

Sun Country Bass Association
East & West Points, Super Team and Ranger Cup
Del Rio, TX February 27-28, 2010

2010 has a lot of new faces in Sun Country and some returning that haven't been around in a while. Missed at the first tourney of the year were Tommy Tharp and Joe Smith, we hope to see them back. Some old faces that came back were Chuck Rizuto and Barry Stanley, Trent Huckaby and Bubba Haralson (always a tough team on Amistad), JJ Ducharme and Gary Carr, Rod Lambirth and Roger Conn, Matt Abeyta and Joe Weber, and Bruce Allred. One of the new faces this year was my partner, Seth Garrison, one of the NMBFN Juniors that has proven to be very successful on his own and as a team partner coming into 2010 with a 2009 Four Corners Team Bass Championship in his rear view mirror. Seth also made the NM 12 man traveling team in the NMBFN in 2009, but because of his Junior status could not compete on the traveling team. Sun Country, as always, put on a great show and the tournament was run very smoothly. Tim and Cheryl Ludwig were the tournament staff and did a spectacular job. Doug Stewart, Todd Town, Kevin Smith, Tony LaPaglia and Steve Del Valle were all pitching in. Thank you to all the people that made it run smoothly.

We showed up late Wednesday night without much of a game plan as Seth had never been to the lake and I had only been there once last year in March as a partner and not a boater.

We trailored up to Box Canyon and launched there on Thursday as we had read [Kurt Dove's fishing report from SW Texas Bass Guide](#) website which will be featured in our weekly report on [ABQ Sportfishing](#). The report had three patterns working in shallow, mid and deep water. Kurt is doing a great job of keeping the report current and also very open to help people coming to the lake. He can be found posting on the Texas Fishing Forum also. Kurt is a guide on Amistad and knows how to find fish if anyone is looking to make a trip there but they don't want to haul their boat.

We rolled straight across to Burro and as I was digging out rods, [Seth had made his third cast and stuck an almost 9 pounder](#) on a crankbait. It was an awesome fish to catch at 8:05 AM on your first day of practice. We spun around and turned on our Humminbird 1197 and plugged in the Navionics Platinum chip. While Seth was still casting for another giant I looked at the 3D view of what he was casting to. It was an expansive flat with a corner that had a deep drain running back in the pocket. Textbook spring stuff and after a couple more fish, we were gone as pre-fishing was not the time to be heros. We went into Zoro next and looked for the same structure on the Navionics Platinum chip and there were several areas that looked similar, but not all of them had the same submergent vegetation. This was labeled on the regular GPS view of our chip so we spent the rest of the day looking for submergent vegetation on areas like the one we found in Burro. Caballo and Tule did not produce for us and we spent the last

part of the day looking at Box Canyon for bedding fish and the ledges between Burro and marker 21-22 with football jigs in 18-32 feet of water. We covered/eliminated a lot of water on day 1 practice.

After a long day we went back to our host housing of Mike and Diane Cones who moved to Del Rio from NM last year. Diane was the most gracious host and made sure all of us were taken care of like we were her own. They had three teams staying at their house and she didn't even blink. It made a huge difference in our practice having dinner and breakfast every day and someone there for moral support. THANK YOU!

Friday we decided to launch at Diablo East. With the water up, there isn't much of a break and the wind was rolling in pretty good from the NW. We fished the lower lake and focused on Evans, Castle and the Devils arms. We caught fish, but not the quality we had up river and came to the conclusion that was our plan at 3PM on Friday. That and we had to get off the lake early to head to [Two Guys Marine](#). While running from the Devils back to Pedro, we had some big water to contend with and my modified 1197 bracket did not hold up well. It ended up in my lap and Seth held on while we ran back in. The folks at Two Guys were awesome. They backed us into a bay, had a tech get the fabricating tools out and they had us out the door in 30 minutes with a bomb proof bracket. (Good thing, we needed it on Sunday).

Rules meeting Friday night went smooth and we were in and out in under an hour. Just enough time to thank all the sponsors that make Sun Country the success it is, cover the rules and draw boat order. Seeing the quality of anglers that had been on that lake for years had me intimidated, but Seth reminded me that he was a starving college student and did not come down to get second. It was a refreshing attitude and motivated us to fish that much better.

Saturday morning came and although I had my chip in, I wasn't really sure where I was going as we were mid way out in the first flight and all I knew was to go out from the launch and turn left. If the GPS only knew how to run down the lake and not point-to-point as the crow flies, that would be helpful. After you get under the bridge, there is a lot of water out there. We were trying to make it look good so I just kept the pedal down on the Optimax and we passed a few boats and made it to Burro before anyone else headed in there. We rolled in to the back and set up shop. Seth began putting on a clinic in crankbait fishing as I spent most of the time netting his fish and trying different lures out the deep side of the flat to intercept some other fish. Within 30 minutes we had a limit in the livewell that would be tough to upgrade until later in the day. We landed every fish without incident and even had a challenge on one of them. Seth had one eat and run right back into a tree. We spent some very tense moments dancing around the tree and after some well executed patience, the fish swam out. We were both fishing [15 pound Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon](#) on our crankbait rods and that was

a critical factor with our presentation. Not only did it allow us better feel of what was going on down below, it saved that fish from breaking us off in that tree.

