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Life Outside the Lab

Getting the Perfect Bite In and Out of the Lab

By Kaitlyn Roberts, Editorial Assistant



Leroy Starling shows off a 6.1-lb smallmouth bass he caught during a Montana B.A.S.S. Nation tournament.

Leroy Starling knows how to make them bite. Fish, that is. The Owner of The Dental Workshop in Whitefish, MT, the Florida native began competing in bass angling tournaments at age 16 and hasn't looked back. "I'm a very competitive person so bass tournaments are a great way to keep that competitive spirit alive," he says.

Starling is a member of the B.A.S.S. Nation, a national fishing club for bass anglers. Club members compete throughout the year in state, divisional and national level tournaments with the highest finishers earning a spot in the Bassmaster Classic.

Most tournaments are two days long and begin around 6am, allowing anglers about eight hours per day to fish. At the end of the day, each angler's fish are weighed, and the angler with the highest total weight after the second day wins. Competitors are penalized one pound for every minute they are late to the weigh-in, and a half pound for each dead fish.

Starling has competed as high as the Bassmaster B.A.S.S. Nation Championship, with dreams to

one day earn a spot in the Bassmaster Classic. "It's like the Super Bowl of bass fishing," he says. The biggest bass he's caught in a tournament was 8.5 lbs in the 2013 B.A.S.S. Nation Western Divisionals, and his highest tournament weight total was 23 lbs during a Montana B.A.S.S. Nation tournament.

Off the water anglers share camaraderie; on the water, competition is intense and there are certain etiquette rules to follow. "We have to occasionally work out problems on the water, like someone fishing in your spot after you fish there the first day or someone coming to your spot while you're fishing it," says Starling.

Fishing and lab work have a lot in common, according to Starling. Both involve planning and having the right tools. "Organization of my tackle is where I really kick it up; every piece has a place, so I don't need to think about where it is when I may need it, just like my lab bench," he says. "You need to be able to fish instinctively and change your game plan when needed, just like lab work." **LMT**



Starling says his fishing hobby also helps his lab work. "When I'm fishing, my mind is renewed by letting the stresses go and I always come back refreshed—win or lose—ready to take on the next case."

Starling's catches at the 2013 B.A.S.S. Nation Western Divisionals in Clear Lake, CA, weighed in at 8.5 and 6 lbs.

