

New Caddo Lake record bass

March 24, 2010

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Keith Burns of Linden, Texas, was having a slow day on Caddo Lake in east Texas Saturday, March 20. The 38-year-old was practicing a week in advance of an upcoming tournament held in honor of his cousin, a Texas Department of Public Safety officer who was shot and killed in the line of duty two years ago.



Larry D. Hodge, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Keith Burns caught this 16.17-pound largemouth bass out of Texas' Caddo Lake on Saturday, March 20. It is a new lake record.

"Caddo was his (Scott's) favorite lake to fish. If he went fishing, it was down there," Burns said. "This will be the second year we've had the Trooper Burns Memorial Tournament. We donate all the proceeds to the Marion County Dive & Rescue Team."

The Burns family has a lot of history on Caddo. Keith has fished the lake with his cousins since they could walk. His father and grandfather fished it long before them.

Burns was actually fishing one of Scott's favorite spots when the fish bit his Senko. It hit at 11:30 a.m. near Bird Island on the south shore, less than a mile from the Louisiana state line. Burns said every fish he has caught outside of the 14- to 18-inch slot has come from that spot in the past two years.

"I never would've fished that area if I hadn't heard Scott talking about it so much," Burns said. "I had never fished the south shore and didn't know how to get there until my dad took me around and showed me some of Scott's favorite places."

Once Burns hooked the 16.17-pound lunker, his troubles were just starting.

"If there was something that could go wrong after I hooked the fish, it did. I had an angel watching over me," he said. "After I cast, my buddy Tony crossed my line, so when I set the hook, his hook came up my line and got caught in my top eyelet.

"He doesn't know how to run a trolling motor, so the wind blew us up into a tree and I'm holding on to a limb with one hand to keep us out of a tree and with the other hand I'm fighting a huge fish. Tony ran back and held the limb for me while I was fighting the fish all over the place. Then it got wrapped up in the motor. It was unbelievable that I ever got that fish into the boat."

Burns' fish is the 16th heaviest to ever be caught in Texas waters. The fish was turned over to the Texas ShareLunker Program that day. If the fish is proven to be a Florida-strain bass (which it likely is), it will be spawned by the state for three years then turned back over to Burns.

"It's my fish. The ShareLunker program is just borrowing it for the time being," Burns said. "When three years is up, they give you the option of what to do with it. ShareLunker is such a great program, and I believe in it. I'm going to go ahead and return her to the lake."

Burns' fish is a sort of closure in his cousin's death. Nothing could have been more fitting than Burns fulfilling his dream at his cousin's favorite spot on his family's favorite lake.

"Catching that fish there, when Scott got me into fishing in a roundabout way, is really special. It's been a dream of mine to have a fish in the ShareLunker program, and doggone it if it wasn't a lake record, too," he said. "That's a double dose of it.

"This fish means everything to me right now with all that's been going on," he said. "I've seen my dad cry twice with tears welled up in his eyes Saturday. I couldn't be happier right now."