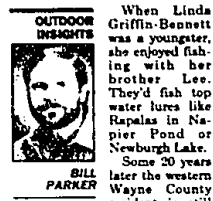


She ranks with best in sport



BILL PARKER

When Linda Griffin-Bennett was a youngster, she enjoyed fishing with her brother Lee. They'd fish top water lures like Rapalas in Napier Pond or Newburg Lake. Some 20 years later the western Wayne County resident is still fishing those top water lures, and a whole array of others, and now she's making a living doing what she has loved to do all her life.

"I started fishing when I was 12 or 14. I'd go out to some of the little inland lakes in the area with my brother Lee," explained the 33-year-old Griffin-Bennett. "The first time I went with him a big bass came up and ate my lure and broke my line. I was pretty impressed with the whole thing."

So impressed, that she continued her pursuit of those big bass throughout her childhood and into her adult life. Along the way,

she's become one of Michigan's top female bass pros.

Gains national prominence

Earlier this month Griffin-Bennett placed 12th in the National Bass'n Gals U.S. Invitational Tournament on Kentucky Lake in Benton, Ky. That finish, combined with her past success on the national tournament trail, enabled her to wrap up 16th place in the National Bass'n Gals XVII Classic Star World Championship standings. By placing in the top 30 in the national standings, Griffin-Bennett has earned a berth in the Classic Star Championship, Sept. 30-Oct. 1 in the waters of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers near St. Charles, Mo.

A Ranger bass boat and a cash stipend are in line for the winner of the Classic Star Championship. "I was 21st in the standings entering the Kentucky Lake tournament," explained Griffin-Bennett. "I was fortunate and did well enough to stay in the top 30. I'm very happy to be going to the Star Classic. I almost made it

last year, and I've worked real hard this '94 season to make it. I'm real pleased with my overall finish. I guess persistence pays off."

A quick start

Griffin-Bennett started fishing the Michigan Bass'n Gals tournament circuit in 1988 and it didn't take her long to make a name for herself. In 1989 she finished second in the Michigan Division and in 1990 earned the honor of Michigan Bass'n Gals Angler of the Year. She placed second again in 1991 and 1993 and finished fourth in 1992. She is currently third in the Michigan Division with two tournaments remaining.

The local pro has taken her talents to the National Bass'n Gals circuit for the past three years and nearly qualified for the Star Classic last year. She was 29th entering the final tournament, but "had a bad day" and dropped out of the top 30.

That disappointment only fueled her desire to work even harder this year.

"Sometimes it can be really

disappointing, but when you succeed it makes it all worth while," admitted Griffin-Bennett.

Fishing is a family affair at the Bennett household.

"My husband Kalen fishes tournaments too, but he's not as competitive as I am," admitted Griffin-Bennett. He works and goes to school so that keeps him pretty busy, but we fish a lot of open tournaments together."

Griffin-Bennett's niece, Jessica, is also becoming quite an angler.

"Bass'n Gals sponsors a kids tournament every year on Pontiac Lake and my 11-year-old niece, Jessica Johnson (Plymouth), took first place this year," she said. "I'm trying to get her going in it."

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

ARCHERY

JAMBOREE
Royal Oak Archers invites local bow hunters to attend its annual Jamboree on Saturday and Sunday. The event will be held on the ROA grounds in Lake Orion. The two-day event includes a pig roast on Saturday, a 3D shoot both days, a coon shoot Saturday night, prizes, trophies, overnight camping and more, (810) 653-1369.

CLASSES/SHOWS

HUNTER SAFETY CLASS
The Western Wayne County Conservation Association in Plymouth Twp. will hold a D.N.R. sanctioned hunter safety course beginning September 12. The class is open to anyone 19 years of age and older and is mandatory for any first time hunter born on or after Jan. 1, 1960. The class will include instruction on hunter/landowner relations, hunter ethics, safe firearm handling, archery hunting, black powder hunting, survival, first aid and more. There is a \$4 fee and a certificate and patch will be awarded to all who successfully complete the course, (313) 453-9843.

DECOY CONTEST/WILDLIFE ART
Area decoy carvers and wildlife art enthusiasts are invited to attend the 11th annual Hunting Decoy and Wildlife Art Show, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday in Port Huron. Competition will be held in Open, Amateur and Junior divisions and the competition is open to the public, (313) 274-1908 or (810) 329-4191.

HUNTER EDUCATION CLASSES
The Wayne County Sportman's Club in Romulus will offer hunter education (safety) classes on the following dates: Sept. 24-25, Oct. 8-9, Oct. 22-23 and Nov. 5-6. Cost is \$6 and the courses are open to anyone 12 years of age or older, (313) 632-0285.

RIFLE SAFETY
The Wayne County Sportman's Club in Romulus will hold a class on rifle safety and marksmanship

beginning Sept. 12. The class will meet Monday evenings, (313) 532-0285. A class on shotgun safety and marksmanship begins Nov. 21.

FISHING TOURNAMENTS

BASSMASTER TOP 100
The top 100 professional bass anglers from across the nation and 100 randomly selected amateurs including eight from the O&E area will compete in the BASSMASTER Top 100 Tournament, through Saturday on Lake St. Clair. Weigh-ins, which are open to the public, will take place at 3 p.m. each day at the North Marina at Metro Beach Metropolitan in Mt. Clemens.

FISHING CLUBS

FOUR SEASONS
The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Maplewood Center in Garden City, 477-3816. Joe Zawislak will be the featured speaker at the Sept. 7 meeting. Zawislak will discuss fishing along the eastern coast of Michigan from Saginaw Bay to Rogers City.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Livonia Clarenceville Junior High School, 420-2233.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS
Metro-West Steelheaders, a non-profit club dedicated to educating the public on improving, preserving and promoting anadromous sport fishing, meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at Garden City High School, 420-2965.

DEADLINES/SEASONS

ELK
Sept. 15 is the application deadline for Michigan's December elk hunt.

SMALLGAME
Smallgame season opens statewide on Sept. 15.

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