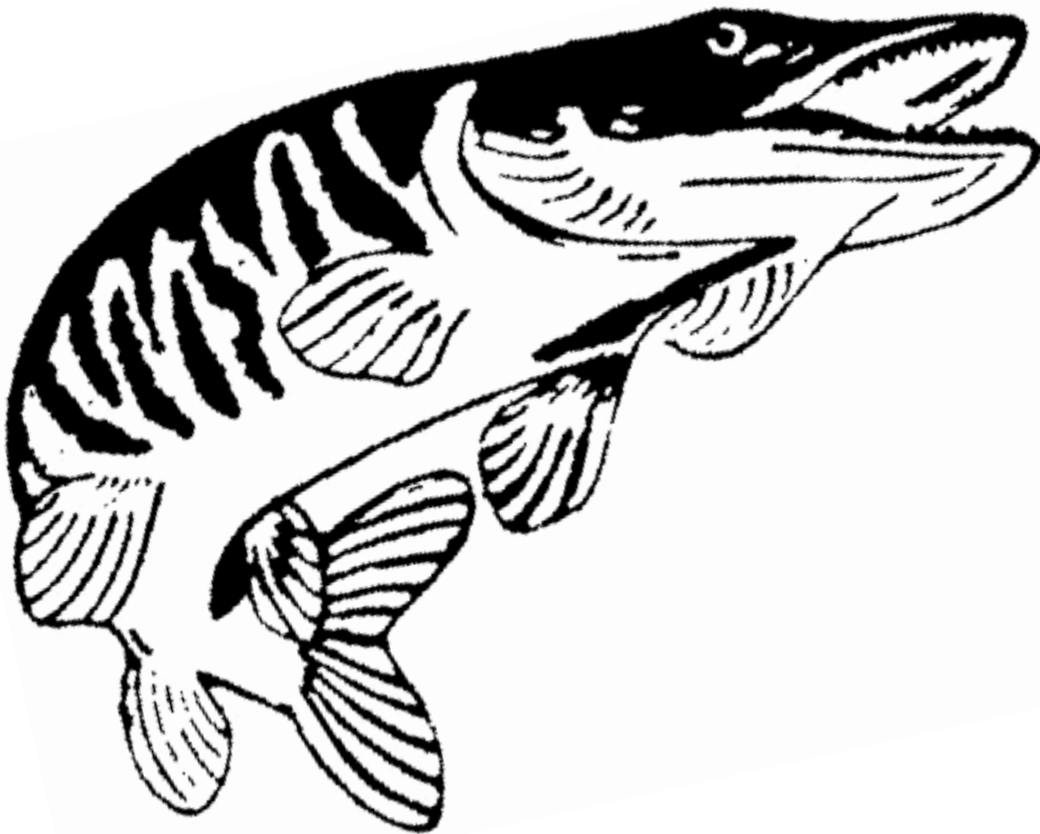


National Championship Musky Open Remembered



**30th Anniversary
August 21th - 23th, 2015**

National Musky Open draws record 1,251 anglers

The National Championship Musky Open was once again a record-setting event, as what is likely the most popular fishing tournament in the Midwest attracted 1,251 anglers to 72 Eagle River area lakes last Friday through Sunday.

Shawn Kopke of Appleton was the top angler in the tournament, while Jim Tustison of Crown Point, Ind., was the luckiest ticket holder in the 29th annual tournament, headquartered at the Vilas County Fairgrounds.

A total of 197 tournament-size (34 inches and over) muskies were registered in the three-day event, short of the record 219 set in 2013. The previous record was 195 fish established in 2012. While most anglers fished just Saturday and Sunday, fishing on Friday was optional.

The tournament is sponsored by the Eagle River Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center and the Musky Clubs Alliance of Wisconsin. The record number of anglers from 16 states topped the old mark of 1,222 anglers last year.

Top anglers

Kopke won the tournament by catching four muskies. He had fish measuring 41", 42", 46" and 47" inches, for a total of 177.25 inches. He won a first-place trophy for his effort and was proclaimed the national champion by tournament master of ceremonies Steve Heiting of St. Germain, editor of Musky Hunter Magazine.

The largest fish of the tournament was boated by Trevor Hake of Jefferson. He caught a 48½-inch muskie on Big St. Germain Lake using a Bull Dawg lure Friday afternoon.

Boat winners

Tustison won the grand



Overall Musky Open winner Shawn Kopke of Appleton was all smiles as event emcee Steve

Heiting presented him with his trophy.

