

Walleye League

The Story of the 2010 Summer Fishing League

During the summer of 2010 my son and I participated in a local walleye fishing league. It was our fourth year and I decided it would be fun to start blogging about our weekly progress. That season is long since over, but the blog entries remain. For those who either read along all summer, or for those who do not have the desire to click through each and every entry, I have collected all of those posts here in one document for your reading pleasure. If you enjoy it, be sure to subscribe to my blog to get tips and more stories.

Early Season

22 days before the Minnesota walleye opener my son was down to the river watching the suckers run thick below the dam. There were plenty of walleyes scattered in as well, and it was enough to get the blood pumping.

We've fished a local walleye league for the past three years and I thought it would be fun to blog about it. This is a compilation of posts I wrote on the WalleyeGuy Blog over the course of the 2010 season edited to make for more complete story.

The night we fish has 15 boats, and for the last three years we've finished in the middle of the pack. Our goal every year is to do well enough to make it to the top four by the end of the season. Top four go to the end of the year fish-offs for the championship. For the most part, we assume this means that we break 100 points for the season, so our sights are set on that number from the start.

League rules are pretty simple; 10 lakes go in the hat and every week we head to the bait shop, pull a lake out of the hat and everyone heads to the landing. Every boat has to be back at the landing by 9:30 for the weigh-in. 15 points for top weight (4 fish max), 14 for second, etc. Everyone who blanks gets half of the last spot left (i.e. if only 5 boats catch fish... 15, 14, 13, 12, 11 points, then everyone else gets 5 points). Keeps it interesting.

The trick to staying in the mix in a league like this is to shoot for at least one fish every night. You don't have to win every night (you don't have to win any nights)... you just need to be consistent. Blanks are deadly. Just about everyone will have a bad night, the trick is simply to limit the number of bad nights.

This year's fishing opener exceeded my hopes with respect to the weather, but missed the mark a bit with respect to the walleye bite. Chalk it up to the early ice-out and warmer-than-average temperatures. We were more in search mode than fish mode for a couple of days and had to work for the keepers that we found. This is not to say that fishing was bad... plenty of folks got on top of some nice bunches of fish and did very well... we just spent more time searching for good spots than actually working the spots where we

marked fish. Every year, fishing league starts on Lake Bemidji, so we naturally focused our pre-fishing efforts there.

On Bemidji, we generally let the wind tell us where to fish. Find the likely structure taking the wind and work our way in and out. We also knew that shiners were still spawning and decided to play that hand as well. We stuck with jig and shiner for Saturday and Sunday. Working close to a couple of creek outlets in about 8 feet of water produced a nice 17" walleye in the first few minutes of our Saturday afternoon outing. We worked that shore for a bit longer but decided to move around a bit to see if we could find other locations holding fish. We wandered across a popular mid-lake flat and started searching along the south edge. We finally started marking some fish in 20 feet and were able to pull a few smaller walleyes over the next hour or so. Satisfied that we had another good possibility for our first night of league, we left the spot alone. The remainder of the weekend followed a similar pattern. We played the wind, found a few fish and moved on. Jig and minnow in 20 feet or less seemed the most productive, although we managed a couple pulling crankbaits in shallower water in the evening. We managed to boat enough fish to enjoy a fresh walleye dinner Monday night.

Walleye League – Night 1

We all know that fishing is a blast. But when you go up against 14 other boats once a week it adds just a little more excitement to the 4 hours you spend on the water. Every fish has new meaning when you know that you need to weigh four good ones to get top points that night. What makes it more fun for me is that I get to go out with my son every week. He can get a little ornery when the fish don't cooperate, but I'll take that over not fishing with him at all.

So the annual ritual gathering at the bait shop for a review of the rules... we weigh 4 fish max, don't weigh anything under 13 inches, be at the landing by 9:30, etc... and we all head off to the lake. The first night we all know we fish Bemidji. Every night after that we pull a lake out of a hat... so nobody has any idea what lake we will be fishing until about 5:00 that afternoon. At 5:30 that afternoon, we headed to the landing and the 2010 season was officially underway.

We rolled out to the south edge of that mid-lake flat we were working on the weekend and joined a couple other boats from our league with the same idea. We decided to start with leeches on a Lindy rig early because leeches are a pretty common bait on this lake early. We rigged up about a 6 foot leader with a plain red hook at the end, and moved about as slow as possible. The water temperature was around 58 degrees and there was just a small breeze from the south. In 15 minutes I had a nice "whack" in about 13 feet, set the hook and reeled in a nice 22" walleye. We were on the board. Nothing better than getting that first fish in the live well. We continued working the same area back and forth, but couldn't coax another bite. My son switched to a jig and shiner as we noticed the guys in the boat next to us were regularly pulling in some smaller walleyes. We moved out to about 24 feet and managed to boat two sub-13" fish, but the action was getting a bit slower for everyone there.

By 8:00 the light was getting low enough that we decided to go to crankbaits and see if we could scare anything up going in shallower. I used a #5 shallow runner, shad colored, my son went with the #5 walleye. One pass through 6 feet the and boy had his first good whack of the night. After a short battle we netted a 16.5" walleye and put him in the live well with his new friend. On the next pass the boy got another nice smack... played it for a few seconds and then nothing. When this happens, we try to make excuses like... I didn't put the motor in neutral fast enough... or ... it was probably a northern. Regardless, we added nothing to the live well. A few more passes yielded only one more 10" 'eye, so we headed to the west shore for the last run in to the landing. With only 20 minutes to go, we always like to hit this spot simply because it almost always holds a fish or two. About half-way through the trek I managed to boat a 13.5" walleye... enough to add another 13 ounces or so to our weight total. With about 10 minutes left, we reeled it in and headed to the weigh-in.

The weigh-in is the greatest display of fishing culture that I can imagine. If you want classic story-telling and excuse-making, go visit a tournament or league weigh-in. Everyone seemed to find a fish or two, everyone had a story or a gripe. The guys that found a bunch of fish found mostly small fish. Others, like us, managed to find a couple of "quality" fish. So after all of the grumbling and chatter, we learned that our three fish just broke the 5 pound mark. Good enough for third place. Top weight was 8 pounds with a nice sized female kicker that beat ours by a few ounces. We'll take that every night.

So league is off to a good start. Next week we start pulling lakes out of the hat, so things get even more interesting.

Walleye League - Night 2

With the second night of league, we start pulling lakes out of the hat. So when everyone pulled up to the bait shop it was a complete mystery until about 5:00, when the lake was drawn. The lake pulled was definitely not our favorite. We never fish it (other than during league). The lake is about 540 acres and has a couple of holes about 50ft deep. For the most part, the boats in our league were working the windy side of a couple of mid-lake points.

