

Wounded Warriors in Action

BASS FISHING WEEKEND



Wounded Warriors in Action: Storm Litzler, Hubble Hainline and Sean Rush with one of the 60 bass caught at Rodman Reservoir during a bass fishing trip sponsored by the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation and hosted by members of the USAA.

Story and Photos by **Duane Wallace**

Numerous sportsmen and professional bass fishing guides joined forces with the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation (WWIA) www.wwiaf.org to sponsor an outstanding bass fishing trip on Rodman Reservoir, in Palatka, Florida, during the weekend of Feb. 5 – 6, 2011. Rodman has been designated one of the 10 best bass lakes in the state by Florida's Fish and Wildlife Commission. The event was an outstanding success with 60 bass caught over a day and a half. Lt. Col. (Ret.) John McDaniel, founder and CEO of the WWIA, summed up the weekend's activities with just a few words: "Awesome time, awesome fishing, and awesome folks!"

One may ask, what made it a success? It was the guides, fishermen

and neighbors who came together to show their respect for a few of those individuals who were wounded in combat when our country called upon them to protect us here at home. It's too easy to go through our daily routines and not think about those who are in harm's way to protect our way of life.

The wounded warriors participating were Hubble Hainline from Athens, Alabama; Jake Whipkey from Boswell, Pennsylvania; and Storm Litzler from Cape Coral, Florida.

The WWIA sponsored the event, and United Sportsmen and Airboaters Alliance member Charlie Lawson and his wife Jackie, hosted it at their home in Orange Springs. Several other USAA members generously gave their time and resources to make this weekend special. Included are: Brian Gotcher, who assisted Jackie with breakfast and was the chef during the two days of delicious cookouts; Allen "Cajun" Perry, Sean Rush and Bill Snyder, the professional bass guides; and Jerry Wetherington, president of the USAA, who arranged the Sunday afternoon cookout.

The alarm clock started Jackie and Brian's day at 4 a.m. Saturday in order to have breakfast ready by 5 a.m. By 5:15, 16 people were enjoying coffee, sausage, eggs, biscuits and gravy. By 6 a.m., everyone was on their way to get wild shinners for a day of fishing.

Hainline caught the largest bass weighing 9.5 pounds. He and Litzler were fishing with guide Rush. Between the two of them they caught 22 bass the first day, several between 6 and 9.5 pounds. Whipkey managed to catch nine the first day while being guided by Snyder. The second half day of fishing wasn't as active. Just as the bass

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The group of sportsmen and professional bass fishing guides who joined forces with the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation (WWIA) www.wwiaf.org to sponsor an outstanding bass fishing trip on Rodman Reservoir during the weekend of Feb. 5 – 6, 2011. From left to right: Bill Snyder, Rick Hefner, Al Robinson, Hubble Hainline, Jake Whipkey, Dr. Mortor, John McDaniel, Storm Litzler, Charlie Lawson, Drew Boisen, Cajun Perry, Brad Boisen, Brian Gotcher, Austin Gotcher.



WWIA participants Jake Whipkey and Bill Snyder with some of their haul of bass.

Brian Gotcher mans the cook's tent and ensures everyone gets a good meal.

John McDaniel shows off a nice sized bass caught during the weekend event.

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were starting to show an interest, the half day of fishing came to an end. However, 16 were caught Sunday morning.

After fishing on Saturday, the troops returned to Lawson's house where Gotcher had prepared some outstanding venison chili and fresh oysters. Afterward everyone enjoyed a bonfire and a few refreshments. There was also a cookout on Sunday after that morning's fishing trip. Honored guest World War II Purple Heart recipient Donn Snow joined the cookout Sunday afternoon.

A special thanks is extended to the following guides and fishermen who volunteered their time and equipment; Sean Rush, Bill Snyder, Allen "Cajun" Perry, Rick Hefner and Al Robinson.

Several other individuals participated in the event in support of our wounded heroes are: WWIA Associate Brad Boisen and his son Drew, special guest Dr. M. T. Mortor Jr., WWIA Associate Duane Wallace and his daughter Madison, and USAA members Austin Gotcher, Cheryl Wetherington and Tom Gotcher.

Established in 2007, the Wounded Warriors in Action foundation is a national 501(c) (3) non-profit organization headquartered in Apollo Beach Florida. Its mission is to aid in healing the hearts and minds of our nation's combat wounded heroes (Purple Heart recipients) from

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. The WWIA provides to wounded veterans world-class outdoor sporting activities, chiefly consisting of participation in hunting and fishing retreats all across America. Interested individuals can contact John McDaniel, Founder and CEO at info@woundedwarriorsinaction.org or call toll free 1-888-308-WWIA (9942).

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