

# Here's Jonny

By JONNY SCHULTZ

Although he's only 11 years old, Jonny Schultz of West Bend, Wis., is a skilled tournament angler and fishing instructor. Hooked on bass fishing through the Bassmaster CastingKids program, Jonny went on to win a national CastingKids title and he has qualified for the Junior Bassmaster World Championship. When not competing in bass tournaments, he conducts fishing seminars and raises funds for children's charities.



Jonny spends most of his time fishing or helping other people learn to fish.

Photos: courtesy of Jonny Schultz



**T**he night before the tournament, I have butterflies in my stomach as I prepare my fishing gear. I grab my maps of the lake and examine them one more time. I rig my rods and reels with the baits I feel will be the most effective in the areas I will fish. I have stocked my tacklebox with all the colors, sizes and types of baits I will be throwing.

Then I'll think about the areas I will be fishing and devise a plan to dissect the area. I wake to the sound of my alarm clock at 4:30 a.m. Today I am going to a Junior Bassmaster Tournament. It's what I have been preparing for, and it's what I love to do.

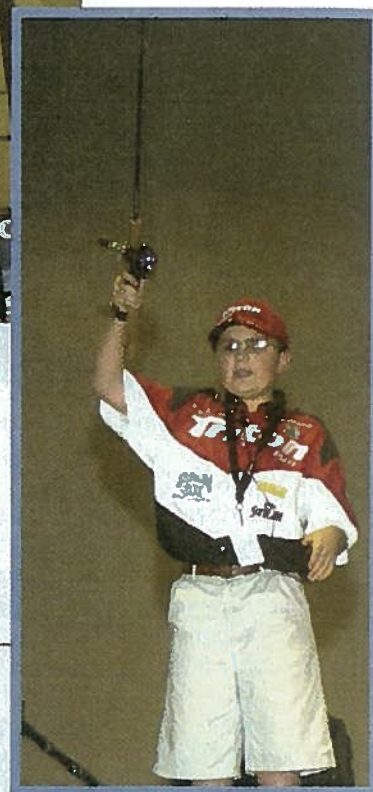
From the start, I have been interested in nature. I attended a DNR seminar to learn more about fish species. At the seminars they had a small fish pond where I could catch small trout. Another activity that I was interested in was a casting competition. I tried the contest and I won, beating a 14-year-old. The man holding the contest told my dad about a program called CastingKids. I attended a CastingKids competition in Madison, Wis., at a sports show. I was surprised to win the



In 2003, Jonny won the national CastingKids competition in New Orleans, La.

Photo: Edward Badham

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event. It qualified me to compete in the state casting competition in Madison.

I was doubtful of my chances at first because the defending Bassmaster Casting Kids National Champion was competing, too. I managed to get into a cast-off with two other kids in my age group. The first kid cast and missed the target. The second kid also missed the target, and I knew I had to land the bait on the target. I cast the bait to the target, and it landed right on the 50 — a perfect score! I had just become the state champion.

The next year, when I was eight, I joined a Junior BASS Club. I couldn't fish competitively because of the minimum age requirement, but I knew this would be a great learning experience for me. The reason it was so valuable was that neither of my parents fish, and they could not help me with my fishing, so I had to take in as much information on the water as possible. This also meant I had to pre-fish the water with the adults from my club. I was allowed to fish when I was 10. I had gathered plenty of information over the last two years, and I even won the Angler-of-the-Year title in my junior club in 2005.

Over the years, I have found that you don't need a boat and fancy gear to become a good fisherman. I still don't have a boat, but I will take any opportunity to go out on the water.

When I am out there, I look for a couple of things. First, I want to know the conditions I will be faced with on the water. What are the water and air temperatures? What is the bait I should be catching bass on in these conditions? Knowing these details will prepare me for any situation I have to deal with on the water.

Tournament fishing can be hard on the mind. You need to be mentally strong to fight the pressure of having a limited time to fish. I have discovered a couple of solutions to ease my mind. First, you can treat the day as if you are pre-fishing. That takes some of the pressure off.

If I'm having trouble figuring out what the fish are biting on that day, I will always try a soft plastic worm. To use the time wisely, try to cover the water fast and efficiently by casting accurately and quickly to your target. When you find the fish, slow down and pick the area apart.

I have been teaching summer school fishing classes for three years to kids ranging from five to 15 years old. I teach them about casting and

**For three years, Jonny has demonstrated fishing lures and techniques at the Classic ESPN Outdoors Expo.**

Photos: Edward Badham

how to use lures that will help them catch more fish. I also cover fishing etiquette on the shore to avoid crossing lines or hooking your partner. I try to educate the kids on what creel and size limits are on the waters they fish and why they are important. I also teach them about the species of fish we are catching. I encourage catch and release and tell them they should leave the shoreline cleaner than they found it. I really enjoy the teaching. I also have given fishing seminars at Bass Pro Shops and for the past three years at the Bassmaster Classic. Casting in the "hawg tank" is a lot of fun. It's interesting to see how fish react to certain baits. I like teaching other anglers about new fishing equipment and how to present the bait to the fish.

Attending bass fishing tournaments is a great way to learn more about competitive fishing. I like to attend the local tournaments and assist at the weigh-ins. I love attending the Classic. The pro fishermen are very friendly, helpful and love to talk about fishing.

I have tried to help out kids in many ways through my fishing. Over the past three years, I've raised money for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and for the past year I've worked to support the St. Jude's Children's Hospital. Raising money for children who need our help is important. I have been given great opportunities because of the sport I love, and I want to be able to help other kids.

If you would like to learn more about me and what I do in the world of fishing, check out my Web site — [www.jonnyschultz.com](http://www.jonnyschultz.com).

**JB**