Mercury pro Lane runs gamut to claim St. Clair title

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Mercury pro Chris Lane had to run his **250 OptiMax Pro XS** more than 700 miles to earn a trip just across the street from his home.

Lane, a native of Guntersville, Ala., – site of the 2014 Bassmaster Classic – put his boat and motor through the most extreme torture test imaginable last week at the B.A.S.S. Elite Series Plano Championship Chase on Michigan’s Lake St. Clair. Over the course of four days on the fishery named “America’s best” by Bassmaster magazine, the veteran racked up hundreds of miles on some of the most treacherous waters ever fished in B.A.S.S. competition.

The result: a first-place finish and an automatic berth in the 2014 Classic on Guntersville, his home lake.

Lane finished the four-day tournament with 82.4 pounds to distance himself from the field by more than 6 pounds, giving him his fifth high-level B.A.S.S. title, a $100,000 payday, and, more importantly, securing the 2012 Classic winner a spot in the 2014 Classic. Lane had entered the St. Clair event needing to finish in the top five to guarantee that he’d fish the sport’s equivalent of the Super Bowl in February.

He did better than that.

“To come in here and win this tournament – basically needing to win it – and make the Classic means everything in the world to me,” said Lane as he goosed his 250 OptiMax to load his boat on the trailer. “I had to give it everything I had, all year long. Who knew that it would come down to the last tournament?”

“There’s nothing in this sport that matches fishing in the Classic. Any tournament fisherman will tell you that. To be able to go home to Guntersville knowing that I’ll be fishing that lake next February with a Classic title on the line is an amazing feeling.”

Equally amazing was the performance of the engine on Lane’s boat.
Launching out of Harrison Township and fishing a wide array of water from Lake St. Clair to Lake Huron to Lake Erie, he racked up 200 to 250 miles a day, much of it on the wicked waters of the Detroit River, which is commonly regarded as one of the most demanding pieces of water to run a boat through. Once out on Huron and Erie, Lane worked his way through 5- to 7-foot waves before hammering his way back to the launch site for the weigh-in.

“I ran some major, major miles – up to 700 miles (at St. Clair), without a hiccup or sputter,” Lane said. “With my Mercury OptiMax, day in and day out, in every single event this year, it got the job done. It doesn’t matter if it was the first event of the year or the last event of the year, we got it done.”