

Military, Law Enforcement News, and More...

Alabama's Choquette claims overall title at the 2024 Skeeter Bassmaster High School Combine

DECATUR, Ala., September 17, 2024 — Opportunities are endless when you gather 97 talented high school anglers from across the country along with 26 of the top collegiate fishing programs in the U.S. That's exactly what happened at the fourth annual Skeeter Bassmaster High School Combine. Over the course of three days, Combine participants had the opportunity to meet one on one with college fishing coaches and anglers in addition to competing in three skills competitions and three bonus points challenges.

After racking up 370 total points across three events — Long Distance Casting, Technical and Casting Accuracy — Barrett Choquette of Headland, Ala., took home the Overall Skill Challenge title. The senior at Headland High School was rock solid across all three events and collected 11 of the 15 available bonus points to narrowly edge out Brock Lovering of Lakeland, Fla., for the grand prize.

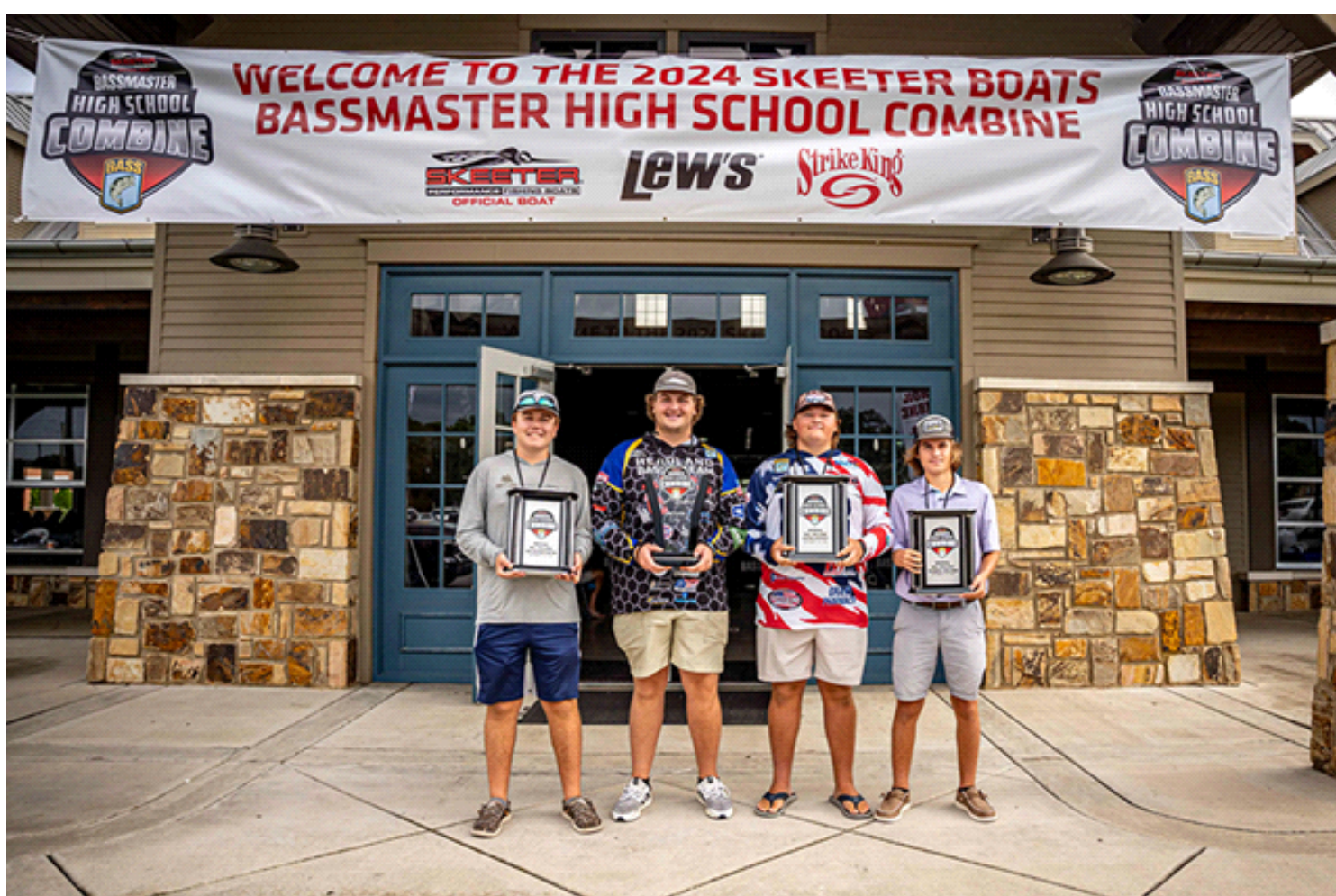
Choquette has been familiar with the High School Combine for a few years now as his brother, Hudson, who currently fishes for the University of Montevallo, attended the very first

