

--New Mexico BASS Federation Nation Angler Spices up the Pro Tours

By Bob Lechel

High Country bass angler – for the New Mexico Bass Federation Nation BigMouth

Everyone from New Mexico knows the one absolute is our chili. New Mexican's are practically born with a chili in their mouth and possess the innate ability to find new and interesting ways to put chile (red or green) into all kinds of concoctions. Former New Mexico angler, Bryan Talmadge, has concocted a little chili number that has been burning his fellow co-anglers on tour with the BASS Elite and FLW tours. It appears that other co-anglers should be ordering "red" when stepping up against Bryan. He's been dishing out red-hot performances over the last few years, which undoubtedly have left burning sensations in their stomach. Not the good kind of burning sensations either, you know, that feeling that makes you think, "Yum, just the right amount of heat and good flavor" while enjoying your favorite dish. More like the flaming hot sensation that would incite a chili newbie, who just tried their first taste of hot chili, to desperately search for the closest bucket of ice to stuff their head in.

Bryan had long been a fixture in the fishing department of Charlie's Sporting Goods in Albuquerque, NM. He developed a loyal following and great deal of respect amongst all fishermen in the state. About two years ago, as a native New Mexican, he relocated to the southeast United States to assist his girlfriend (now wife), Lisa, in running the American Bass Association tournaments in the region. His move to the southeast (Florida and then Alabama) left a void at Charlie's and amongst the fishermen in the state; for Bryan opportunity was just around the corner. He was now in the heart of bass fishing. Professional tournaments and big payouts were all within reach from his new location. He could work with Lisa and still have the chance to fish the professional circuits and learn from the pros while competing on the co-angler side. Quickly, he was showing his co-angler competition and that he knew how to turn up the heat — New Mexican style.

At Bryan's first 2007 BASS Elite Series event at Amistad, his eighth place was very respectable. Following that finish with an Elite Series win at Lake Guntersville, then a first and second in ABA Grand Slam qualifying tournaments, he punctuated his 2007 siege with another win at the ABA Grand Slam National Championship. Collecting two boats and numerous checks for the 2007 season, Bryan left a mark. Starting 2008 in similar fashion, with a co-angler win on the FLW Tour Lake Toho and ninth at the BASS Elite Series Harris Chain, Bryan has good momentum. Since moving, Bryan has amassed an estimated \$100,000 in winnings as a co-angler! How did he do it? It's the luck of the draw. Right? Wrong!

Bryan says his biggest keys to success were being versatile and paying attention, stressing a co-angler better be open minded and adjust your techniques based on the type of water your pro fishes. Many pros are on completely different patterns and not adapting well or only knowing a couple techniques you limiting your chances for success from the back of the boat. Bryan also attributes his awareness around the boat and the particular spots he was fishing as paying dividends. Several instances where paying attention to the graph at the console, picking up on subtle structure and cover changes, allowed him to boat fish from the back, often while his pro was struggling in the same area. Bryan also credited learning how to fish in The Land of Enchantment as a factor.

“If you can learn how to catch fish in New Mexico, where the fisheries are pretty diverse and don’t have a ton of fish, that makes you a much better fisherman. By better, I mean versatile, out here these lakes have tons of fish and catching them seems easier,” he said.

Another facet to his success was using the drop-shot technique.

“Very few people in the south use the drop shot rig. For some pros, it’s either a 10 inch worm or spinnerbait, that’s it, if they can’t catch them on that, well, they just weren’t biting,” he said.

Bryan doesn’t subscribe to that philosophy. Most of the pros are around fish, they are the best of the best and know how to find fish, some are just hard headed and don’t adapt as well as others, according to Bryan. His confidence in the drop-shot rig has allowed him to fish confidently behind most of the pros. Most of his wins and good finishes came from the drop-shot rig while the pro was power fishing in front of him.

With that in mind, we wanted to share some of these experiences. Having fished several tournaments in the BASS Elite Series, ABA and FLW Tour series events, Bryan had some amazing stories to tell.

Who was your favorite draw?

“KVD! It was like the MasterCard commercial, priceless. I’ve drawn KVD twice and he is a wealth of knowledge. He answers all of your questions honestly and provides some amazing advice. I zeroed on the last day of the Harris Chain event (when he drew KVD) and I learned more that day about grass fishing than I could have in five years of grass fishing. He is a genuinely good guy and an awesome fisherman.”

Who is the best pro fisherman that you’ve fished with?

“Aaron Martens. He’s on a whole different level than any other pro I’ve fished with. He’s the most creative and is willing to try baits and techniques that are outside the box. I know it sounds stupid, but he’s got that sixth sense. He thinks like a fish.”

What did you learn from the pros?

“Confidence. The different levels of confidence, even between the pros, was amazing. The pros near the top of the standings had a level of confidence that they knew they were going to catch them. It wasn’t even a question. Other pros (in the bottom tier) had an attitude that they hoped to catch five fish. Also, the boat control by the pros was very impressive. They make it look really easy at how well they keep their boat in the best position all the time.”

What was the “best lesson” you got from a pro?

“David Fritz gave me a lesson on crank bait fishing I’ll never forget. He had three crank baits tied on in different colors. He had an area that he was wondering around in 40-plus feet of water just looking at his electronics. He finally found the fish he was looking for, rotated through his crank baits, and I think I spent the next hour on my knees netting his fish. In between netting, I tried every different kind of crank bait I had, but couldn’t get a bite. That guy is an awesome crank bait fisherman.”

Have you had any bad experiences?

“Falling short on the last day. I’ve been in contention to win a couple of times and to go out and not catch them, for one reason or another, was very frustrating. Even though my main goal is to learn from the pros, anyone who knows me knows that I still have a strong desire to win.”

With your continued success, when are you going to step up to the front of the boat?

“It’s not that easy of a decision. We still have bills, want to buy a house, and are recently married. If I found someone to front entry fees and expenses then the decision would be much easier. Right now, it’s not the right time for me and my family.”

Bryan’s confidence is soaring and his wins are mounting, there is no doubt his success will continue and he will keep serving up (or force feeding if you wish) his southern competition a little New Mexican flavor. Give them the red Bryan, give ’em the red!