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Dream comes true for Trace Antunes III who wins Mercury B.A.S.S. Nation Championship presented by Lowrance; Wins berth in 2027 Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Classic, $50,000 plus

ANDERSON, S.C., November 21, 2026 — Trace Antunes III was well aware of the spoils he would collect if he won the 2026 Mercury B.A.S.S. Nation Championship presented by Lowrance — a berth in the 2027 Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Classic presented by Under Armour and a $50,000 cash among them.

But the ultimate prize in victory, Antunes said, would be the invitation to fish in the 2027 Progressive Bassmaster Elite Series.

Antunes earned all that and more Saturday when he clinched the B.A.S.S. Nation Championship on Lake Hartwell, the storied reservoir that has been home to countless big moments in B.A.S.S. history. The 21-year-old Henderson, Texas resident finished the four-day tournament with 20 bass weighing 70 pounds, 11 ounces. That was enough to hold off Andrew Rickman, a hard-charging fellow Texan, who finished second with 67-15.

Both anglers won a spot in the Bassmaster Classic when it's held March 19-21, right back here on Lake Hartwell. New York's Alex Korol, who finished third overall with 64-12, snatched the last of the three Classic berths up for grabs in this tournament.

That trio was the best in a field of more than 500 boaters and non-boaters from throughout the U.S. and a half dozen other countries who competed this week. A total of $223,500 in prize money and the aforementioned spots in the sport's grandest events were split among the top anglers.

Antunes' star shined brightest at Hartwell. He was tied for 10th after catching a Day 1 limit of 15-11 and he vaulted into the lead a day later with a 19-8 haul, the third-heaviest bag of the derby. He held steady with 18-15 on Day 3 and led by more than four pounds heading into Championship Saturday.

Three of the final 11 anglers caught heavier bags on Saturday, but Antunes' final limit of 16-9 was enough to fend off all comers on a misty and chilly day at Hartwell.

"I'm at a loss for words," Antunes said shortly after grabbing hold of the Bryan V. Kerchal Memorial Trophy, named for the man who in 1994 became the first B.A.S.S. Federation Nation angler to win a Bassmaster Classic

"I came into this thing not thinking I could get it done with the bad practice I had," Antunes said. "But sitting in 10th place after the first day, something sparked in me. I said 'We can do this.' So, I started swinging and got after it."

Antunes found success when he decided to run new water on the sprawling reservoir that forms part of the South Carolina/Georgia border.

"I went about 45 miles from where I fished the first day," he said. "And I was able to get a limit of more than 19 pounds. I think it was a mental thing, being able to run new water and catch fish … Everything just came together."

Antunes targeted largemouth bass moving up into shallow water as temperatures climbed into the low 70s on Thursday and Friday. He bumped a 6th Sense Abstract (gill dust) off the bottom in 2 to 5 feet of water, which imitated a crawfish bite the largemouth were keying on this week, especially among patches of hydrilla and other aquatic vegetation.

"The fish didn't want anything over their heads or anything in the middle of the water column," he said. "As soon as that Abstract would hit bottom, I'd start snapping it and they would dive straight down and eat it."

Saturday was a curve ball that Antunes adjusted to and smacked. With temperatures plunging into the 50s and wind sweeping over Hartwell, he picked up extra weight fishing a brushpile farther from the bank and 10 feet underwater.

"There was no sun and they never really started swimming today," he said. "But I knew there were fish in the area. I got lucky and saw a few wolfpacks that bit. And the brushpile was new to me, but I caught a 5-pounder off it."

It was a magical week for the University of West Alabama student, who got hooked on bass fishing in junior high. He competed on both the Strike King Bassmaster High School and Strike King Bassmaster College Series presented by Bass Pro Shops before qualifying for the B.A.S.S. Nation Championship following a third-place finish at a qualifier on Toledo Bend in April.

Now, he has the Elite Series and the Bassmaster Classic in front of him.

"I've got a long history with B.A.S.S.," he said. "I didn't expect to be qualified for the Elites and the Classic while in college. I was hoping I could get in after fishing some Opens, but it's happening quicker than I thought. I fished one Nation tournament and now this. It's unbelievable."

Rickman, a 25-year-old Canton, Texas native, qualified for the Nation Championship by winning that qualifier on Toledo Bend earlier this year. He was in third place after Day 1 on Hartwell but fell to 20th at the halfway point. Then, he strung together bags of 21-4 and 19-7 to finish second overall, good for a $14,000 payday.

Rickman got off to a quick start on Day 4, but he really solidified his catch with a 6-pounder to anchor his final bag.

"That big one put me over 15 pounds and I was just ecstatic at that point," he said. "If you're going to contend in a tournament like this, you've got to have a big fish like that. The competition is too good to miss your chances on a big one."

Rickman, who guides on Lake Fork, caught his best bass this week on a variety of Hideup Coike Fullcast creature baits. He boated a mix of largemouth and spotted bass, largely fishing around docks, making precision casts to bass tucked behind structure. His sweet spot was a cove about 15 minutes down lake from Green Pond Landing, where daily take-offs and weigh-ins were held.



Texas' Trace Antunes III has won the 2026 Mercury B.A.S.S. Nation Championship at Lake Hartwell presented by Lowrance with a four-day total of 70 pounds, 11 ounces. ***(Photo by Dalton Tumblin/B.A.S.S.)***

NSSF, SAF, and partners get New Mexico to agree to halt enforcement of the firearms purchase period in motion

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"The continued enforcement of HB129 after it was ruled unconstitutional was an affront to the law-abiding residents of New Mexico, and we're pleased with today's outcome," said SAF founder and Executive Vice President Alan M. Gottlieb. "The state rightfully came to their senses and stopped wasting taxpayer dollars on a case it had already lost once. The writing was on the wall..."

by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Rifle Association, New Mexico Firearms Industry Association, New Mexico Shooting Sports Association, Calibers Shooting Sports Center, Omni Tactical USA, Right to Bear Arms and private citizen Peter Hackett.

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For more information visit SAF.org.

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 individuals 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 the right to keep and bear arms.

DA Steve Mulroy invites families, friends and community to bring ornaments in Annual Season of Remembrance of homicide victims

DA Mulroy invites families, friends and community members to attend the annual Season of Remembrance ceremony on Tuesday, December 1, 2026. The ceremony honors the lives of Shelby County homicide victims and provides an opportunity for loved ones to gather, remember and support one another. This year's event will be held at a new location, First Baptist Church – Broad, with check-in and reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. and the ceremony starting at 6 p.m.

Family members and friends are encouraged to bring an ornament in memory of their loved one to place on a remembrance wreath. Please do not bring ornaments decorated with glitter. A separate tree will display the names of 2026 homicide victims.

Location: First Baptist Church – Broad, 2849 Broad Avenue, Memphis, TN

Parking: Enter the parking lot through the gate on Carpenter Street, between Broad Avenue and Sam Cooper Boulevard.

For questions, contact Amy McCullough at (901) 222-1561 or amy.mccullough@scdag.com.



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