—Staff Photo By ANTHONY DREW

door prize of a Ranger boat, remarking that he was celebrating his wedding anniversary while fishing in the tournament.

"This is my wedding gift to my wife," he exclaimed.

While only anglers who entered the tournament for \$60-\$65 had a chance at the top door prize, a second identical fishing boat package was given away by the Musky Clubs Alliance following a summerlong fundraising raffle.

The winner of that boat was Paul Morack of New London.

"It feels pretty good to have won this boat. I'm going to have to fish a little more now," Morack said with a laugh.

Besides a boat as a top door prize, anglers had a

chance to win more than 200 other door prizes Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon — ranging from muskie baits to rods and reels to huge landing nets. All anglers received a free hat and T-shirt.

More winners

The 197 muskies registered in the tournament were caught Friday, Saturday and Sunday on seven lake groups comprised of 72 bodies of water. The fish were registered by other tournament anglers right on the water to improve the muskies' chance of survival.

Trophies, courtesy of Miller Beer of the Northwoods, went to the top fishermen and -women.

Placing second in overall

points behind Kopke was Kim Stenard of Plymouth, who caught four fish measuring 37, 38, 43½ and 45 inches, good for 163½ points. Third place with four fish went to Ryan Knapp of West Bend. He caught fish measuring 34, 38, 38 and 47 inches.

Fourth place went to John Skibbie of Waukesha, who registered three fish measuring 38½, 43 and 45 inches.

Fifth place went to Jeff Davis of Sheboygan, boating three fish measuring 40½, 42 and 42 inches.

Jesse Bergner of Minneapolis, Minn., placed sixth with three fish measuring 38½, 40½ and 41 inches.

Trophies also went to the anglers catching the largest

To MUSKY, Pg. 11A

Musky: 83 youths registered for tourney

FROM PAGE 10A

fish on each lake family as follows: family one, Richard Becker, Mokena, Ill., 46 inches, Eagle Lake; family two, Knapp, 47 inches, Big Stone Lake; family three, Todd Wal-lender, Oakfield, 47½ inches, Big Sand Lake; family four, Hake, 48½, Big St. Germain Lake; family five, Justin Schu-macher, Kaukauna, 46 inches, Gilmore Lake; family six, Sternard, 45 inches, Pickerel Lake; and family seven, Skib-bie, 45 inches, Palmer Lake.

Hake also will receive a reproduction of his fish, the largest of the weekend, at next year's tournament. Completing the reproduction will be taxidermist Joe Fit-tante of Antigo. Dave Stewart was presented a reproduction Sunday afternoon of last year's largest fish registered in the tournament.

The husband-and-wife team trophy went to Elmer and Diane Jensen of Eagle River with two fish measur-ing 45 and 38 inches. There were 58 teams in the hus-band-and-wife category.

Hailey Holmberg of Eagle River took home the youth trophy with a muskie mea-suring 35 inches. There were 83 youths age 15 and younger entered in the tour-nament.

The guardian/youth trophy went to Richard Becker and Samuel Becker of Moke-



The top finishers in the Musky Open included, front row from left, second, Kim Sternard; first, Ryan Knapp. fifth, Jeff Davis; fourth, John Skibbie; and third, Shawn Kopke; back row, sixth, Jesse Bergner;

—Staff Photos By ANTHONY DREW

na, Ill., for registering Samuel's two muskies mea-suring 37½ and 36 inches. There were 83 guar-dian/youth teams.

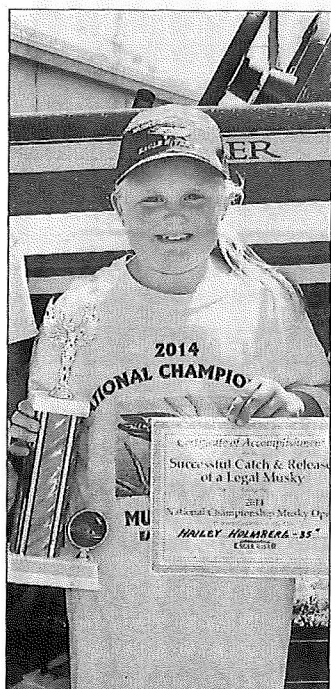
All the anglers also were congratulated for the 10th annual Help Fight Hunger program in support of the Vilas Food Pantry. Each

angler was asked to take a nonperishable food item and, in return, each angler would receive one chance at win-ning many muskie fishing items for their donation.

Participants donated more than 3,300 pounds of nonper-ishable food items to the Vilas Food Pantry and gave

more than \$1,500 in cash donations.

