

Johnston victorious with overwhelming performance in Bassmaster Elite Series event at St. Johns River

PALATKA, Fla. — Cory Johnston fished a full tournament. But with all due respect to nine other talented and worthy Top 10 competitors, he could've slept in the final day and still won the MAXAM Tire Bassmaster Elite at St. Johns River.

A four-day total of 93 pounds, 6 ounces gave the pro from Otonabee, Canada, a winning margin of 21-2 over Texan Brad Whatley. But Johnston's Day 3 total — 73-13 — would have edged Whatley's tournament total of 72-4 by 1-9.

"Everyone who fishes these tournaments dreams of winning one of these blue trophies," said Johnston, who took home the \$101,000 top prize. "I don't know what to say; it was just one of those weeks that was absolutely incredible.

"People say, 'When it's your time, it's your time.' This week, I couldn't do anything wrong." Johnston's winning margin was the second largest in Elite history (behind Patrick Walters' 29-10 record at Lake Fork in 2020). This is only the 15th time an Elite Series competitor has recorded a double-digit winning margin.

Johnston placed second on Day 1 with 23-3, took the lead with a second-round catch of 27-8, and held on to the top spot with a Semifinal Saturday limit of 23-2. With Johnston carrying a 14-pound lead into the final round, a come-from-behind victory would have required either a stumble at the top, or heroics somewhere below.

Neither occurred and with Johnston turning in a Championship Sunday limit of 19-9, he strolled across the finish line to



Canada's Cory Johnston wins the MAXAM Tire Bassmaster Elite at St. Johns River with a four-day total of 93 pounds, 6 ounces. Here he is shown celebrating with family. (Photo by Seigo Saito/B.A.S.S.)

claim his first blue trophy. With a trio of second-place Elite finishes (Lake St. Clair 2020, St. Lawrence River 2022 and 2023), Johnston said that finally closing an Elite win was hugely rewarding.

"It's been five years (on the Elites) and I've been so close so many times," Johnston said. "To finally get it done, I can't even describe it."

All week, Johnston targeted bed fish in Salt Springs, which runs off the northwest side of Lake George. Noting that he relied

heavily on Garmin Perspective Mode and his Power-Pole Move trolling motor, Johnston said he caught those fish by flipping various worms and creature baits and drop shooting a finesse worm. On Day 4, Johnston sensed his main pattern was dwindling, so he started his morning by flipping spatterdock (pads) on the main river. This produced a couple of his limit fish, including his biggest catch — a 7-12.

"I managed my fish well and made good decisions," Johnston said. "Flipping pads today was

probably the best decision, in my mind, that I could've made."

Of all the Top 10 competitors, Whatley was the one with the highest probability of snatching victory from Johnston's grasp. The pro from Bivins, Texas, mounted the event's biggest comeback by boosting a disastrous 95th-place Day 1 bag of 8-9 with a second-round limit of 20 pounds and rising to 36th.

"I didn't turn it around; the good Lord turned it around," Whatley said. "My back was against the wall. I had a couple of bad events

(Toledo Bend and Lake Fork), got a Top 10 at the Harris Chain and came out here swinging."

When Whatley hit the "dirty 30" with a Semifinal Saturday limit of 31-4 — the event's heaviest bag and Whatley's best Elite Series catch — speculation over his show-stealing potential percolated. Ultimately, Whatley weighed a Day 4 bag that went 12-7.

All week, Whatley has focused on main-river spatterdock fields. Whatley said he caught his bass on an Epic Baits swim jig and

another unnamed swim jig, both with craw trailers and a chrome/blue Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap.

"I love Florida," Whatley said of his back-to-back Sunshine State Top 10 finishes. "If I ever move anywhere, it will be right here." Jacob Foutz of Charleston, Tenn., finished third with 7-16. His daily weights were 17-11, 18-12, 18-4 and 16-11.

Committing his event to Rodman Reservoir, south of Palatka, Foutz focused on chasing bass that were moving with bait schools. When the fish came up schooling, he'd catch them on a Zara Spook. For the ones he spied on forward-facing sonar, a jighead minnow presentation got the bites.

"I had (Rodman) to myself, which is surprising with these guys," Foutz said. "Anytime you have something to yourself, it means one of two things: It's something special or you're not on them at all.

"I was around so many fish. They were swimming around in schools of 30 and 40. They got a little hard to catch the last two days. I just had two 30-minute flurries when I caught the bulk of my weight."

Cory Johnston won the \$1,000 Phoenix Boats Big Bass award for Day 4 with his 7-12. Whatley won the \$2,000 Rapala Crush-City Monster Bag Award.