We started in a nice little corner taking the wind. This spot has produced fish for us (and others) before. It has a cabbage bed growing in about 8 feet. With the way the wind was blowing all day we figured there should be fish holding somewhere in that area. There were three other boats working the same general area so we stuck to a short run that took us east and west along the weed line. We worked anywhere between 12 and 8 feet with a jig and shiner minnow and immediately started getting hits. Unfortunately, the early action was of the slimy, northern pike variety. Fun, but not what we were after. While we were working our spot, the guy in the Lund next to us boated what looked to be a nice 20+" walleye. The pressure was on. Within the half hour he boated another decent walleye. We knew we were in the right area... we just couldn't seem to coax a walleye out of the weeds.

I made a switch to a lindy rig with a leech and started moving a little further east along the same shoreline. We marked some fish deeper, but couldn't manage any bites, so we eventually moved back to our original spot. We knew there were fish there... we just needed some luck. There were a couple other guys working the area using the same tactics and they managed to put a couple of 17" walleyes in their live well, so we figured we would stick it out there and hope for the best. I switched back to a jig and shiner when my son was able to finally boat a walleye. Unfortunately it was only 12" so we sent it back to the lake hoping that big sister would show up. In the next hour we managed two more sub-13" walleyes and all the rock bass a person could ask for. Things were looking bleak. With about half an hour to go we grabbed the crankbait rods, tossed out a couple of shad raps and made a few passes through the cabbage and on the outer edge of the weed line... but it was futile. One last pass and we had to admit defeat for the night.

Four other boats suffered the same fate as us and had to settle for a couple of points for showing up for the night. Not fun, but not the end of the world either. These type of nights are the nights that a person questions what they did wrong and what they could have done different. In our case, we probably need to do a better job of planning and managing our time on a spot. When you keep pounding a spot and can't pull anything out you probably need to switch to a different spot. So we move on and get ready for next week and another shot at tacking on a bunch of points.

Walleye League – Night 3

When the lake for this week was announced as a "surprise" at the bait shop, the news was met with a whole bunch of grumbling and complaining. This lake had been dubbed the "Dead Sea" for a few years for its notorious lack of walleye action, and a few of the guys in the league had some personal experience with fishless nights on it. Since my son and I had never fished it, we had no reason to gripe. We were in for a pleasant surprise.

With no real clue how to fish the lake, and no idea what the fish (if any) might be after, we grabbed minnows and leeches and headed out. We have a book of lake maps of area lakes, and so we pulled it out to have a look at this one. It is basically round with very little structure in the way of islands or humps. There is one small hump that comes up fairly shallow in the middle of the lake, so we started there.

With a decent wind out of the northwest, we worked that side of the hump with a jig and shiner. We started on top of the hump in about 10 feet and worked to the base at about 20 feet, repeating the in an out trying to mark fish and get a bite. After a half hour and no bites we decided to move to the southeast end to take advantage of the wind. Without any real structure in the way of points or drop-offs, we focused on a large bed of weeds. We tried working the outer edge and then moving right into the weeds with a fairly vertical presentation. This definitely produced fish... perch, northern, largemouth bass, and a couple of monster crappies. But while it was fun to catch some fish, we needed to find walleyes.

Around 8:00, with no walleye in the live well, we noticed several boats gathering around the same area just south of where we were fishing. We were trolling that edge anyway, so we moved in a bit closer to check it out. Most were in 18-20 feet working a large area that seemed to us to be in the middle of nothing. After a few minutes of jigging we observed some nice sized walleyes getting boated and soon realized that fish were being caught here. One of the teams swung by us and commented that leeches seemed to be the favorite in this hole, so we made the switch to a lindy rig with big leeches.

The chatter around us was fun to hear. Guys were talking about having their two over 20" fish and struggling to get their "unders". The action wasn't fast and furious, but there was action. After a few minutes with the leech and rig we boated our first walleye, a keeper 16" fish to get on the boards. My son was jigging a leech but after netting our fish, he made the switch to a rig. Another 15 minutes of what I could only call "wandering" and I had what I thought was just a light perch tap. I set the hook and from the feel I figured I had a small perch. But the second I had the line close to the boat the fish realized what was up and she stripped off a few yards of line diving to the bottom. A minute later we had a fat 23 inch walleye in the live well. I was soon able to boat a 22" fish and my son pulled in a fish just over 20" that had to go back to the lake. We found ourselves in the enviable position of hoping the next walleye was under 20". My son set the hook on one, but she threw the hook before we could see what it was. By 9:20 we figured we had enough to put us in the middle of the pack, so we buttoned up and headed for the landing.

The weigh-in that night was the best I have seen. Out of 15 boats there were probably half a dozen who brought in single fish that weighed over 6 pounds. The top two weights were just over 16 pounds total... the guys that were lucky enough to find their two big ones and a couple of decent fish under 20". We weighed in 8.5 pounds with two over 20 and our 16" kicker... good enough for 7th place and 9 points. A fun night for most with a couple of boats who didn't venture out into the honey-hole and either blanked or managed just one nice fish. But I believe most boats had at least one fish over 20" with several managing two.

We fished the following Friday night just to get out with some friends for a fishing night. There was a pretty good wind and we managed to find some walleyes on top of the big mid-lake flat. Small walleyes, but walleyes nonetheless. So when we pulled the lake for league Tuesday night I figured we had a shot at catching some fish.

Walleye League – Night 4

My son was out of town for league night, so my bride rode shotgun on this trip. We had rain all day and I was worried that it would continue through the evening. Fortunately the rain let up for the first couple of hours, so it wasn't as bad as I thought. We pulled Lake Bemidji, so since we had some success that first night, we hit the spot where we found the big fish first.

Again, we went to the leech and Lindy combination and actually managed to boat two walleyes right off the bat. Unfortunately, we can only weigh a fish over 13 inches, and

these did not quite make that length. We drifted on top of the shallow flat and failed to pick up any more fish. As we watched the dark clouds moving in from the west, we opted to grab the crankbait rods and troll as far as a point farther north to see what we could find. One nice northern and a few perch later, the wind started to howl. Boat control started to become a real issue, but we opted to go back to the leech and lindy rig as we moved into a patch of cabbage on the east side of the lake taking the pounding from the wind.