"My brother really got me into tournament bass fishing and encouraged me to enter into the Combine this year," said Choquette. "I knew for sure as soon as he participated in the first Combine I wanted to be a part of this event. It's all about getting to meet the coaches and the competitors."

Combine in 2021. "My brother really got me into tournament bass fishing and encouraged me to enter into the Combine this year," said Choquette. "I knew for sure as soon as he participated in the first Combine I wanted to be a part of this event. It's all about getting to meet the coaches and the competitors."

"A lot of the anglers here are anglers that I will be fishing against in college for years to come, so I really wanted to meet everyone and make sure to meet with as many coaches as I could."

As a competitor, Choquette wanted to make sure to beat his brother's ninth-place finish at the 2021 Combine, and getting a good start was crucial to his success. His first competition was the Long Distance Casting Challenge where he made the fifth-longest cast of 57.4 yards. "I knew that the wind was going to pick up throughout the day, so I wanted to knock out the long cast first," he said. "After I got



Nearly 100 student anglers and 26 of the top collegiate fishing programs in the country gathered in Decatur, Ala., Sept. 13-15 for the fourth annual Skeeter Bassmaster High School Combine. (Photo by Chase Sansom/B.A.S.S.)

done with that challenge, I had to go back inside for a coaching visit, so having positive momentum was nice."

After a great start, Choquette moved on to the Technical Challenge where he had to navigate a 20-foot Skeeter bass boat around an obstacle and make an accurate cast into a floating target. Choquette, as well as four other Combine anglers, completed the challenge in 39 seconds to tie for the third-fastest time. This event proved to be critical to making a move up the overall leaderboard.

"The Technical Challenge is really the one that saved me," he said. "I really didn't think that my time was that great at the time, but it turned out to be pretty good. I knew I had to put the trolling motor on 10 and get going. "I got around the buoy, and the wind was blowing pretty strong. I made a long cast but didn't get it in the target, but I was able to get a little closer and make a short flip on my second attempt."

In addition to taking out the competition at the Combine, Choquette was able to meet with a number of coaches and narrow down a few schools that he is interested in attending next year.

"I'm not exactly sure where I am going to go to school, but after this event I feel like I have a lot of options," said Choquette. "I'm really liking a few schools right now, so I guess we'll just have to see what happens next."

Technical Challenge
Drake Fleming of Martin, Ga.,

was the champion of the Technical Challenge with a blazing-fast time of just 33 seconds, which was five seconds faster than second place. The 12th grader used his fishing strengths and his familiarity with the Skeeter Boat/Minn Kota Ultrex QUEST combo to his advantage to take home the trophy.

"We actually fish out of a Skeeter ZXR20 with an Ultrex, so I'm super-familiar with the boat we were using," said Fleming. "I fish on Lake Hartwell a lot so I'm used to keeping the trolling motor on 10 and chasing around herring fish."

The senior from Stephens County High School paid close attention to the anglers that competed in the challenge before him to learn from their mistakes.

"I tried to hug the buoy as tight as I could and was able to hit inside the target on my second flip," he said. "I knew that I could separate myself if I made casts from farther out rather than spending more time getting close to the target."

Long Distance Casting Challenge

With a cast measuring 62.8 yards, Carter Lanclos of Sulphur, La., took home first place in the Long Distance Casting Challenge. Competitors were fully equipped with a Lew's baitcasting combo, 12-pound monofilament line and a Strike King Sexy Dawg topwater. Each competitor was allowed two casts, and the farthest cast was their final score.

