**The Battle Begins**

The Oklahoma State University Bass Fishing Club will have its first qualifying tournament at Lake Sooner, Oklahoma on Oct. 24, 2009.

Oklahoma State University has been allotted three spots in the 2009 Boat U.S. Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship in Lewisville, Texas. Club President James Elam said qualifying tournaments are the best way to determine who will represent OSU.

If the teams do well, OSU could receive scholarships and national recognition. “You want your best guys competing because you want to be the best in Oklahoma,” Elam said. The club will make changes to the qualifying system as the season progresses.

Furthermore, the club will use the qualifying system to determine who competes in The Championship. The club has grown rapidly in the past year and a qualifying system is needed. “You need to use the qualifying tournaments to level the playing field,” club member William Powell said.

Elam said Jared Jones, Arkansas University Bass Fishing Club member, created the qualifying system. However, the system has been modified to accommodate the OSU Bass Fishing Club. Five teams will compete in four tournaments throughout the year and the top three will earn spots in the championship.

The teams will be allowed to catch five fish. They will receive one point for each pound, and each point is important because the system uses a running point total. “The tournament will start thirty minutes before daylight and end at 3:00 p.m.,” Elam said, “and the teams will lose one point for every minute they are late.”

Each team will be allowed to drop its lowest tournament score before the standings are finalized. This protects the teams that have a bad day. “Anyone can luck into fish, but its fishing two or three days that sets you apart,” Powell said.

The club has several members who have done well in previous tournaments and are favored but everyone has a shot. Club Vice President Orie Chambers said the qualifying tournament will show who the best fisherman are.

Several club members want win the qualifying tournament because they will be representing OSU in The Championship. “Fishing for OSU is a pride issue,” Chambers said. He also expressed his desire to use The Championship as a stepping-stone, as he wants to compete on a professional level.

Elam said that the qualifying tournaments would be great for the club because it will give members a chance to learn how to fish in a competitive environment. “The crème of the crop will be fishing at the championship,” Elam said, “and the club’s members will need to be experienced in order to do well at the championship.”

Although the group will compete in four qualifying tournaments, each tournament is important and the competition is stiff. The first qualifying tournament will set the tone for the season and expectations are high. Only time will tell what the season holds, but the teams will soon find out what they are up against.