I had to go to the outboard to get enough power to backtroll into the rollers coming in from the west. The wave-whackers did their job for the most part, but a few monster peaks made their way over the back end making for a wet ride. We were getting bites, but had a real tough time getting the feel for the weight of the fish with the waves and couldn't manage to hook into anything. As the front passed over and the sun came out the wind subsided a bit, but we had a little more than an hour until we had to be at the landing, and we had nothing in the live well. Since we fished this lake the previous Friday and had some success with crankbaits up on the flats, we decided to make our way back south for one last push.

Our guess appeared to be correct as I proceeded to boat another 12 incher a few minutes after tossing out the #5 deep running Salmo. My wife had a walleye colored deep running shad rap and soon found success as well. Over the next hour we had regular action boating one walleye after another trolling the edge of the flats in about 9 feet of water. The problem, however, was that every one of them was under 13 inches. With little time to spare I finally managed to find a 14 inch fish. We were on the board. Unfortunately, over the next few minutes we only managed to catch more small walleyes. So we headed back north to the landing with one lonely fish in the live well.

The weigh-in wasn't nearly as impressive the [previous week](#) with a couple of boats coming in with nothing, several more with only one fish, and a few of the most consistent boats at the top with a few fish to weigh. It really is hard to complain when we had some pretty good action, even though the fish didn't qualify for the weigh-in.

Walleye League – Night 5

We've had about one day of sunshine so far this June. We've gotten rain of some kind every night that we have fished this month, and Tuesday was no different. After 5 straight nights of walleye fishing on a few area lakes, we felt ready for the night and were happy to find out the lake that was pulled was one of our favorites. We have yet to get blanked on this lake, and we headed out full of confidence.

Unfortunately, confidence during walleye fishing can be a fleeting thing. It didn't help when the rain that had pounded us during most of the morning decided to pay us a visit as we rolled out to the hump we were targeting for the evening. I decided to work this spot with a 1/4 ounce blue jig and shiner while my son pulled a crawler on a Lindy rig. Two other boats from our league decided to work the same hump. This mid-lake structure came up to about 10 feet at the top and was covered with a good growth of weeds. We

stuck to the south side of it working anywhere from 11 to 22 feet of water. My son started getting bites early, but couldn't get anything to commit. At about 6:30 he finally got something to take the bait far enough to set the hook. We both breathed a sigh of relief when I dipped the net and pulled in our first walleye. A nice 20.5 inch fish that went about 2.5 pounds. We had visions of a full live well that night.

As the evening rolled along we continued to work the hump with only a couple of very small walleyes and some rock bass. We watched the two boats near us net a couple of fish each, so we knew we needed to put another fish or two in the live well to be near the top, but once again we found ourselves struggling to find anything over 13 inches.

We finally moved off the spot and headed to one of our most reliable holes on the south end. We managed 7 nice walleyes in about an hours four years earlier when we fished it for the very first time as part of this league. Since then it had always been good for a fish or two. We made one pass along the weed line in about 10 feet of water... just along the edge of the weeds, but couldn't coax anything out. With about 45 minutes to go, we pulled out the crankbaits and started making passes along a 100 yard stretch of shoreline. On the first pass, I latched into a nice fish. I wasn't sure what I had at first, but my excitement turned to disappointment when I realized I had a northern and not a walleye. A few more passes produced several rock bass, and the final pass produced a 12.75 inch walleye. Too little, too late.

With only about 10 minutes to go we shot back over to the hump we started on to make one final pass with the cranks. Unfortunately the walleyes didn't feel like obliging us with a last-minute bite, so we headed to shore with our single fish.

The story at the landing was surprisingly close to our own. Either very little action, or the action was very small walleyes. Several boats were weighing single fish that barely made the 14 inch mark, so we were not in terrible shape. Of the two boats that were next to us early, one weighed two nice fish for a 6 pound total and the win, the other weighed the two fish we watched them catch for about 3 pounds... finishing just ahead of us. I know our single 2.5 pound fish beat out another boat that came in with three walleyes. We're talking tough fishing. The final verdict for us was 9 points (7th place) out of 15 boats. We're now only one point off of our goal of averaging 8 points per night. A couple of good nights would really give us a boost.

Walleye League – Night 6

After a week of some odd weather, including tornados, torrential rain and a beautiful sunny weekend we headed out for a night of fishing league not sure what mood the fish would be in.

We drew a lake that we fished a week or so before, and on that night we managed to find a half-dozen keeper walleyes pulling crankbaits later in the evening. This night we decided to keep that spot in our back pocket in case our other options didn't pan out. As it turns out, our backup turned out to be the loser.

This is a lake we haven't quite figured out. It seems like we get lucky every once in a while and manage to find a few fish, but they never seem to be in the same place. Since the cabbage is pretty easy to spot now, we figured we would start in a couple of likely spots loaded with cabbage. I pulled a crawler and the boy pulled a leech, both on Lindy rigs. We worked one hole for half an hour and moved on to a long point with some nice sharp drops to deeper water. Sticking to around 12 feet just outside the heavy weeds we immediately started getting bites and marking fish. It wasn't too long before I was able to hook my first fish... a walleye, 13 inches on the nose. We were on the board.

Another boat from our group wandered through and we chatted for a bit. They had a 13 incher themselves, but nothing else. They continued from the point south while we kept working the same stretch, backtrolling slow and working shallow to deep and back. We started to contemplate a move at about 8:00 and decided to finish the current pass. No sooner had we made the decision when my son set the hook on a nicer fish, a 16 inch walleye. The mood was getting better. He had been feeding line every time he felt a tap... this time he just gave it a foot or so and dropped the hammer. So we hung tight to that spot for another half hour without another bite.

With an hour to go we pulled out the rods with the crankbaits and made our way to our "ace-in-the-hole". With the wind pounding that side all day we figured we could count on at least one more keeper for the live well. Unfortunately we also learned that it's pointless trying to predict where walleyes will be from one week to the next. Five or six passes along the long weed line produced three northers and several keeper weeds. The whole time we were trolling we watched tiny minnows flipping out of the water all around the boat. With action like that, we had some stiff competition for the walleyes.

So we called it a night with five minutes left and hoped for the best. As it turns out, things didn't go so well for most boats that night. A couple of teams managed a few decent fish for the top spots with one nice 3 pounder weighed and released. Our two fish weighed 1.6 pounds, good enough for fifth place and 11 points. From what I could see it looked like about 8 of the 15 boats came in empty. Telling for a group comprised of some pretty good fishermen.

Walleye League – Night 7

We took a couple of weeks off for some traveling, golfing and general family time. Always nice to get a break from work and the regular routine, but we were definitely ready to get back to fishing this week.

