

Power fishing lifts Arkansas Youth Anglers duo Connor Gartman and Blake Starr to victory at Lake Tenkiller

COOKSON, Okla., March 30, 2025. — There have been days when Connor Gartman and Blake Starr believed they were in line to win a tournament, only to finish second or third to a team with a kicker bass.

The Arkansas Youth Anglers duo sealed the deal this time at the Strike King Bassmaster High School Series at Lake Tenkiller, landing a five-bass limit weighing 18 pounds, 3 ounces. They anchored their winning catch with a 5-pound largemouth.

“This feels amazing,” Gartman said. “I’ve been one good bite away in many tournaments. We caught our kicker today, and we had four good ones to go with it. We did it the way we like to — power fishing. It was windy and cloudy, perfect conditions for it.”

Fellow Arkansas Youth Anglers Tayson Hathorn and Tristin Hathorn finished second in the 78-boat field with 16-7 and landed the Big Bass of the Day, a 5-2 bass. Cale Compton and Adam Reed from the Moore High School Fishing Club finished third with 16-3.

Clouds and wind prevailed in eastern Oklahoma on Sunday, but plenty of bass were caught on Lake Tenkiller. Forty-seven teams caught a limit of bass during the one-day tournament and nearly 699 pounds were brought to the scales.

Hailing from central Arkansas, Gartman and Starr have been fishing together since the seventh grade but had never fished Lake Tenkiller prior to this week. After spending plenty of time looking at Google Earth, it didn’t take



The Arkansas Youth Anglers team of Connor Gartman and Blake Starr have won the 2025 Strike King Bassmaster High School Series at Lake Tenkiller. (Photo by Chase Sansom/B.A.S.S.)

long for them to get comfortable. “We’ve gotten comfortable with being uncomfortable,” Starr said. “This week was the best practice we’ve ever had. We had 19 or 20 pounds in practice and today it just happened for us.”

Two areas with prominent points produced the bulk of their weight during the tournament. They tossed a ½-ounce football jig paired with either a Strike King

Rage Craw or a Strike King Menace trailer, but their best bites came using a 6-inch Megabass Magdraft swimbait. Gartman and Starr would position the boat so one of them could toss the football jig into deeper water and the other could throw the swimbait in shallow water. “We kept the boat in 14 feet of water,” Starr said. “We tried to position it so we could parallel

the bank with the Magdraft and then get the football jig into the deeper water. It really worked out. We were on as windy of a bank as we could get with as big of rock as we could find.”

“With that Magdraft, I had it in no more than 5 feet of water,” Gartman added.

While they caught quality smallmouth in practice, the duo landed mostly largemouth on tourna-

ment day.

They filled out their limit around 10 a.m., which allowed them to pick up their “big-fish baits” later in the day. The Magdraft produced a 3-pounder and their 5-pounder, which rounded out their bag and lifted them to victory.

The Top 8 teams punched their tickets to the 2025 Strike King Bassmaster High School National Championship at Clarks

Hill Reservoir, which is scheduled for July 31-Aug. 2. Teams will have one final chance to qualify at Buggs Island in Virginia on May 4.

The tournament was hosted by the Oklahoma Ozarks Tourism Association.

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The Bassmaster Tournament Trail includes the most prestigious events at each level of competition, including the Bassmaster Elite Series, St. Croix Bassmaster Opens Series presented by SEVIN, Mercury B.A.S.S. Nation Qualifier Series presented by Lowrance, Strike King Bassmaster College Series presented by Bass Pro Shops, Strike King Bassmaster High School Series, Bassmaster Junior Series, Bassmaster Team Championship, Newport Bassmaster Kayak Series presented by Native Watercraft, Bassmaster College Kayak Series, Yamaha Bassmaster Redfish Cup Championship presented by Skeeter and the ultimate celebration of competitive fishing, the Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Classic presented by Under Armour.

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Whataburger named title sponsor for Bassmaster Elite Series at Lake Hartwell set for April 24-27

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., April 1, 2025 — B.A.S.S. is proud to announce that Whataburger will serve as the title sponsor for the upcoming Bassmaster Elite Series event at Lake Hartwell to be held April 24-27 in Anderson, S.C. In addition to the title sponsorship, Bassmaster will launch a new digital content franchise, Whataburger Wednesdays, bringing fans fun and flavorful lifestyle content featuring their favorite Progressive Bassmaster Elite Series pros.

glers to one of the Southeast’s most iconic fisheries. Known for its scenic views and big spotted bass, Lake Hartwell promises to deliver four exciting days of competition for fans both on-site and online.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Whataburger to the B.A.S.S. family as a title sponsor and content partner,” said Phillip Johnson, B.A.S.S. Chief Operating Officer. “Their brand is built on passion, tradition and community — the same values that drive our anglers and our fans. Together, we’re going to create a world-class event at Lake Hartwell and

“Whataburger is excited to partner with B.A.S.S. and be part of a sport that resonates so strongly with our fans,” said Whataburger Director of Corporate Sponsorship Jeff Altman. “Fishing is about more than just competition — it’s about family, tradition and creating unforgettable moments. That’s exactly the spirit we want to bring to the Whataburger Bassmaster Elite at Lake Hartwell.”

share even more great stories through Whataburger Wednesdays.”

Whataburger Wednesdays will feature behind-the-scenes access, off-the-water adventures and a bite-sized look into the personalities of Elite Series anglers. The content will be distributed across Bassmaster digital and social media platforms throughout the 2025 season.

“Whataburger is excited to partner with B.A.S.S. and be part of a sport that resonates so strongly with our fans,” said Whataburger Director of Corporate Sponsorship Jeff Altman. “Fishing is

about more than just competition — it’s about family, tradition and creating unforgettable moments. That’s exactly the spirit we want to bring to the Whataburger Bassmaster Elite at Lake Hartwell.”

Fans can expect great fishing, delicious food experiences and a one-of-a-kind connection to their favorite anglers during the Lake Hartwell event.

For more information and updates on the 2025 Whataburger Bassmaster Elite at Lake Hartwell, visit Bassmaster.com.

SAF announces Blackout Coffee joins as corporate partner at the Silver level from sports-Military 2

their values: bold flavor, fierce independence, and unwavering support for the Constitution.

“We don’t just make coffee — we make a statement,” said Blackout Coffee co-owner and Guns & Gadgets CEO Jared Yanis. “Whether it’s supporting the Second Amendment, backing our troops and law enforcement, or calling out corporate hypocrisy, we believe in standing up for what’s right. That’s why we proudly support the Second

Amendment Foundation. Together, we’re not just brewing coffee — we’re fueling the fight for freedom.”

For more information, visit saf.org to get your bag of the special SAF roast.

The Second Amendment Foundation (saf.org) is the nation’s oldest and largest tax-exempt education, research, publishing and legal action group dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the fundamental rights of individ-

uals enshrined in the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution. SAF engages in aggressive legal action to ensure the principles of armed self-defense, personal liberty, and the ownership of arms are defended, secured, and restored. Through public education initiatives, SAF teaches the importance of the Second Amendment to promote a society that values and exercises

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