Lanclos, a 12th grader at Sulphur High School, tried to relate the competition to the bass fishing that he does on a few of his home lakes, which proved to be a great move.

"When I fish Toledo Bend and Sam Rayburn, I seem to be fishing for schooling fish a good bit, so I'm used to making extremely long casts," said Lanclos. "I knew the wind was going to be a big factor, so I tried to knock out the Long Distance (Casting) challenge as quick as I could."

Also, ensuring his Lew's combo was set to the appropriate settings was a key to maximizing casting distance. "It took me a long time the night before to make sure my settings were going to be just right," he said. "I knew that we were going to be throwing a bigger topwater, so everything needed to be just right to compete."

Casting Accuracy Challenge

The Casting Accuracy Challenge proved to be the most challenging of all the competitions. Each competitor had two minutes to pitch or cast a 1/2-ounce jig with their Lew's combo into five buckets of water while standing on the casting platform. Each pitch or cast was progressively farther away from the platform.

While this challenge stumped quite a few competitors, Tanner Mason of Grant, Ala., knocked it out of the park with a dominating score of just 32 seconds. This score was 39 seconds faster than the second-place score.

Having a background in shallow-water flipping and pitching

came in clutch for the 12th grader from Dar High School.

"I consider Lake Guntersville my home lake, and I love to flip mats up the river," said Mason. "I had a buddy that competed in the Combine a few years ago, so I knew that my best chance to win would be in this competition."

The 2024 Skeeter Bassmaster High School Combine was hosted by Decatur Morgan County Tourism.

**For more information, visit Bassmaster.com/high-school.
2024 Bassmaster High School Combine Title Sponsor: Skeeter
2024 Bassmaster High School Combine Gear Partners: Lew's, Strike King
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About B.A.S.S. B.A.S.S., which encompasses the Bassmaster tournament leagues, events and media platforms, is the worldwide authority on bass fishing and keeper of the culture of the sport, providing cutting-edge content on bass fishing. Headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., the 500,000-member organization's fully integrated media platforms include the industry's leading magazines (Bassmaster and B.A.S.S. Times), website (Bassmaster.com), TV show, radio show, social media programs and events.

For more than 50 years, B.A.S.S. has been dedicated to access, conservation and youth fishing.

B.A.S.S. LLC names Phillip Johnson Chief Operating Officer



Phillip Johnson

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., September 23, 2024 — B.A.S.S., the world's largest fishing organization, today announced the promotion of Executive Vice President Phillip Johnson to Chief Operating Officer. For the past two years, Johnson has steered the organization's content strategy, advertising, events, marketing and communications. Now, he will also assume management responsibilities of the Bassmaster Tournament operations as well as focus on new processes to improve and expand total business operations.

"I am pleased to announce the promotion of Phillip Johnson to Chief Operating Officer, B.A.S.S. LLC," said B.A.S.S. CEO Chase Anderson. "I have known and worked with Phillip for well over a decade. He has been a trusted executive for the Anderson Companies for 17 years, at one time leading a department of more than 7,000 associates. I have been very impressed with Phillip's work at B.A.S.S. as he has spearheaded the reorganization of business operations."

"Phillip's leadership and collaborative approach to working with our associates and customers is taking our company to a new level," Anderson added. "Phillip's new expanded role will give him management responsibilities over our operations, and I'm confident we will continue to evolve with an 'outside-in' culture and maintain our position of strength and leadership in our industry."

Johnson's 25 years of experience in sales and operations management will prove vital to B.A.S.S., as the organization continues to focus on growing the sport and more completely engaging current participants and fans. He will continue to play a crucial part of ad and sponsorship sales, events and content, and has also played a vital role in building the organization's relationship with FOX Sports, which recently led to a contract renewal with increased coverage that has the potential to deliver the biggest audience the sport has ever seen.

Sen. Blackburn introduces bill to hold VA accountable ... from sports-Military 2

at its central office.

•If there are VA budget shortfalls outside of regular order, this legislation would restrict bonuses for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees in the VA's central office as well as employ-

ees at the Office of Management and Budget.

CO-SPONSORS

This legislation is also co-sponsored by **Senators Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Tommy Tuberville**

(R-Ala.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.).

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