



# LAST MOUNTAIN LAKE

13 year old Tyson Ruitter with his 12.56 pound walleye, wins big fish of the event.

**T**he Last Mountain Fall Walleye tournament is the last stop on the Saskatchewan Walleye Trail. For the teams that have been fishing for top recognition on the circuit, this is a huge event.

Over the years I fished it several times, first starting in 1988 when I was invited by Greg Prokopetz, who is the owner of Pokey's Tackle in Regina along with his brother Gord.

It was the first year of the event and Greg was to host and run it for several years. I had met him the previous year at the Premiers Cup Walleye tournament. Back in those days, tournament fishing was just starting to gain in popularity, spreading across the western prairies like wildfire.

When I arrived that year, I had just signed a new sponsorship deal with Lund Boats which meant I had a brand-new model to fish out of that year. It was the Lund Pro V, a boat that was to become a staple of tournament anglers to this day.

One other angler, an American named Pete Johnston, (who I became good friends with) had the other Pro V in the field. The next year, in 1989, I counted 50 of those boats on the water. Now, the boats are huge with way more horsepower, and I mean considerably. Lots of them measure almost 21 feet with a minimum of 200 horsepower including the tiller models. Cost for some doesn't seem to be a real issue as a lot of these rigs are over \$100,000. It doesn't mean you need both to compete but if it is

available those who really want them will spend the money.

This year I was out to be the MC at the live weigh in of fish both days. It was the idea of Doug Cramer and Kelly Turcotte, who took over the event this year. Their expertise is in event management and they wanted to up the spectator experience. This meant four cameras spread out on the dock and in the tent to allow people to watch the experience. It also allowed tournament anglers an opportunity to thank sponsors and tell their story about themselves and their day on the water. These kinds of opportunities have really contributed to the resurgence of tournament fishing in Canada. Tournaments have exploded across western Canada with mostly good results. These

events help drive the industry and the value of sportfishing continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Kelly Turcotte and Doug Kramer are committed to charity in pretty much every event that they do. In this case, Strasburg Rec Center Fund Raising Committee received \$8100!

### EVOLUTION OF PRESENTATION

During the first three years, the tournament was won by one team, Bob Helmer and his partner Russell Kern, who were Americans.

Nobody could figure out how they were bringing in such massive weights. In year three, after complaints that they must be cheating, organizers put a boat in charge to follow them on the water. Nothing



Rob and Donna looking after the fish.

I first met Rob and Donna Shultz way back at that first event. They had just set up a store, and then cabins at Rowans Ravine, where the tournament is headquartered out of. For a few years they had to take over the event but for the majority, they have been the on-site anchors, providing any support tournament organizers have needed. We became life long friends and I watched their children grow up. Kendra now helps with whatever is needed while still going to university. Their son Jordan who got a degree while playing baseball in the United States, is now working in Regina. Rob twice was on my show, The Complete Angler. We did one walleye show and a carp show that to this day is one of my all-time favourites. He still guides full time both fishing and hunting and the family still love what they do.



Concentration on the water.

changed, and they won again, ending any controversy. Turns out they were using heavy bottom bouncers, rigged with spinners and giant blades. This proved to be the trigger for uneducated fish. That changed in the next years, and their finishes dropped off.

Next came the live bait rigs and buzz bombs, followed by crankbaits, then reaction baits like jigging raps, shiver minnows and fat raps. That all changed somewhat this year when good old live bait rigging took home the money once again.

The winning team of Jared Gawley and Jay Dermody won with 54.4 pounds. Over the years the winning weight has varied somewhat but usually 50 pounds or better will get you in the top three. ■



Doug Cramer and the author.