

Stewart and Stewart Win SuperClean Showdown on Sardis

The American Crappie Trail's SuperClean Showdown on Sardis Lake in northern Mississippi was held over the weekend as 77 boats competed for over \$60,000 in cash and a Ranger RT188C boat. With the ACT's extremely popular ten-day off limits period, anglers are not allowed to be on the lake prior to the four days of pre-fishing leading into the tournament, but local anglers and many traveling pros were experienced with the normally steady fishing patterns at Sardis in the summer. Enter Tropical Storm Cindy: the weather forecast for tournament weekend, namely Friday, was bleak on Monday, and grew to slightly less than catastrophic by the week's end. The decision was made to back up the fishing hours on day one to 10-6PM to avoid the brunt of the storm, but high southwest winds still plagued the lake and made the majority of the water unfishable.



The father and son team of Terry and Cole Stewart grinded out the awful weather and made the correct adjustments to bring in solid stringers on both days, which is exactly what it took to win. Although the Magnolia Crappie Club team had a tough time pre-fishing, they were able to locate decent fish in the timber on the east side of the lake. After putting in at Engineers Point and attempting to make the run to the back of the lake in the standing timber, they quickly decided the waves were too large and pulled into Clear Creek, where many anglers found refuge from the wind. The Stewarts stayed out closer to the mouth in 18-20 feet of water and concentrated on suspended fish 15 feet down, utilizing straight minnows on 3/4-ounce double hook rigs around 0.5 mph to catch their 10.98 pounds.

On day two, the forecast was much more conducive to fishing, with lower wind speeds, and the team opted to abandon Clear Creek and go to the areas they'd planned on fishing initially on day one. After their first couple spots were mostly unproductive, the team moved around quite a bit. "We just got lucky and stumbled upon some fish," said Terry. "This whole lake has fish in it, and they're mostly moving from the back of the creeks to the deeper water, so we just kept picking out spots with the same depths and were able to catch some good fish." The father and son team's persistence and simple but consistent approach was the exact recipe needed to fend off competitors and win in the deplorable conditions. Their day-two weight of 10.47 pounds was enough to propel them to a 21.46-pound total, winning the anglers a \$25,000 Ranger RT188c boat plus contingency money.



Local anglers Clay Blaire and Brad Calhoun made a huge jump from twelfth on day one to second on day two by bringing in the biggest weight of the tournament. Their monster 12.41-pound day-two bag took them to an even 20 pounds for the tournament. Like most anglers following the forecast on Friday, Blaire and Calhoun assumed the south wind would open up the ramps on the southern bank, but after putting in at Hurricane Landing, the four to five foot waves from the mostly westward wind turned them around and sent them to a safer ramp in an area they hadn't fished at all. Knowing that just bringing in seven fish would put them in a good position for day two, the team grinded out a 7.59-pound stringer, pushing jigs tipped with minnows, to land in twelfth place. On day two, they were able to capitalize on their pre-fishing, and after catching seven legal fish by noon, they went back to the timber to one-pole fish, where Blaire caught their best fish on Monday. The local knowledge and well-spent time pre-fishing allowed the fishermen to substantially upgrade all of their fish vertical jigging, securing second place and winning the team \$7,500 plus contingency money.



Veteran pros Michael Walters and Rick Solomon had never been to Sardis before Monday, but the B'n'M pro staffers were able to find quality fish immediately, and by the end of the week had multiple options, one of which was Clear Creek, mostly out of the 25+ mph winds on Friday, where they caught their day one stringer of 8.38 pounds to secure fifth place. On Saturday, the team was able to fish the timber in ten feet of water where they'd done a lot of pre-fishing, and all but one of their GPS points produced a good fish. Walters and

Solomon pushed minnow and jig rigs and concentrated on suspended fish, pushing from 0.5 to 0.9 mph. "On our Humminbird Helix 10's and Lakemaster maps we found breaks," said Walters. "Anytime we found shallow water next to deep water where the contour lines were tight, that's where we caught fish." The anglers weighed 11.07 pounds on day two, giving them a total of 19.47 pounds, securing third place and \$5,000 plus contingency money.

The Memphis, Tennessee team and Sardis Lake crappie guides Thomas Hill and Warren Cotton caught the Big Fish of the tournament, a 2.6-pound slab, winning the team \$1,155. The anglers went from ramp to ramp on day one, looking for a safe place to put in at, and ended up back where they started at the dam, catching a lot of short fish until the wind died enough for them to run down the lake to an area they'd been pre-fishing, which is where they caught the prize winning crappie.

