

## "Lady Bass Anglers Weigh in on 'Classic Announcement'"

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BASS recently took the next step towards nurturing its Women's Bassmaster Trail into something special. In mid-October, the Florida-based tournament giant announced a new format that will reserve one of 51 slots at the 2009 Bassmaster Classic for the 2008 WBT Angler of the Year.

The AOY race will be determined by a points system that weighs heavily on consistency. The lady angler who finishes highest in the points after five WBT qualifying events in 2008 will earn an automatic berth to the 'Classic the following year.

It will be a first for BASS and lady anglers, alike. Never before has a woman competed in the 'Classic. Nor has a woman ever had the opportunity to fish for a \$500,000 cash prize in such a high-profile event.

"Next year promises to be a historic year, with the first female angler qualifying for the Bassmaster Classic," said Tom Ricks, vice president and general manager of BASS. "The WBT continues to receive some well-deserved attention and we are excited about this opportunity for the circuit to grow."

So are the ladies. Sheri Glasgow of Muskogee, Okla., won the 2007 WBT AOY title. Glasgow summarized the news from BASS as "huge."

"A 'Classic berth gives us a platform we've never had before to let people see we're serious about the sport — not only that the sport can be enjoyed and appreciated by women — but that we can compete in the sport."

Debra Hengst is a Texas-based pro who has been competing in tournaments since 1995. She has been following the WBT since its inception in 2006.

Hengst said she applauds BASS' efforts to promote women's fishing and appreciates the door that has been opened for lady anglers by making a slot available at the 'Classic.

"The first woman to qualify for the 'Classic is definitely going to have a lot of pressure on her from the media," Hengst said. "Personally, I hope it's me. This is going to be a great step up for our sport."

Lady bass pros have a deep history of spending a lot to fish for a little. The trend dates back to the days of Bass N' Gals, Lady Bass and the Women's Bass Fishing Association, all them now defunct.

Women's tournament trails have never paid much to competitors as compared to men's tournament circuits. The reason is tour sponsors are reluctant to dump as much money into women's tournament trails.

BASS is still hopeful the WBT will eventually change that. The circuit is open only to female competitors. To learn more, check the Internet, [www.bassmaster.com](http://www.bassmaster.com).



2007 WBT Angler of the Year Sheri Glasgow said BASS' new format that will reserve one spot at the 2009 Bassmaster Classic is definite step up for the sport.