

# Family Fishing Fun at the NTAC Camanche Event

by Jack Naves

I enjoy taking my kids to Chuck E. Cheese's or Six Flags as much as any other dad out there. Time keeps on moving, and any chance to have some fun with my family is always a welcomed opportunity.

It won't come to anybody's surprise that my favorite hobby is fishing. So when I have the prospect of rolling a family outing into a fishing trip, it's the best of both worlds. Such an opportunity presented itself on May 17<sup>th</sup>, when I participated in the NorCal Trout Anglers Challenge at Lake Camanche with my wife Gina and our kids Grace and Adam. It ended up being a great day of fun, food, and of course...fishing!

We began our trip by leaving the shadowy darkness of Roseville at a quarter to five in the morning. Luckily, my passengers were able to sleep during most of the drive as we meandered through the winding hills of Amador County.

After checking in for the tournament, we made a quick gravel-road drive over to Lake Camanche's south shore low-water ramp. Although the ramp was a little steep, a dock was available, and everybody seemed to be getting their boats in without too much effort.

Once we had the boat in the water, I made a quick run through the early morning chop to the center of the main lake. I hadn't fished Camanche since the cold of winter, but my fishing logs from last year coupled with some recent reports gave me a pretty good idea as to where to start.

Most of the fish I was marking on the sonar were about 25 feet deep. As the 7:00 am start time approached, we rigged up our gear in anticipation of the kick-off. When start time arrived, we trolled downrigger offerings between 20 and 30 feet deep. We also ran topline rods with banana sinkers to get them down into the water column.

The first 20 minutes came and went without as much as a bump, but then I looked back and saw one of the downrigger rods bouncing in its holder. "Fish on!" I shouted, and everybody rushed to the back of the boat.

The kids get excited any time we hook a fish. Although the first trout of the day wasn't a scale-buster,

any fish is enough to send the kids' energy levels through the roof. We quickly caught two more trout and lost another one before the action tapered off.

We were trolling orange Arctic Fox flies behind wiggle discs at 2.6 miles per hour. We also employed chartreuse Excel spoons and orange and gold F7 Rapala floating minnows. The majority of our fish hit the flies tipped with worms, but the other offerings caught fish as well.

Looking over to the west, I noticed several dozen boats working the dam area. "The fleet is over at the dam," I relayed to Gina. I don't like fishing in large crowds, so I didn't venture much further west than Little Hat Island.

The action came in bursts, with several hookups in a row followed by periods of quiet. There didn't seem to be any pattern, as open water produced as many trout as the channel ledges.

The kids' inexperience showed, as they lost several nice fish at the back of the boat. While my kids are used to cranking dinky kokanee into the net, the sizable rainbows at Lake Camanche threw a curve at them. In total, we had seven trout throw the hook by either jumping, head shaking, or zigzagging right at the back of the boat. Although I get pretty upset when losing a fish myself, I don't mind letting the kids gain hands-on experience, even if it means lost fish. They were having fun, and that was all that mattered.

Despite losing over a half a dozen trout, we managed to net eleven nice looking rainbows up to four pounds. The kids had a blast fighting the fish, and we even cooked up some hot dogs on my portable gas grill while trolling the lake. The kids' top request for every fishing trip is that we must grill food on the boat. Anything I can do to make a fishing trip more enjoyable for them is just icing on the cake.

Not long after lunch, we pulled out the boat and headed over to the tournament weigh-in station. I have to say that Sheldon Bright and Vince Harris, both of whom are skilled emcees, organized a really smooth event.

There was never a dull moment, as they kept the tempo flowing during the weigh-in, raffle,

and prize portions of the tournament. There were tons of giveaways, with a free raffle for all participants. Most of the folks walked away with fishing gear of some sort, even if they didn't hook a big one.

Gina and I were thrilled when our girl Grace was announced as the winner of the kids' division. For me, the day was all about getting our kids excited about fishing. The more kids we can get involved in events like this, the better chance we have of advancing our resource.

At the end of the day, my football-shaped four pounder captured the 3<sup>rd</sup> spot, while Gina's biggest trout bagged 11<sup>th</sup> place. Since Gina and I both placed in the top 50, we qualified for the tournament of champions November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> at Collins Lake.

Our kids also qualified by being in the top 25, so the four of us have the opportunity to fish the November tournament as a family. Anybody who qualified for the tournament of champions this year should plan on being there, as you have the chance to win a Klamath boat with a trailer and outboard motor.

I look forward to more outings with my family this summer, and I'm hoping that our schedule allows us to fish more derbies and tournaments as well.

The NTAC circuit is a great opportunity for family fishing, which provides for a fun day whether you are in a boat or on the shore. And if you qualified for this year's tournament of champions, make sure you sign up early to reserve your chance at that shiny new boat this November.



Young Adam Naves got in on the trout action during the NTAC event at Lake Camanche last month while fishing with his dad Jack and mom Gina. Photo courtesy of JACK NAVES, Fish Sniffer Staff.



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