After fending off some local boat traffic we headed out of Burro and back to Evans to see if we could make some swim bait magic happen with some hand pours that Dalton King made for us.

We got to Evans and Seth was able to get one to eat a swimbait, but the last upgrade of the day came on a crankbait again. We had a pretty good bag and did not want to be late so we ran back across and fished the point outside of Diablo with the swimbait with no luck. We loaded up and as we went up the ramp, the motor quit going up. The trim relay had failed. After weigh-in we headed to Two Guys Marine again and they had us in and out in 15 minutes all fixed up. What a great place!

Our first day sack was 26.74 and had us in second place. We found this out later that night and we were pretty excited as we left our primary spot alone and never made it to our second best spot in Zoro. Saturday night the weather was calling for winds in the 30s with gust up to 40 out of the Southeast. We thought we could fish our primary spot and that was the plan. We trailored to Box Canyon and launched and headed across. Already in the morning it was a rough run, but nothing like what the rest of the day held for us.

We made it to Burro with nobody in site. We pulled up again and today, we were both throwing at the spot as we knew we did not have much time and it was already blowing hard. We pulled up at 7:47 and had a limit by 8:11, but it was not the quality that we had the day before. We had two fish under three pounds in the livewell and knew that would not cut it. Two 4s and a 4.5 were the other three. Our deficit on Day 1 was 10 pounds to the leaders and we wanted to catch them. Amistad is the kind of fishery that can produce 40 pound bags and we wanted one. As the morning rolled on, the wind got worse and we could not hold on our spot, we ran up to the bank and tried shallow, but we only caught smaller fish. After making the hard decision to leave and try to get to Zorro, only a few miles, we headed out. It took 45 minutes to get there and it was an ugly ride. The mouth of Burro looked like something out of the perfect storm with waves that were coming from three directions. Once we made it around the point, we were able to run wide open down the shoreline, but once we entered Zoro, it was blowing right at us again.

We pulled up on spot number two and began trying to fish. Trying because it was almost impossible to hold the boat in the wind and cast into it. Crankbaits and headwinds are not a good mix. Our pattern involved really long casts and not running over our fish so it was tough to execute. Seth did a great job and I did my best to hold the boat and fish in between. Not falling in the lake was an accomplishment in itself. Still had two rats to upgrade and we closed the deal in Zorro. Seth had one that bit and started coming right at the boat. As the fish

came up, it decided to let go of the bait and I made the save with a long-handled net (12 feet extended) coming up with the fish. It was a nice moment to see that fish in the bag after watching the crankbait go flying by us. We continued to grind it out and were able to scrape up one more. The net save gained us a full pound and as you will see in the results, it was a critical point in our overall weight.

After that fish we did not know how long it would take us to get back as Box Canyon was a lot of waves away. We ran back down river into the ways, quartered across the river channel to the other bank and came back down and fished Amistad Acres and the mouth of Box. It was time to go face the music as we were not extremely happy with our sack, but also knew the conditions were a lot tougher on Sunday. We had just shy of 20 pounds for our best five and were hoping to still cash a check. Another key element to our being able to fish some key areas was the Minn Kota Maxxum Pro with 52" shaft. This is longer than most people fish, but without it, we would not have been able to hold as well in the wind on Sunday.

We arrived at weigh-in and our hosts (Mike and Diane) were there waiting anxiously telling us some of the weights that came in. Although Jimmy and Ray may not believe us, we were hoping they could have a good day as we knew it would be tough to fish their spot and even tougher just to fish. They had a rough day with a little less than 8 pounds which opened the door for a lot of things to happen. Seth weighed us in at 19.80 and from some initial calculations we were in the lead, but there were a lot of boats out yet. After the majority of the rest of the boats weighed-in we felt pretty good as a lot of bags in the low teens seemed to be the norm. Not knowing how Trent and Bubba did or some other top teams, we saw Trent Loukas weigh a 9.5 at the scales. With fish like that to be had, it was a stressful time as we waited for the final tally.

Once the dust settled (it never really did as the wind continued to howl) Seth and I got the word that we had won, a clean sweep! We won the East, West, Ranger Cup (thank you to [Smith RV and Marine](#) and Kevin Smith) and are leading the Super Team competition. It was a great way to start out the year, especially on an unfamiliar body of water for both of us. Having Kurt's report helped us narrow down the very daunting task of tackling Lake Amistad. In addition to the Navionics Platinum card, our Humminbird 1197 and some effective practice, we put a plan into motion that worked flawlessly. We only had one fish that came off on the way to the boat during the tourney and had a lot of other things fall into place. It was truly a pleasure to fish with Seth and we are both looking forward to the rest of the year and some great competition. Sun Country has some of the best anglers West Texas, New Mexico and Colorado have to offer. We know that we have started at the front and we appreciate all the help from our friends and sponsors. We need to thank Rich Davisson from Berkley for getting us line at the last minute; we needed every bit of the 15 pound Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon. Thank you also to [Mercury Marine](#), [Navionics](#), [Loc R Bar](#), [Berkley](#), [Abu Garcia](#) and [Kurt Dove](#).