As a tune-up, we headed north of town a few miles late last week to scope out one of the league lakes we haven't fished yet. This lake is notorious for some big walleyes, but it has been spotty this year. My son and I have established a habit of using different baits when we have no clue what might be working on a particular lake, and this evening I pulled a rig with a leech, and he pulled a rig with a crawler. The results were less than stellar. Granted, we tried a couple of new spots and were learning the structure, but when

we went back to more familiar territory the action was no better. The highlight of the evening included this excellent specimen of a bluegill:



And a fine summer evening rainstorm to blow us off the lake. No walleyes.

Last night we decided to give a nearby lake a try. We rarely fish it, but it's close, and it's another league lake that we haven't fished yet. This time I pulled a rig with a crawler and Junior hooked up a leech. I struck first with a little banana-sized walleye in about 12 feet... just on the south end of a nice sized mid lake hump. We worked that area the entire evening moving about .5 mph with leeches and crawlers on a plain hook and a 3 foot snell. The result was about a half dozen nice little eater fish:



We did make a switch to crankbaits at about 9:00 just to see what we could scare up, and the boy managed to hook into a decent 17 incher, but that was the end of it.

So with a little bit of success in our back pockets we headed into league tonight with some confidence. The lake that was pulled was not one of the lakes we had fished. We've had modest success on this lake with a few small fish, so we were not boiling over with excitement. With no real good idea what the fish were after, we bought a dozen red tailed chubs, crawlers and leeches. I decided that I would do some jigging tonight. We found a few fish deep last time jigging so I figured it was worth a shot. My son went to crawlers on a lindy rig. He also gave a spinner a shot.

With raindrops spattering us yet again, we worked a little point of cabbage on the east side of the lake, drifting over with the wind, and backtrolling into the wind on the way back. We managed to boat two walleyes in the 12 inch range, a few northerns and a couple of perch. We were marking fish all over on the Lowrance, but could not get them to hit the bait with any consistency. By 8:40 we'd had enough and decided to switch to crankbaits to see if we could entice a reaction bite out of one of the finicky walleyes. All we could manage were a couple more northerns off the bullrushes in about 9 feet. On our last pass along a long weed line Junior hooked into a decent fish, got it to within 4 feet of the boat, and before we could get a good look at it, the dirty bugger threw the hook. This is the stuff that keeps walleye fishermen awake at night.

With a good bit of mumbling, we put the rods down and buzzed back to the landing trying to convince ourselves that the last fish was a northern. There was mixed success this evening with a couple of boats coming in with their four fish, but I would have to say most were only able to weigh a fish or two and a few of us weighed nothing.

So we roll into the last five weeks of the season needing to average a top 5 showing every night to break 100 points for the season. We're probably sitting at about 52 points right now after 8 weeks with two blanks under our belts, so while the task ahead is not impossible, it won't be easy. My guess is that we will be doing a good bit of fishing on the remaining lakes in the next week or two and hopefully will find a few hot spots to hit when we pull them for league. Until then, we'll lick our wounds and move on.

Walleye League – Night 8

One hard lesson that we never seem to hear from the walleye fishing experts is that walleye, while they have some predictable patterns fishermen can use to find them, have an annoying habit of not showing up in the same place they were just a few nights before. If we accomplished anything in the last week, it was doing a thorough job of proving this simple fact.



In my [last post](#), I mentioned that we did some fishing on a couple of area lakes that we had yet to fish on a league night. This past week, Junior and I headed back north to the lake we struck out on a week earlier. Our goal was to mark a couple of mid-lake humps on the Lowrance and then fish a long point with crawlers and leeches on lindy rigs. This strategy bore some fruit right away when the boy hauled in a nice 19 inch fish about 10 minutes into our first run. The victim was a medium sized leech on a plain pink hook pulled on a three foot snell.

We continued backtrolling west to the end of the point and kept moving across a narrow channel to a point on the west side of the lake. We worked along that point in about 15 feet when Junior got another whack. It was obvious when he set the hook that he had a substantial fish. After a little bit of back and forth, I dipped the net under this 25 inch beauty:



So... like good fishermen... we marked the spot and continued working around it. We boated a few more fish, including this 18 incher fooled by a crawler:



So as we headed into league night, we had successfully located fish on two of the possible four lakes we could possibly pull. As “luck” would have it, we pulled the lake I discussed in last week’s post. That night we managed several keepers, and a few nights later found a couple more pulling shad raps. So we were fairly confident going in that we would find a few to weigh.

Once again we used leeches and crawlers working the same mid-lake hump we fished the previous week. We were getting some consistent bites, but not much to show for it. The wind was pounding the north side of the hump so we focused on that and were soon rewarded with a nice 18 inch walleye. Encouraged, we backtrolled and drifted along that edge picking up several small walleyes over the next half hour or so. Unfortunately, none of them were keepers.

By 7:30 we bailed on lindy rigs and started pulling shad raps. We knew that they had been working during the week, so we figured we could at least pick up one more keeper before weigh-in. But as I stated at the beginning of this post, the fact that the walleyes were there yesterday means very little today. Two hours of pulling cranks through shallow water produced one northern pike, one rock bass, and one sub-13 inch walleye. So, once again, we rolled to the landing braced for a middle-of-the-pack finish. As we pulled up to the dock we learned that one boat had three. I jumped out and headed to the truck to learn that another boat found five nice fish. As I backed the trailer down to the dock I watched another team with a bucket of fish with the tail of a big one hanging out the end. I strapped down the boat while Junior headed to the scale with our 18 incher. After getting the boat squared away I headed over to the scales and learned that our 18

incher was good for fourth place and 12 points. A slow night indeed, but we met our goal for the night and a glimmer of hope for the last four.

Walleye League – Night 9



On an afternoon that started with some nasty looking weather and heavy rain, the teams gathered at the bait shop hoping that the worst had passed. The good news was that we pulled a lake about 30 miles to the north... away from the nasty stuff. In fact, this is the same lake we fished on [Friday](#), with mixed results. But we did find a couple of fish on Friday, and we had the spot prominently marked on the Lowrance.

We hit the lake, headed west and started hunting. The wind was brisk and coming straight from the west, so we started scanning the edges of some sharp drops facing west. When we hit 25 feet of water we started marking some pretty good batches of fish, so we tossed out jigs and fatheads and started working the deep edge of the drop. We got a couple of light taps, but that was about it. The fish we were marking seemed to be concentrated 4 to 10 feet from the bottom with a few holding tight to the bottom. Out of curiosity, we pulled some deep running cranks through the stacked fish, but only managed one solid smack on Junior's. I contemplated slip bobbers for a minute, but with only a couple of hours left to fish, we decided to move to the hump where we caught our two fish on Friday.

