

The Toyota Texas Bass Classic: A New Paradigm for Professional Bass Fishing Tournaments

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Abstract: The Toyota Texas Bass Classic (TTBC) is a professional bass fishing tournament that promotes fishing and the conservation efforts of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This unique bass tournament, created through a partnership among Gulf States Toyota, the Professional Anglers Association, and TPWD, showcases a new “catch-weigh-immediate release” format that differs from typical stage weigh-in practices. Two events held at Lake Fork, Texas, in 2007 and 2008 demonstrated the utility of the format on a fishery managed with a slot limit. This new format opens doors for conducting professional bass tournaments on reservoirs managed with restrictive size limits and gives fisheries managers’ opportunities to reconsider these types of limits on reservoirs where tournament fishing has influenced the selection of less restrictive limits. Since bass are immediately weighed and released during the tournament, mortality rates are lower than a traditional stage weigh-in practices and similar to non-tournament anglers who practice catch and release fishing. The result may mean better fishing quality and fewer controversies between tournament and non-tournament anglers. The TBBC is also a benefit tournament that supports outreach efforts of TPWD. Events in 2007 and 2008 raised \$500,000 to support TPWD’s urban fishing program and other initiatives designed to recruit new anglers, showcase management practices, and promote fishing opportunities in Texas. Past events drew over 60,000 on-site spectators and were televised nationally on CBS Sports. We believe the TTBC has created a new paradigm for tournament bass fishing and a new way to communicate our conservation message to the public.

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