

National Championship Highlights 2018 Bassmaster Opens Series Tournament Lineup

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — The 2018 Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Opens Series will again include nine tournaments on prime bass fishing waters, but the series format will be markedly different from recent seasons, B.A.S.S. announced today.

“We are excited about the new Opens format,” said B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin. “It’s designed to provide opportunities for the best bass fishermen to prove their fishing skills on a variety of waters as they earn their way into the Bassmaster Classic and Elite Series.”

Instead of three divisions of three tournaments each, B.A.S.S. will conduct two divisions — Central and East — comprising four tournaments each. As was last done in 2005, a season finale Opens Championship will be held. It will determine qualifiers for the 2019 Bassmaster Elite Series and for the GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK’S Sporting Goods.

The Opens Championship winner and the Top 5 in performance points from each division — determined by an angler’s finish in all four divisional tournaments and the Championship — will be invited to the Elites. The winner of the Championship and the Top 3 anglers in points from each division following the Championship will be invited to the Classic.

In addition, fisheries in the two new divisions are more geographically diverse, requiring a greater commitment from Opens pros who want to qualify for the championship. The Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Eastern Opens Division, for example, includes one tournament in central Florida and another in Upstate New York.

“These changes to our Opens Series are bound to qualify a very diverse and versatile group of anglers for the Elite Series and the Classic,” said Chris Bowes, Opens tournament director. “They will have to prove their abilities on a variety of fisheries and at different seasons. And, to get to the Classic, they will have to perform throughout the season, not just in one event.”

Akin expects the Opens Championship to become a marquee event for aspiring pros and other tournament anglers.

“The Bass Pro Shops Bassmaster Opens Championship will be a no-entry-fee tournament pitting some of the nation’s best bass anglers against one another,” Akin said. “The smaller, more elite field of championship qualifiers can be expected to create more excitement, attract a bigger fan base and generate more media coverage than ever before in Opens competition.”

The championship is tentatively scheduled to be held Oct. 18-20. The location will be announced later. The field will include the four winners of Opens tournaments as well as the Top 10 in points standings, not including the winners, from each division, for a total of 28. In addition, the four winning co-anglers from each division tournament and the Top 10 in points standings, not including winners, will compete alongside the pros for a share of their own prize fund.

Thanks to the “win-and-you’re-in” provision of the Opens, pros and co-anglers will have a shot at making the Championship even if they’re not at the top of the points standings toward the end of the season, Bowes noted.

The lineup includes some of the most popular and productive fisheries in the nation, including several that have hosted the Bassmaster Classic in past years. Following are details about each of the events in the 2018 Opens Series.

Eastern Opens Division

Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, Kissimmee, Fla. — Feb. 1-3, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 22, including 1977 and 2006 Classics

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: Chad Morgenthaler (52-7), 2015 Bassmaster Southern Open, Jan. 15-17, 2015

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 11th, Southeastern Division, in 2017

Lake Norman, Cornelius, N.C. — May 10-12, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 11

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2014 Southern Open, Andy Montgomery (37-10), Oct. 2-4, 2014

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 91st in 2013

Lake Champlain, Plattsburgh, N.Y — Aug. 2-4, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 20

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2017 Bassmaster Elite, Aaron Martens (58-12), July 27-30, 2017

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 5th, Northeastern Division, in 2017

Douglas Lake, Dandridge, Tenn. — Sept. 13-15, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 12

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2016 Bassmaster Southern Open, David Mullins (62-12), May 19-21, 2016

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 56th in 2013

Central Opens Division

Ross Barnett Reservoir, Ridgeland, Miss. — March 1-3, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 18, including 1978 Classic

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2017 Bassmaster Elite Series, Dustin Connell (64-13), April 27-30, 2017

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 9th, Southeastern Division, in 2016

Arkansas River, Muskogee, Okla. — April 19-21, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 14

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2016 Bassmaster Central Open, Skylar Hamilton (45-6), June 2-4, 2016

Red River, Shreveport, La. — June 14-16, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 21, including 2009 and 2012 Classics

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2016 Bassmaster Central Open, Alton Jones Jr. (35-14), Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2016

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 77th in 2015

Logan Martin, Pell City, Ala. — Sept. 6-8, 2018

Total B.A.S.S. events hosted: 7, including 1992, 1993 and 1997 Classics

Most recent B.A.S.S. winner: 2013 Bassmaster Southern Open, David Kilgore (46-8), May 16-18, 2013

Bassmaster 100 Best Bass Lakes Rank: 23rd, Southeastern Division, in 2017

(NOTE: Entries for the 2018 Opens will be accepted beginning Oct. 31, 2017. See Bassmaster.com for a full schedule of registration dates, deadlines and payouts. Entry fees are \$1,500 per event for pros and \$425 per event for co-anglers. Payouts are based on a full field of 200 pros and 200 co-anglers.)