We stuck with the jig and fathead and drifted from the west end of the hump to the east end in about 11 feet without a bite. At the east end I backed the boat into the wind and backrolled over the spot we marked on Friday. About 10 yards past the mark I got a nice tap, let out some line, reeled up the slack and felt nothing. I gently pulled the jig and felt the tap again... gave the fish just a touch of line and set the hook. Junior scooped up a 15 inch walleye and we were on the board. We drifted back to the same mark and turned and backrolled into the wind again and Junior set the hook on a decent fish... not five

minutes after I hooked mine. A few seconds of reeling and we had a 17 inch walleye in the live well. One more drift to the east end and I picked up a 10 incher. We continued this pattern until about 9:00 without another bite. Concerned that two fish wouldn't cut it, we started pulling shad raps across the top of the hump, then moved to the shoreline for one last pass along a line of bullrushes that has produced walleyes in the past. But our last-ditch effort produced nothing and by 9:23 we strapped everything down and headed to the landing for the verdict.

I spent some extra time putting away our raingear and strapping the boat to the trailer while the boy brought our fish over to the scale. By the time I was done, most of the boats had pulled in and I was surprised to learn that we were holding on to first place. One team came in with a 2 pound fish, beating our 17 incher by a few ounces, but our kicker fish kept us at the top. Turns out it was a pretty brutal night for most. I guess when two fish take first place it goes without saying that fishing was tough. Several small fish were caught, but only five or six boats came in with anything to weigh.

So, for once, our pre-fishing paid off. The two fish we caught were caught within yards of the fish we caught on Friday. On a night that was tough by every standard, it was enough. So with three nights left we find ourselves about 5 points out of the fourth and final spot for the fish-offs. To get there we are most likely going to have to score high every night.

Walleye League – Night 10

Heading into the last few weeks of walleye fishing league, we once again found ourselves pre-fishing to locate a spot or two we could count on for a few fish come Tuesday night. Sitting only 5 points behind the coveted fourth place slot, we need to maintain our pace of top 5 finishes to have a shot at the fish-offs at the end of the month. Last week's first place finish helped our cause immensely, so now instead of simply trying to break 100 for the season, we have a legitimate shot at fourth.

On Sunday evening we headed to Cass Lake in the pouring rain. We fish Cass only a couple of times each year and have yet to "discover" any spots that we could reasonably consider reliable places to put a walleye or two in the live well. When we got to the landing we could see the rain moving in. By the time we hit our first spot we were getting pounded by heavy rain. Undaunted, we carried out our plan of working shallow humps with shad raps to see if we could find any active fish. In our first hour or so the perch action was consistent, but the walleyes were nowhere to be found. The rain eventually stopped but the sky was still dark and threatened to smack us again. We headed over to a long bar that we targeted earlier and to our surprise we found a walleye fairly quickly. The edges of this bar come up from 25-30 feet to 8 feet on the edge fairly quickly. From the edge it slowly transitions to 5 or 6 feet on the top. We concentrated on a "zone" of about 30 yards from the edge of the drop where the depth was about 9 feet to the inside where depths hit about 6 feet. There are scattered weed patches in this area, so we were able to troll our shallow runners well behind the boat without hanging up in weeds too often. For an hour or so we picked up walleyes along this path, nothing big, but enough to

make us feel that we could probably count on this area to put some 15 inchers in the live well on league night. By sunset we decided we had learned all we needed to learn that night, so we headed off with a little more confidence that we knew at least one spot on Cass.

So on Tuesday night we were pleasantly surprised that Cass was pulled out of the hat. On the way to the landing Junior and I agreed that we had a good shot at putting four fish in the boat. We felt that the size of the fish we caught on Sunday would not win for the night, but that it would be enough to put us in the top 5. Plenty of other teams out there knew Cass far better than we did and they would be looking deeper early to find a big fish or two to weigh. We headed straight to our bar. The plan was to make a pass or two with the shad raps to see if we could find a fish, and if that didn't produce anything we would work a lindy rig and crawler deeper off the edge. As it turns out, I managed to boat a 15 inch walleye on our second pass at about 6:20 and we made the decision to stick with it for the night. This set us up for an exercise in patience that we had not put ourselves through since last year. We have consistently worked live bait this season, so pulling cranks for an entire evening can be a real test if the action isn't steady. And the action was definitely not steady. The one walleye we put in the live well was probably just a random fluke for the conditions. It was partly cloudy... mostly sunny though, with a decent chop... a far cry from the dark and windy conditions on Sunday. Junior was getting edgy, but I kept trying to reassure him that as soon as that sun dropped below the tree-line the walleyes would come up on that bar. It was simply too bright early for the walleyes to come up and feed in that shallow water. So, like clockwork, by about 8:50 when the sun was dropping behind the clouds and trees another walleye hammered my shad rap. Junior had just lost his to a northern and put a purple shallow runner on. With two 15 inch walleyes in the live well, the race was on. We had 20 minutes of fishing time, enough for two or three passes along the area we had been working and we needed two fish. Fortunately Junior's fishing rod started to heat up... he boated a 14 incher on the first pass. He pulled in a cigar-length walleye on the next one, then a big fish on the third that turned out to be a wandering northern. By 9:18 we were one fish short and four minutes from the landing... enough for one last pass. As we reached the end of the run Junior latched on to our last fish... a 14 inch keeper. We netted it, dropped the rods and kicked it down for the landing with our four fish... our goal for the night.

At the landing it was apparent that most had found a fish or two. The guys that pulled out ahead of us were on fish all night, but like us couldn't find anything really large. They did, however, manage to weigh about half a pound more than our 3.5. At the scales another team that was working the deeper edge of the same hump we were on came in with two pigs, one about 4.8 pounds and the other only slightly less... definitely first place for the night. When the last team weighed their big fish... a 5 pound hog, we dropped to fifth place. Good enough for 11 points and, more important, enough to put us in fourth place overall by one point.

For the first time in four years we find ourselves with a shot at the fish-offs. There is a big cluster of teams hovering around the 90 point mark, so the last two nights are going to be very interesting. If we can keep catching fish, we have a shot. At the very least we

have a great chance of reaching our yearly goal of breaking 100 points. Next week will be the small lake we fished in [this post](#) where we managed to find a nice 25 inch fish (this lake regularly produces some very nice fish). The final night will be on Lake Bemidji. This should be fun.

