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How do you Get to be a Pro Fisherman? Cont. from page 28

Nine events in nine states covering three geographic regions will send winners to the 2015 Bassmaster Classic. And for those anglers hoping to take the next step in their careers, the Opens are the way to reach the most prestigious professional fishing circuit in the world, the Bassmaster Elite Series. Opens' competitors earn performance points at each tournament, and at the end of the season the Top 5 ranked anglers in each division who aren't already qualified for the Elites will be invited to join the premier tour. In recent years Ott DeFoe, Hank Cherry, and Jason Christie followed this path and have made their marks as Elite pros.

Brandon Coulter, who qualified for the 2015 Pro Elite Series after fishing the Northern Open on Lake St. Clair, shared some tips for those thinking about getting into the sport.

First, Lake St. Clair.... There are fish everywhere. Success comes from learning the type of lure for each occasion. He used 4 different lures to catch the 5 fish in his bag on day one of the Northern Open Tournament.

How do you get better? There are so many considerations... and every tournament is different because every lake is different. Weather conditions, wind direction - water temperature - water clarity - sand, weeds, tree stumps, rocks - deep or shallow water - drop offs vs. flat bottom. All things the angler must consider with each and every cast. Brandon said every single minute of a tournament is important. One missed cast and that may have been the winning bass for the day. No sitting down with a sandwich and relaxing for a couple of minutes.

Practice? You need to fish all the time. One angler during the weigh in said "I didn't know what I was doing, I don't know what I'm going to do tomorrow... I'm just going to have a good dinner and big breakfast and try again." Brandon felt most successful anglers have good instinct and then follow it. Whereas a rookie may have



Ott DeFoe



Brandon Coulter

great instinct and is very successful during the practice days, then during the tournament when the money is in play, safe decisions take over instead of sticking with your instinct and they don't fare as well.

Talking with the Pro Elites a couple of years ago, I was told that many of the anglers are independently wealthy. If you're not, you must work hard to get sponsors to help out. Plan on at least \$40,000 to cover your tournament season to pursue your fishing dreams.