Whatley also won the \$2,000 Phoenix Boats Big Bass award for the tournament with his 8-7. This event was hosted by the Putnam County Chamber of Commerce.

For more information, visit, Bassmaster.com website.

NFL, NFLPA and 2K announce launch of NFL 2K Playmakers mobile game; New free-to-play card battler game available now

Download new free-to-play card battler mobile game now

Houston Texans Quarterback and 2023 AP Offensive Rookie of the Year, C.J. Stroud, revealed as the NFL 2K Playmakers cover athlete



NEW YORK, NY — April 23, 2024 — The National Football League, NFL Players Association (NFLPA) and 2K launched NFL 2K Playmakers, a new non-simulation tactical card battler mobile game for iOS and An-

droid devices* developed by Cat Daddy Games. Users who download NFL 2K Playmakers and create a game account before May 7, 2024, will earn a special launch bundle, including a Houston Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud Player Card**.

"NFL 2K Playmakers expands our mobile footprint and brings a

whole new way for NFL fans to play and engage," said Ed Kiang, vice president of video gaming at the NFL. "We're excited to see this partnership with 2K - a company with a proven track record at the intersection of sports and gaming - come to life on mobile devices."

NFL 2K Playmakers allows users to collect NFL player cards to assemble the strongest roster on offense, defense and special teams in this free-to-play card battler mobile game that puts

fans squarely on the gridiron. Users can make their mark by leveling up their card collection as they experience a variety of game modes and features in NFL 2K Playmakers, including:

Red Zone Drive Mode - In Red Zone Drive, decisions made on the field matter. Apply your NFL knowledge, call strategic plays and watch your team execute on the field. Draft a custom roster of NFL player cards as you chase the win and earn rewards across different regions.

Seasons Mode - Build your dream team and lead them through an NFL season on your way to a Super Bowl victory. Join an NFL season and earn your way into the playoffs for a chance at becoming a Super Bowl Champion.

Leverage Real NFL Results - Starting this upcoming 2024 NFL season, make predictions about upcoming real NFL games to score points for a chance to win in-game rewards. More information will be available at the start of the 2024 NFL season.

"With NFL 2K Playmakers we're delivering football fans the chance to make strategic calls, build their dream roster and dominate the field all from their

mobile devices," said John Kim, vice president & general man-

"NFL 2K Playmakers elevates gaming with real player likenesses," said Ashwin Desai, senior vice president of games, interactive & experiences at OneTeam Partners, the NFLPA's group licensing partner in the digital games category. "We're thrilled to be working with 2K as they bring to life a mobile game that capitalizes on the inclusion of an expansive roster of NFL players and will test the strategic ability of players worldwide. Our goal is to amplify engagement, realism and overall value in mobile gaming."

ager of mobile at 2K. "We're proud to be adding 'NFL 2K Playmakers' to our ever-growing mobile portfolio in partnership with the NFL and the NFLPA."

"NFL 2K Playmakers elevates gaming with real player likenesses," said Ashwin Desai, sen-

ior vice president of games, interactive & experiences at OneTeam Partners, the NFLPA's group licensing partner in the digital games category. "We're thrilled to be working with 2K as they bring to life a mobile game that capitalizes on the inclusion of an expansive roster of NFL players and will test the strategic ability of players worldwide. Our goal is to amplify engagement, realism and overall value in mobile gaming."

Developed by Cat Daddy Games, a 2K studio, NFL 2K Please see sports-Ent. 5

Email sports news and photos to: MSTsports@prodigy.net
Email entertainment news and photos to: MSTentertainment@prodigy.net or MSTsports@prodigy.net

Do you have an idea to improve your neighborhood?
Do you need start-up funding?

- Resident LED Groups
- Faith Based
- Non-Profit Organizations



Apply for up to a \$2,500 grant for crime prevention projects in your communities.

Eligible neighborhood watch groups should register with their local MPD Neighborhood Watch Coordinator.

Application Portal opens March 15, 2024

Deadline to apply is May 15, 2024 by 4:00 PM

APPLICATION LINK TO APPLY:

Crime Prevention Grant - The City of Memphis (memphistn.gov)

AUDRA.LANEHART@MEMPHISTN.GOV
PH: (901) 636-3708

Matching Donors

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DONATE A KIDNEY TO SAVE A LIFE
DONATE YOUR CAR, BOAT, REAL ESTATE, OR PLANE!

We take donations in any condition, with fast, free pickup.

Every donation is tax deductible.

100% of the proceeds help save the lives of people needing organ transplants on MatchingDonors.com, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



Call us at 781-821-2204

or donate online at

MatchingDonorsDonations.com