Walleye League – Night 11



We spent the past week doing a great deal of fishing. We focused on two lakes, Bemidji and the little lake we all knew we would be fishing this week. The former produced some great fishing, including the nice 18 incher in the photo above. The latter produced mixed results, but we found a couple of spots where we figured we could at least pick up a couple of fish. On the line was our precarious one point lead for fourth place overall.

Lake Bemidji has been heating up with the weather. Our efforts have primarily focused on pulling shad raps on the mid-lake flat and on top of some key humps. We were able to consistently find fish, but still not the larger fish that we will need next week when we finish up the regular season. On the lake we fished this week, our pre-fishing was strictly live bait. Crawlers and leeches on lindy rigs produced several fish, but we were only able to boat one decent fish each of the last two nights we pre-fished. So as we rolled up to the landing we had a basic game-plan in mind. Unfortunately, mother nature had her own game plan. We tried pulling shallow running shad raps over the cabbage for about an hour or so and managed to boat one 13 inch fish. We also caught a fairly decent sized bullhead, a personal first for me on a crankbait. By the time we were ready to change gears, the skies opened up. We battened down the hatches and prepared for what would be an all-night soaker.

We switched over to live bait rigs and moved to the point we had been working the last couple of trips out to this lake. One other boat was working the same area and we were soon joined by another... the team that was one point behind us. This point is no mystery

for those who have fished this lake. It consistently produces walleyes, so it was perfectly natural that anyone in need of a few fish would gravitate toward it. So there we all were, chatting back and forth keeping up on the Twins game and discovering just how poor our duck gear was at keeping out driving sheets of rain. We continued our slow backtroll doing circles around the point getting a few bites, with Junior latching into something decent only to have it take the hook. Not sure if it was a cut or a bad tie but the result was the same... no fish. Then we looked over at our competition and saw he was reeling something in. A bullhead, he thought, but was surprised with a nice walleye that went over 20 inches. The game was on. As the invisible sun went down, the rain seemed to drive even harder. By now I had the outboard running and the bilge pump going full-time. We bucked the wind half the time and struggled to feel the line for bites, but as the sun went down the walleyes did move up. We caught a few smaller fish, but two of them were at least measurable to give us three in the live well. We were safely on the board, but needed a decent fish to pass our competition who would surely weigh at least 3 pounds with his nice fish.

By 9:00 everyone else bailed. It was getting cold and we were soaked to the skin, but we hung on for another 15 minutes or so hoping for that one decent fish that never appeared. We high-tailed it over to the north shore by the landing and Junior pulled a crankbait the last couple hundred yards to the landing actually picking up a 12 incher along the way, but nothing more. We loaded up the boat on the wet, muddy landing and I strapped everything down while Junior took our three fish over to the scales. We ended up with 2.35 pounds of fish... good for fourth place, 12 points and the successful completion of our goal for the year of passing the 100 point mark. Our competition ended up in second with their nice fish, enough to pull them ahead of us by one point!

So the formula is very simple. Next week we fish Lake Bemidji for our final night of league. If we want to make the fish-offs, we will need to do two points better than our main competition. Knowing how good they are, that could very well mean we need to win next week. So we will be doing a little fishing this weekend looking for big fish. Considering the fact that the last three years we have been out of the race completely by the last week, this is turning out to be our best season yet.

Walleye League – The End of the Regular Season



With a week to do a little pre-fishing on Lake Bemidji we headed out into some interesting weather with the goal of locating a few likely spots to find four good fish for the Tuesday night finish. The fishing has been pretty good lately, so finding fish wasn't too big a problem. Our main concern was finding places where the fish were a bit larger. A stiff west wind and bouts of rain provided conditions that were perfect for some shallow fishing... so we went shallow.

With winds in the 20-30 mph range boat control was a real issue for live bait on a rig. We managed to find a couple of decent sized fish on live rigs, but each night we opted to cover more ground with shad raps as the sun crept below the horizon. We moved from one spot to another adding and removing them from our list of possibilities for Tuesday night. The places that we could find fish above the 16 inch range made it to the top. We felt confident when the weekend was over that we could find four keeper fish, but we were just as sure that the team we were trailing by one point would find four fish as well. They had proven over and over again that they could find fish on some of the toughest nights, so it was probably going to come down to one good fish. We were ready, but we needed some luck.

When Tuesday rolled around the weather had cleared and the wind died down, two things I really didn't want to see. The bright sun and lack of chop would kill our plans for fishing shallow early, but as the day wore on the wind picked up out of the southwest until the whitecaps were rolling hard at the north end of the lake. Unfortunately, threatening weather was also in the forecast, so the raingear had to come out again. The scenario as we headed out was clear; we needed to gain a point on our competition to achieve at least a tie and a place in the fish-offs. The tiebreaker would be total weight and we had that by three pounds. Before we headed out we planned to do a little jigging with

small red tails on a little hump at the north end. We found a few fish there the previous night, so we gave ourselves a time limit of an hour or so before we headed south. With a nasty wind rolling into that end of the lake, I had my hands full just keeping the boat in line. Junior had to carry the load at the front end while I hid behind the wave whackers at the back end. After getting bounced around for a half hour or so we finally managed to jig up a 13 incher. We were on the board... but barely. 13 inchers were not going to get it done. Fortunately, after another 15 minutes or so of bouncing Junior hooked into a 16 incher... half-way home, with some work to do. It was only 7:00 and we were feeling good about taking our chances pulling shad raps on some of the humps we had on our list. So we headed south.

After a kidney-pounding ride south we settled down on a bar that juts out from the western shoreline. We found a couple of decent fish on it a couple of days before, but nothing since, so we planned to only make a couple of passes over the top of it then move on if we didn't find anything. As it turns out, it was quiet again tonight so we opted to move on rather than waste more time. From there we moved to the big mid-lake flat we always fish. About 10 seconds after I slowed the boat and started trolling I latched into a 15 incher... three in the live well. We were getting comfortable, but not too comfortable knowing that we probably needed a bigger fish to score well. Another factor playing on the comfort level was a nasty looking weather front rolling in from the northwest. We were going to get pummeled, we just didn't know exactly when. We continued circling the flats picking up small walleyes and one northern that kept Junior's purple shad rap as a souvenir. We got tired of the small walleyes so we reeled up and headed to our next candidate. This little bar produced a 20 incher the night before, so we had high hopes. We tied up a couple of deep runners for this bar because we were working 10-12 feet. I hovered out in 20 feet and started the troll over the first hump when Junior got a solid whack. In a couple of minutes we netted a nice 18.5 incher. Not exactly a hog, but definitely a possible difference-maker. We officially had our four fish, but really wanted to upgrade the 13 incher. As we started making our next pass the rain started sprinkling down on us and the wind got even worse. On our run back to the north end of the bar another walleye attacked Junior's shad rap... 15 inches. We had our upgrade and what we figured would be at least 5 pounds of fish. Not stellar weight, but we figured we had found enough to be competitive given the current ... terrible... weather conditions.

