118.00
4	Pete Antoniewicz	573	15.40	105.25
5	Scott McDonough	497	19.36	95.75
6	Casey McDonough	492	20.63	98.75
7	Rick Mawson Sr	474	13.59	90.25
8	Joe Newton	391	15.16	82.25
9	Ron Soto	389	15.96	84.00
10	Gregg Southrey	380	17.96	85.25
11	Bryan Malkiewicz	191	5.70	36.00
12	Rick Gasper	189	3.12	29.50
13	Bob Kuntz	99	3.94	21.75
14	Shane Seliga	96	2.12	16.00
15	Mike Nucero	95	1.38	13.75
16	Anthony Scholl Sr	93	2.30	18.00
17	John Pedrick	92	3.01	21.00
18	Anthony Scholl Jr	91	0.38	11.00

From A to Z:

Keep Your Ear To The Ground, Shoulder To the Wheel, And Nose To The Grindstone

Based on what I have personally experienced from nearly a quarter century in the Club I always tout the value of being a DRFA member, attending tournaments, and fishing with (*or at least talking with*) other members.

This year was no exception. But one thing that struck me from post-tournament discussions is that it's not always as easy as our top tournament anglers make it seem. What I gleaned from random conversations with George and Rich Hoffman and Scott and Casey McDonough is that even the best anglers can struggle a bit on tournament day. All of the above anglers told me at one tournament or another that

they were pretty far into the day without success, before pulling the bacon out of the fire with a winning fish or even just a legal fish toward the end of the event.

When you consider the relatively short time of a tournament – six hours minus travel time to and from fishing hotspots – it is important to have back-up plans and to know when it's time to take a different tack from your initial strategy.

But how are we supposed to formulate those back-up alternatives? One is by attending meetings to hear our guest speakers and other club members relate their experiences. (*The fishing reports shared by members at the end of every meeting are an excellent way to expand your perspective.*) Fishing with other DRFA anglers during a tournament or even a pre-tournament practice session is another excellent way to be

exposed to new perspectives. And cultivating casual acquaintances for post-tournament feedback can help in comparing the experiences of other anglers.

All those three forms of learning, combined with remnants of past experience, contributed to my tournament performance this year. I was also able to pay some of it forward while sharing my back seat with Bryan and Frank during two tournaments this year.

Of course, learning what to do is a far cry from making it happen in real time. This year's Shad Tournament was a perfect case in point. I've listened to hours of shad fishing seminars but have not had the time to put it into practice in advance of our annual tournaments. Simply knowing what to do was of no help as I anchored within casting distance of the top three finishers but still had nothing to show for the day.

Because there's no substitute for experience, blocking out time for practice fishing time is critical to refining your technique. Doing so made a specific difference in two tournaments for me this year.

Also, not giving up during a slow practice day or a frustrating tournament experience is essential. When my practice experience for the most recent non-tidal Bass Tournament let me down, I had to count on past recreational fishing experiences to save the day.

So, in 2023, participate in as many DRFA gatherings as possible to stock the filing cabinet in the recesses of your mind with resources from your own experiences and those of other DRFA members shared during a meeting, fishing trip, or tournament.

The Delaware River Fishermen's Association
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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2022 ISSUE

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- 'BLOTCHY BASS SYNDROME'
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Also visit our website

www.drfishermen.com

THE RIVER NEWS is the bimonthly newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association. The DRFA typically meets the last Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Silver Lake Nature Center, 1306 Bath Road, Bristol, PA. All interested sportsmen and women are invited to attend our meetings and join the organization.

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