

Junior State Championship

New Mexico posted the highest team finish in JWC history with Jordan McMorris's 11-14 age-group Champion title and Robert (Chase) Rahm's third place finish on Lake Onondaga in Syracuse New York. Their accomplishments in my opinion are not coincidence but a direct result of the way New Mexico runs our junior program. In many States the juniors attend one tournament, a State Championship open to all junior members of the Junior Clubs. The top finisher in each age-group advances to the next level. Few states take the time and effort to establish a junior tournament trail.

In New Mexico we have established a junior tournament trail with each club determining the number and frequency of the qualifiers they can support, followed by a State Championship Tournament. Each Club is allowed to send three contenders from each age-group to the State Championship. This format is based on the same format that our State Bass Federation Nation uses to construct the 12 man traveling team that represents New Mexico at the Divisional level. We have conducted the State Championship on four different lakes over the last four years providing our junior contenders with the experience necessary to dissect a body of water they are unfamiliar with in preparation for the next level of competition. The format allows for the strongest overall contenders to rise to the top.

The 2009 JWC contender will travel to the Divisional Tournament in May of 2009. Our Tournament trail finished on September 20-21, 2008, when New Mexico's Junior State Championship was determined on Elephant Butte Lake. Like most lakes in New Mexico the fishing was tough, a condition of the time of year and boating pressure through the summer months. As always though the juniors developed patterns and brought fish to the scales. As expected the fishing proved tougher for the 11-14 age-group, while the 15-18 age-group demonstrated that experience counts.

In the 11-14 age-group, Donald Peters of Las Cruces taking home the State Championship title. His first day weight of 1.31 lbs was tripled on day two with 4.30 lbs giving him a two day total of 5.61 lbs. In second place with 1.59 lbs was Brodie Hall of Bloomfield, and in third place Justin Hettinga of Fairacres rounded out the top three in the younger age group. Donald and Justin are representative of the great job Kids of The Southwest are doing with their youth program under the adult supervision of the Elephant Butte mother club.

In the 15-18 age-group, Seth Garrison of Farmington demonstrated the skills that made in a three time State Champion. In a shoot-out indicative of the competitive spirit among the states junior anglers Seth ended the first day knowing that the title was going to be determined by day two's performance. His first day weight of 2.54 lbs on three fish combined with a day two weight of 3.84 lbs on three fish proved that consistency was the key. Second place went to J'Ray Cox with a two day total of 5.57 lbs and big fish honors with a 4.34 lb largemouth. Third place went to Cole Bingham with a two day total of 5.03 lbs. Look for Donald and Seth to represent us well at the Divisional Tournament in Washington next spring.

It is important that we recognize the contributions of those who sponsor our Junior Program. We owe our thanks and patronage to Charlie's Sporting Goods who donated Rods to our Junior State Champions. Make sure you stop in and thank Bill Dunn and the staff on your next trip to Albuquerque. After that stop by the Sportsman's Warehouse and thank Ben Martinez, manager of the fishing department for their support. Both the Sportsman's and Charlie's have helped us with product and awards through two separate State Championships this year. We have to recognize the Four Corners, Cortez and Elephant Butte Bassmasters along with Kids of The Southwest for mentoring our junior anglers. These clubs supply boaters, tackle and most importantly their time to ensure the future of our sport and success of our contenders. We must also recognize the companies in the Alliance Program who continue to provide sponsorship for all the anglers in our state. Last but not least lets recognize our youth who have chosen to spend their free hours in a constructive manner, learning a skill that albeit may be recreational in nature hones the competitive spirit and honors the values of the great outdoors.