Before sending more than 1,200 fishermen and -women on their way home Sunday, Heiting reminded the muskie hunters that next year's tour-nament National Musky Open was set for Aug. 21-23, 2015.

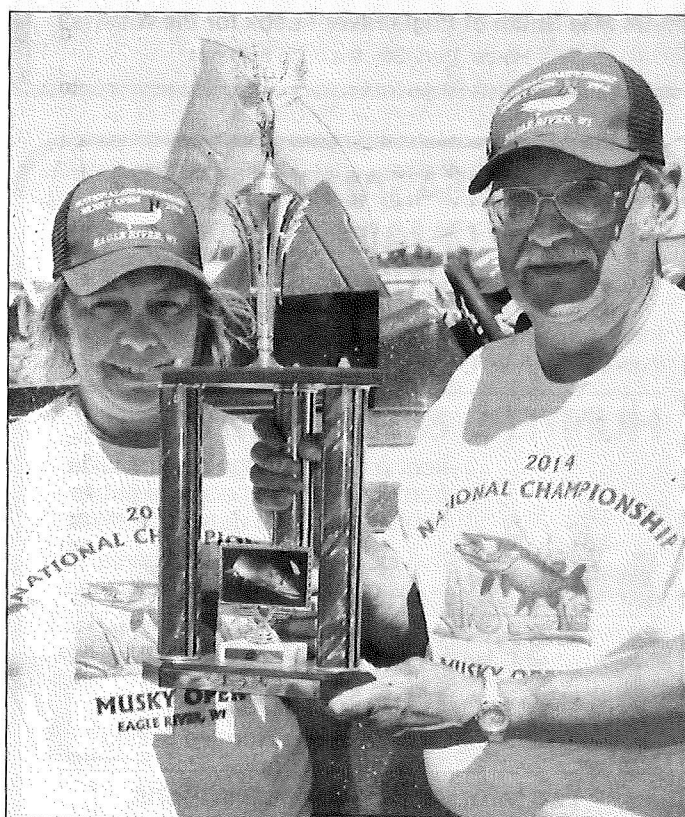


Youth winner Hailey Holmberg of Eagle River caught a 35-inch muskie to take a trophy home. There were 83 youth anglers at the event.

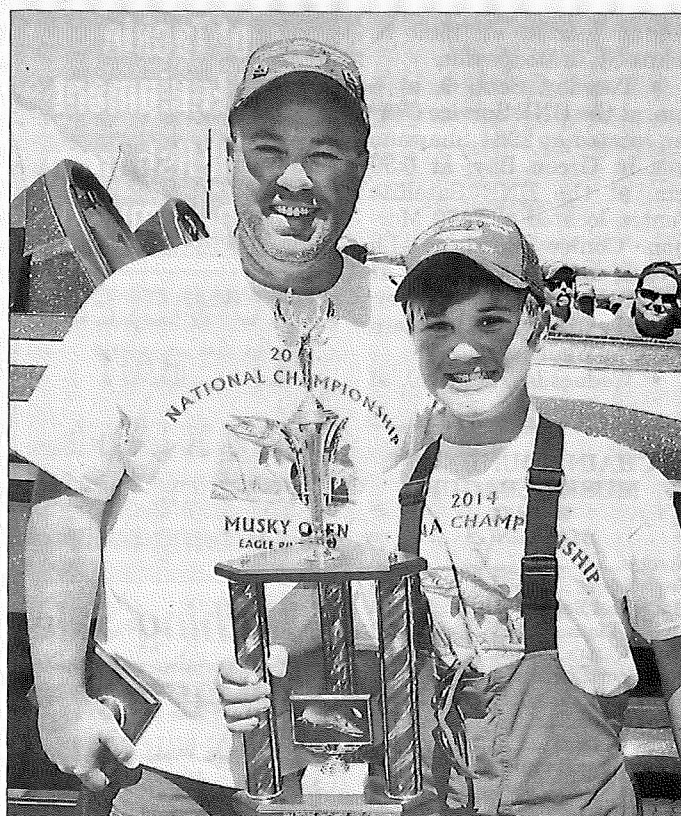


Anglers catching the largest fish in each lake family included, front row from left, lake family five, Justin Schumacher; six, Kim Starnard; seven,

John Skibbie; back row, one, Richard Becker; two, Ryan Knapp; three, Todd Wallender; and four, Trevor Hake (largest fish of tournament).



The winners of the husband-and-wife trophy were Jane and Elmer Jensen of Eagle River with 45-inch and 38-inch muskies.



The guardian and youth trophy went to Richard Becker (left) and his son, Samuel. They are from Mokena, Ill.