By about 9:10 we decided we better start the 10 minute run back to the landing at the north end of the lake. With big rollers at our back the Pro-V rode the tops and crashed into bottoms of successive rollers sending massive sprays of water over the front of the boat directly into my face. Something Junior found rather amusing. We made it back in one piece with enough time to pull cranks along the shoreline for a couple of minutes, an exercise that we often go through just to see if we could say we found a fish at the absolute last minute. But tonight we would have to take our chances with the four keepers in the main live well. Junior dropped me at the dock and a few of the other teams had come in to see how the last weigh-in fell... even guys who were completely out of the race. I had a brief chat with one of the guys on the team we trailed by one. They found four fish, but none of them were bigger than 16 inches. It was going to be interesting. Junior grabbed the bucket and hauled our catch to the scale. The big fish weighed 1.8

pounds... just shy of big fish for the night. Our total weight was 5.5 pounds. We all waited as the other team carried their bucket over. The total after they dumped their fish into the bucket on the scale was about 4.4 pounds. We did it. As it turns out, we took second place for the night and they took third. So after 13 weeks of fishing we both ended up with 116 points. It turns out that we actually had to go to the total weight tiebreaker to determine fourth place, and we had that by a mere three pounds for the season. A real shame that we couldn't send five teams given the marathon nature of the league, but we go by the rules and the rules say 4.

So we close out our best finish in four years with our first trip to the fish-offs. Next week will feature our top four teams and the top four teams from Thursday night league. We all start with a clean slate and fish next Tuesday on a "mystery lake" and on Lake Bemidji Thursday night. Top total weight for those two nights wins it all.

Walleye League – Fish Offs



With our photo finish last week we had an entire week to contemplate our first appearance in the walleye league fish-offs after three years finishing in the middle of the pack. To be quite honest, we had set a goal early to break 100 points, and after our poor showing back in [week 8](#) we knew that we had our work cut out for us. We had to average 10 points the rest of the way and we managed to do better than that with some good luck on a couple of less-than-stellar nights. We entered the fish-offs with the attitude that we just wanted to catch a few fish and do well enough to sit somewhere in the middle of the pack when we weighed in on Thursday night. The final two nights would feature 8 boats that managed to finish 13 weeks of fishing with some pretty good point totals. These guys all know how to fish, and for any one of them to enter fish-offs thinking they had anything sewed up would be wishful thinking at best. If we were to hold fish-offs 10 times in a row with these 8 boats, you would most likely get 10 different results.

The format for fish-offs is simple; 8 teams start from scratch... everyone at zero. Tuesday night, the boss tells us where we are going. We have no clue ahead of time, but I can assure you the speculation was rampant. Then on Thursday we all finish on Lake Bemidji. The best total weight for the two nights wins... simple as that. Top three places pay off.

Tuesday Night

8 teams showed up on Tuesday to learn that we would be fishing lake Plantagenet. The logic for the choice was simple; every team in the fish-offs had done reasonably well on the lake, so there was no real advantage for anyone. Junior and I were somewhat ambivalent about the choice. It's not our favorite lake, but we somehow seemed to manage to catch a fish or two on league nights, so we figured we would be able to find a fish or two to stay competitive.

Our plan was pretty basic; pull crankbaitss right away on one of the spots we found fish before just to see what the action was like, then go to leeches and crawlers until closer to sunset with the hope of catching a keeper or two until we could pull shad raps again.

For the most part, we got what we figured we would get, slime-ridden razor toothed northerns. After boating three and losing \$15 worth of shad raps to two more, we did manage to find one 13 inch walleye. While this would be great on most nights, we weren't going with the point system this week. Everything was based on weight, so we hoped that we would be able to upgrade that fish later in the evening. This chewed up a bit of time and we knew that we needed to wait a while before the northerns moved out and the walleyes moved in. So we headed across the bay to another of our go-to spots to pull some live bait around. This turned out to be a real test of patience. We marked a few fish, and even managed to get a few bites, but we didn't net a single fish. We worked deep to shallow and back out to deep again with nothing to show for our efforts. By 7:40 we looked at each other and decided to tie on the shad raps again and throw the dice hoping that we would manage to hit a fish or two. We made one pass along the edge of the point we had been working with crawlers and leeches with no hits, so we targeted two spots; the first was a stretch of shoreline in front of a resort closer to the north end of the lake, and the second was the point we were working when we first hit the lake.

On a hunch we tied on deep running #5s and tried to keep ourselves in about 10 feet of water. The weeds were nasty closer to the shore and there was little chance a shallow runner would ride very well above them. About half-way along our first run I got a nice little whack and reeled in a 15 inch walleye. Bingo. We popped him in the live well and I tossed my rap back out and no less than 10 seconds after it hit the water I got another whack. This time I reeled in a 17 incher. This was looking a little better. With some hope that we had found an active pocket of fish, we made a few more long passes along that stretch of shoreline, but we didn't manage to find another fish. So we headed back south and started working the line of bullrushes we started on. The weeds were much better along this line, so we went back to shallow runners. The line of bullrushes tapered of to a nice point at the south end and as we passed that point Junior got his first nice hit, another

good 16 plus walleye. We had our four now and needed to find some upgrades. We continued in the same pattern and every time we passed that point Junior got a fish. I was basically just driving the boat and running the net. On the next pass following this pattern he got a real nice smack. By now the sun was well below the horizon and I had neglected to put my headlamp on. We knew he had a decent fish, but I couldn't see the line or below the water that well. He got the fish near the boat and I saw a flash and moved the net under it but missed the fish. I heard it flop against the side of the boat and felt that sick feeling figuring that it shook itself off, but to my surprise it stayed on and I scooped a nice 20 inch walleye into the boat. We had our upgrade. We made a few more passes and ended up tossing back a couple of keepers that weren't quite as nice as the fish we had in the live well. With 15 minutes of fishing time left we opted to take our chances with the weight we had and headed to the landing.

The weigh-in went quick, and by the time everything was said and done we sat with 6.3 pounds, nearly 1 pound ahead of the next closest team. Just like that, we were actually thinking we had a legitimate shot at winning this thing. Thursday was going to be interesting.

