

## Getting the Last Laugh

My partner Derek let loose on a rant recently, blabbing his big mouth about what a great bass fishing team he and I made. I was smiling, kind of agreeable; until he started challenging my dad and my brother Heath to a contest! My face went pale.

“Bragging rights will hang in the balance,” He continued.

I kicked him under the table. Derek was full of hot air. I'd never out fished my dad. I had no doubt he could stop at a pothole along the way and dangle out a safety pin from an old broom stick and win this deal.

I straightened up just in time to meet my dad's gaze. “Yeah,” I heard someone say, “You guys won't stand a chance.”

“Hey, I thought, “That's my voice!”

I wish somebody would come up with a cure for this testosterone stuff!!!

As if we needed another witness to our pending humiliation, Derek invited our work buddy Keith to go along. It only added to my apprehension.

We got there extra early that day and shoved off. To my surprise, my old boat cranked up the very first try. Yes!!! We'd be getting a much needed head start on my dad's fancy new boat. I put the hammer down, but it just gasp, choked, and sputtered off lamely hitting on one cylinder.

“Did you change out the gas out from last year?” Derek asked.

“Just hush up,” I replied. I had the cover off the motor and was sweating profusely by the time my dad and Heath barreled past us.

Thirty minutes later we puttered past to find them wrangling a big bass out of my secret spot. I jutted my jaw out in protest and refused to look; just kept going. Besides, I knew of another little honey hole on down. Seconds later we ran a ground.

“The water level is down a mite since my last trip,” I said sheepishly.

We shoved back off and resigned to fish my dad's leftovers. There weren't many. By lunch we had boated one little throw-back. I finally suggested we try the other end of the lake. As we puttered back by I noticed Heath had the net out and was scooping another one of my dad's big bass. I didn't hear them laugh, but sometimes you just know.

On the other end of the lake the wind was really whipping up. I had more than a little hesitation as we passed back by the safety of the boat ramp. However, I saw a promising little spot and let down the trolling motor. When it didn't work Derek asked, “Did you charge the battery?”

“Just hush up,” I replied.

As the wind swept us further down from the boat ramp I thought about crying, but I held off. Instead I focused on yanking the pull rope to see if I could get the engine started without a battery. To my surprise, that one working cylinder eventually sputtered to life. Yes!!!

“Let's go on down a little further and try to get out of this wind,” I suggested boldly. I admit, I had more than a little hesitation as we puttered off.

Once at the far end of the lake the wind was a little better, but unfortunately it was also a little shallow. We ran aground again. “I guess the water level is down a mite,” I said sheepishly.

That's when Keith opened his mouth for the first time, “Let's just get back to the boat ramp while we still can.”

It sounded like the best plan yet. I went to yank on that pull rope again and it broke, cracking old Derek squarely in the back of the head. I thought about crying again, but something about seeing Derek rubbing that newly forming knot on his noggin caused me to busted out laughing. Derek and Keith reluctantly followed suit. There, a mile from the boat ramp facing 35 mph winds I finally got my cry; but it was from chuckling so hard!

Thanks goodness for cell phones. Daddy and Heath said they'd come get us once they'd caught their limit. About ten minutes later they rolled up. I didn't see them laughing, but sometimes you just know.

But anyway- I'm so glad the Lord is teaching me to weather the storms differently these days. He said, (*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* **John 16:33** KJV) I'm glad He's overcome. I'm also glad He doesn't fall off the throne and start biting His fingernails every time I go up the creek without a paddle! In the big scheme of things I can trust that my light afflictions are but for a moment. I can keep my cheer. The Bible also says, (*for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* **Nehemiah 8:10** KJV)

So whether you're riding high in a fancy new boat full of fish, or whether you're bailing water in stranded boat full goofballs, trust in the Lord. He is the one who can give you the ultimate victory. Maybe now I can't see God getting the last laugh on my behalf, but sometimes you just know. -Guy Sheffield 6-1-06