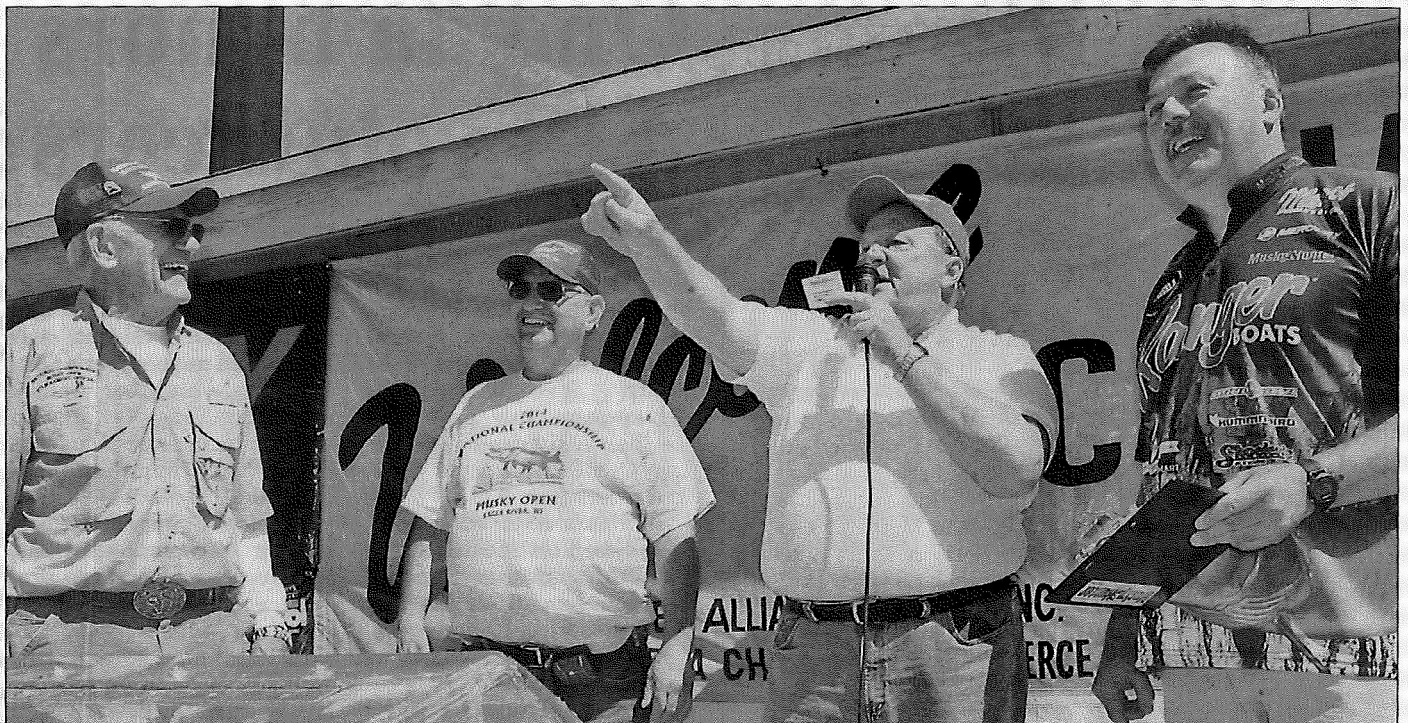
OUTDOORS



Dave Stewart (left) was presented a replica of his 49-inch muskie caught in last year's event. The mount was done by Fittante Taxi-

dermy of Antigo. Joining Stewart were, from left, Ben Fittante and Musky Alliance President Larry Slagoski.

NEWS



BOAT WINNER — Paul Morack of New London won the raffle boat at this year's National Championship Musky Open in Eagle River. On the stage were, from left, Musky Clubs Alliance Presi-

dent Larry Slagoski, Morack, Steve Lindahl of Ranger Boats and event emcee Steve Heiting of Musky Hunter Magazine.

—Staff Photo By ANTHONY DREW



BOAT WINNER — Jim Tustison (front) was in high spirits after winning the Ranger boat at the Musky Open in Eagle River Sunday. Celebrating with Tustison were, back row from left, Muskie Clubs Alliance President Larry Slagoski, Eagle River Chamber

Director Kim Emerson, Ranger Boats representative Steven Lindahl, Shoeder's Marine representative John Koch, and Mercury Marine representative Debbie Priepke.

—Staff Photo By ANTHONY DREW

Article from the:
Vilas County News Review -
August 20, 2014