Mercury pro Casey Ashley wins Bassmaster Classic on home water

GREENVILLE, S.C. - Never in the 45-year history of the Bassmaster Classic had an angler won the championship tournament on his home water, turning the perceived "home field advantage" into a "home field jinx."

Casey Ashley - and his Mercury 250 Pro XS - changed all that Sunday.

Ashley claimed the 2015 Bassmaster Classic championship on Lake Hartwell in weather-torn northwestern South Carolina, locking up the $300,000 title with a strong 20-pound, 3-ounce performance on the third and final day of the event. He finished more than 4 pounds ahead of the field, and he did it with a bait his father made.

Ashley finished with a three-day total of 50 pounds, 1 ounce, to claim his first Bassmaster Classic championship and his fourth tour-level win.

"I know everybody wanted to win this tournament, but they couldn't have wanted to win it more than I did," Ashley said after one of the most raucous post-Classic victory laps in the history of the event. "This is truly special to me. I broke that record of 'Nobody can win a Classic on their home lake.' (Sunday) was just a magical day. I could do no wrong. Every bite, when I needed it, was the right bite. Hometown advantage or whatever it is, it was just my time."

While the rest of the field fished multiple locations and battled to decipher the wildly fluctuating weather and water conditions on Hartwell - a massive impoundment of the Savannah, Tugaloo and Seneca Rivers on the South Carolina/Georgia border - Ashley calmly alternated between two primary areas for two days with a spinner and jig, and caught his biggest limit Sunday. He relied almost exclusively on the simple, three-eighth ounce nickel-plated fish head spinner his father Danny Ashley built a month prior to the Classic.

"It's the silliest, most simple (bait), that we've made for years," Ashley said. "There's really nothing to it. It's a three-eighth ounce head we pour on a Do-It Mold, powder-coated white, and a 3.5 willow-leaf blade. My Daddy gave me about 24 of them in January and said 'You'll probably win the Classic on this.'

"I'll always use (the fish-head spinner) on this lake at this time of year to get a good start and get the day going. Today - with the overcast - you couldn't have picked a better day to do what I was doing all day long."

Brutal conditions test anglers' equipment

The field of 56 anglers in the Classic field started Day 1 in single-digit temperatures, thanks to a record cold front that caused boats to freeze tight to trailers at the launch and delayed takeoff for two hours. Ashley and the rest of the field were faced with frozen-shut live-well lids, and heavily iced-up rods and reels.

"I've never fished in a tournament this cold, so without having any experience, I really didn't know any better," Ashley said. "I had a little bit of water in the bottom of my live wells, and they were frozen solid. I had to go out into the middle of the lake and do doughnuts backwards just to get some water through them to thaw them out. The Mercury service guys told us to at least go a mile or two before you 'power down on your engine,' but all of my equipment worked flawlessly."

Fellow Mercury pro Jacob Powroznik finished fifth with 43 pounds, 1 ounce.

NOTES: Ashley finished 17th at the 2008 Classic held on Lake Hartwell, his rookie year on the Elite Series … the Championship Sunday attendance of 33,868 at launch, weigh-in and the Classic Expo broke the single-day record.

About Mercury Marine

Headquartered in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Mercury Marine is the world's leading manufacturer of recreational marine propulsion engines. A $2 billion division of Brunswick Corporation (NYSE: BC), Mercury provides engines, boats, services and parts for recreational, commercial and government marine applications, empowering boaters with products that are easy to use, extremely reliable and backed by the most dedicated customer support in the world. Mercury's industry-leading brand portfolio includes Mercury and Mariner outboard engines; Mercury MerCruiser sterndrive and inboard packages; MotorGuide trolling motors; Mercury propellers; Mercury inflatable boats; Mercury SmartCraft electronics;
Attwood marine parts; Land 'N Sea marine parts distribution; and Mercury and Quicksilver parts and oils. More information is available at mercurymarine.com.

About Brunswick
Headquartered in Lake Forest, Illinois, Brunswick Corporation endeavors to instill "Genuine Ingenuity"(TM) in all its leading consumer brands, including Mercury and Mariner outboard engines; Mercury MerCruiser sterndrives and inboard engines; MotorGuide trolling motors; Attwood and Whale marine parts and accessories; Land 'N' Sea, Kellogg Marine, Diversified Marine and Bell RPG parts and accessories distributors; Bayliner, Boston Whaler, Brunswick Commercial and Government Products, Crestliner, Cypress Cay, Harris FloteBote, Lowe, Lund, Meridian, Princecraft, Quicksilver, Rayglass, Sea Ray and Uttern boats, and Life Fitness and Hammer Strength fitness equipment, and Brunswick billiards tables and table tennis. For more information, visit http://www.brunswick.com.

Steve Fleming
Communications Director
Mercury Marine
Office: 920-929-5340
Cell: 920-979-7626
Steve.Fleming@mercmarine.com