Thursday Night

Suffice it to say that during the few days before fish-offs, every team was fishing Lake Bemidji trying to find one or two go-to spots for some decent sized fish. While we were happy to be in the lead going in, we knew very well that there were a few teams in the field that were fully capable of pulling in some very good weights with disturbing regularity. Junior had a good buddy of his fishing in one of the boats and they pulled in some monster fish the previous week. The guys that won this competition last year did it by passing the entire field with over 10 pounds of fish on the last night. So our 1 pound lead meant nothing if we couldn't at least match our Tuesday night total for the finale.

Just to be sure we had all of our spots lined up, we headed out late on Wednesday evening to do a little pre-fishing. We fiddled around with some deep water jigging for a little while before the sun went down and did manage to find one small keeper. But as soon as the sun hit the horizon we headed to spot #1, shad raps ready to go. This spot had turned out to be a nice little late-season discovery and it saved our bacon last week with a nice 18 inch walleye that put us in the fish-offs. As it turned out Wednesday night, it had a little surprise for us on the first pass. As soon as we passed over the first hump that marked the beginning of the bar, a nice fish hammered Junior's lure. After a brief battle, I netted the 25 inch walleye you see a few paragraphs above. A great fish, but I think it left both of us wondering what the odds would be that we would find another fish like that on Thursday night. Several more passes yielded nothing, which gave us a small bit of concern, so we moved on to spot #2. This mid-lake flat had been walleye central for the last two weeks. It was covered with a bunch of sub-13 inch walleyes, but had some decent keepers scattered around as well. As it turns out, the first pass through one of our better spots on the bar produced another nice smack on Junior's rap. Another brief battle and I netted a nice 24 inch walleye and hauled it in the boat. Again, very comforting that they were here, but I think we were both wondering if we just had our best night on Lake

Bemidji one night too early. In addition, there was very little action on this flat after that fish. Things had slowed down for sure, but we left the lake knowing that these spots were our best shot at pulling in some nice weight Thursday night.

When the big night finally arrived we started the evening working live bait on a couple of humps at the north end of the lake. We were searching deep to see if we could find any decent numbers of fish but the marks were few and far between. We did manage one very small walleye early, but that was the extent of the action. We headed over to the west side of the lake where we found our first keeper the night before. There were definitely some fish on this little hump so we backrolled it for a while with our live bait rigs. After a couple of minutes of this I felt a sudden tug at my line. Not really a "tap", but just resistance like the fish just sucked it in and was holding on. So I reeled up a couple of feet to get the rod tip to the water and I set the hook. The weight felt good and Junior went for the net. I wasn't getting any fight, and when I finally pulled it up to the top we discovered that I had managed to catch a beautiful two pound snowmobile belt. Now on any other night, that would be pretty funny. But on this night, it was anything but. We were half-way through our night with nothing to show for our efforts. While we had managed to find a keeper or two early on our previous outings, we were batting .000 this night. With our patience stretched a bit thin, we once again made the decision to go to shad raps early and take our chances on about three spots we had on the map.

Our first stop was a short bar on the west side that had produced a couple of nice fish on just one of our previous outings. We started our journey from the north end and after about 100 yards Junior caught a 13 incher for the live well. This was looking a lot like Tuesday night. Two more passes produced nothing, so we moved on to the middle of the lake. The sky was still a bit bright and the wind was dying, so the chances of finding any numbers of active fish on this spot were fairly low. We did make a couple of spins around which produced nothing so we headed to our go-to spot further south. Again, we went to deep-runners and worked in 10-12 feet of water. The mojo we had on previous evenings wasn't there as our first several passes along this structure produced several tiny walleyes and one annoying northern. We knew the calm weather was not helping and waited patiently as the sun finally crept below the horizon. With the low light conditions we hoped that the walleyes would start moving up shallow in search of dinner. I have no idea how many passes we made along that bar with nothing but tiny fish, but not long after the sun disappeared Junior finally latched into the fish we were looking for. He had quite a bit of line out, so he took his time making sure he didn't horse the fish in too hard. Interestingly enough... a walleye up to about 17 inches will actually come up to the surface very easily as you reel in and will skim in most of the way. The better fish will stay down, and this one was most definitely down. When he finally got it to the boat, I scooped up a 23 inch walleye. We were officially back in the game. Neither of us believed it was enough to win, but we felt like we could use the hour we had left to find one or two more keeper fish to at least give us a shot at a top three spot. But our hour shrank to 45 minutes with no more keepers. We made our last pass over the last hump on that bar and I started reeling in to get ready to move back to the flat bar in the middle of the lake, but Junior left his shad rap out a bit longer to let it pass off the deep side and he

was rewarded with another hit. This one skimmed in, but it was a 16 inch walleye and more than welcome in the live well.

We had about 40 minutes to make our rounds on the last of our go-to spots. We had been catching fish on this bar literally all year long and had every reason to believe we could find one more keeper for the live well. About half way through our rounds I finally latched into a fish, but after a little twisting and turning around the back of the boat we were greeted by a late-night northern. 9:20 arrived much too soon, but we needed the 10 minutes to get back to the landing. I was happy that we had found one decent fish to bring in. We knew for sure that we had done enough to at least end up in the middle of the pack, the question we kept asking was whether or not we had done enough to make it to the top three. We had our doubts. When we rolled up to the dock and reported that we did indeed have a few fish, we were told to weigh in last. We found out that Junior's buddy and his partner had found a very nice fish and three more keepers, but the reports from the other boats were not great. Just the chatter made me wonder if there was a chance. We got the boat strapped down and threw our three keepers in the bucket to head to the scales. We weighed 5.18 pounds... about what we figured. That put us at 11.48 for the two nights. Junior's buddy and his partner weighed 2.9 pounds on Tuesday, but they found a 25 incher and enough keepers to weigh 8.71 this night to put them at 11.61 over all... nipping us by basically 3 ounces. As it turns out, those were the top two weights for the week. The third place team actually blanked on Tuesday night, but hauled in over 9 pounds of fish this night to pull off a third place finish.

The disappointment... if you can call it that... lasted about two seconds. We were close, but those two earned their win with a great night. They are both great kids who earned their spot in the fish-offs with some great fishing all summer. We hoped for a good showing and managed exactly that. We left ourselves a little room for improvement next year, and so we are already planning how we are going to invest our second place money, but you'll have to stay tuned to find that out. September is coming and with it some of the best big walleye fishing of the year... then, ice fishing.

If you enjoyed these stories, stay tuned to the WalleyeGuy Blog (<http://walleyeguyblog.com>) for more league action next year, and to gather a few fishing tips along the way.