

# BASS FISHING WORLD CUP



Photos courtesy of Joe Jones.

Team Yamamoto was invited to compete in the Bass Fishing World Cup held in Portugal in November '03. Three two-person Yamamoto teams represented the United States - two-time Bassmaster Classic qualifier Gary Yamamoto with wife Beverly Yamamoto, two-time WBFA Champion Judy Wong with Chief George Braswell and '04 Classic qualifier Ben Matsubu with Pro-Staffer

Joe Jones. It should be noted that '02 Classic qualifier Ron Colby was originally chosen to fish with Ben Matsubu - a scheduling conflict prevented him from going - darn the luck; I was chosen to go in his place. Thank you, Ron!

I arrived in Portugal carrying a very large suitcase full of Senkos, Kut-Tails and Hula Grubs, and an eight-foot tube stuffed with Allstar rods. I

expected to see the rest of the team since their flight was due an hour prior to mine - I cleared Customs, walked into the terminal to hear someone shouting, "Gary Yamamoto!" I didn't see Gary anywhere, and then realized they were calling to me because of my Yamamoto jacket. They turned out to be Herminio and Lois Santo from the Portugal Bass Federation, there to pick up the team and take us to the hotel.

They told me the other Team members were delayed, so Lois waited for the others while Herminio drove me several hours from the airport to the hotel, overlooking the lake. On the drive I learned from Herminio that the folks in Portugal are just as serious about tournament fishing as we are in the States. In fact, Herminio and several others have been members of B.A.S.S. since the early 1970's, and Herminio had attended several Classics. I struck up a friendship with Herminio that I know will last a lifetime.

The next day was "training day" or what we call practice day. All teams were given one day of official practice on the tournament lake, Lake Cabil, a deep, clear, mountainous lake with very little shallow cover. Ben and I (the rest of the team arrived late the evening before) began the day throwing spinnerbaits and cranks to the shoreline - no luck. We changed tactics and had some luck drop-shotting deep drop-offs, ledges and points.



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We searched for concentrations of fish, and finally located an area where fish were stacked like cordwood. We were excited and felt that spot could be enough to give us the win. At day's end the Team convened to compare notes and share methods and locations. We

were there representing the United States and our goal was to bring the World Cup to America as a team.

At that time Ben and I were notified that the spot we worked so hard to locate, the one with the concentration of fish, was off limits. We decided that we'd just have to locate other areas similar to our honey hole, and hope they held fish too. We retired to our rooms where Ben and I prepared our rods for day one. We re-spoiled with Sugoi 6-pound Drop-Shot line, tied on a #4 Gamakatsu Drop-Shot hook and Tungsten Drop-Shot weights - we were ready.

**Day One** - Ben and I decided before blast-off that we'd go just outside the off-limits area and try our luck. We located the hotspot and were culling in two hours! Each time one of us caught a bass the spectators on the hill above us would clap and cheer. Gary and Beverly Yamamoto were fishing across the Lake from us near a small island. We knew by the reaction of the spectators that they were catching fish too. In fact, the spectators

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would shout down to us, "Gary just caught one!"

We decided to leave the spot and save some fish for the next day, so we went "pre-fishing." We met Gary and Beverly on the water later that day, and Gary was quick to tell us he hadn't had much fishing time - he'd been too busy netting Beverly's fish. At the end of Day One, Ben and I were in second, Gary and Beverly were in seventh, and Judy and Chief George were in fourteenth.

**Day Two** – Ben and I tried an area across the lake, but didn't have much luck so we quickly went back to our Day One honey hole. Sure enough, we were culling after an hour's drop-shotting with a four-inch Kut-Tail, purple w/blue flake (234). We culled fish all day, gaining only a few ounces at a time.

Later we ran into Judy and Chief George who had just caught a nice

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bass in about 50 feet, but the fish didn't survive. Chief George said the fish "exploded" before they could deflate it. At the weigh-in Ben and I slipped to third, Gary and Beverly moved up to a close fourth, and Judy and Chief George held down fifteenth place.

**Day Three** - The final day with Ben and me less than a pound out of first. We felt good about our chances that morning as we headed to our hotspot. Unfortunately we struggled and had only three in the boat when we decided to move across the Lake to a point off a small island. We found fish stacked up again, this time in 45 feet. We put two in the livewell and culled five times in fifteen minutes, and then left to look for a kicker. We caught several more that wouldn't cull, and then as we were heading in Ben noticed a spot that he felt "looked good," so we stopped to give it a try.

In seconds Ben caught a short and then a bass *inhaled* my bait. I yelled, "Get the net!" The fish broke the surface (well over five) and Ben said, "Whoa dude!" As Ben scrambled for the net I made another crank on the reel and the fish came unbuckled - expletive deleted - expletive deleted. We knew what had happened. That fish would have given us the win. We never got another bite.

We were the second to last team to weigh-in, where a large crowd and press from all over Europe had gathered to see the final day's results. The cheers and applause were loud when we held up our fish - even though we didn't catch the hawg, we finished third, less than a pound from first. Gary and Beverly finished eighth and Judy and Chief George finished sixteenth. The overall results were Portugal winning the tournament and the United States finishing in second.

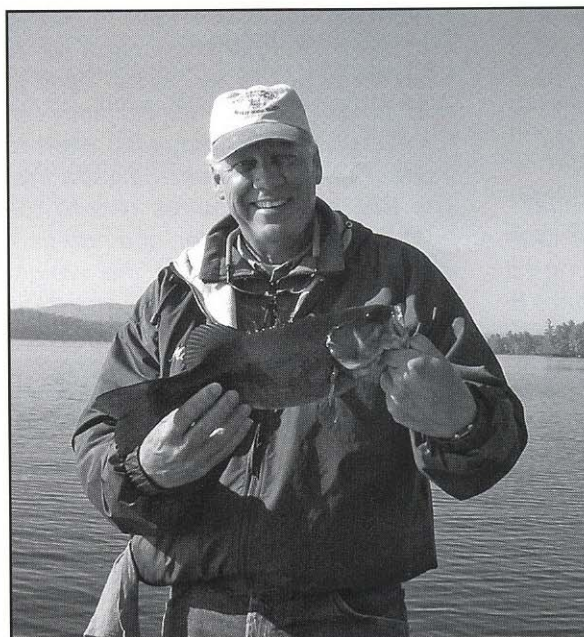
Team Yamamoto congratulates the team from Portugal on the win; it

was well deserved. We also thank our hosts, Herminio and Lois Santos from the Portugal Bass Federation. They made the tournament a success, and our trip a pleasure. 🐟

**The Good, The Bad, The Ugly,**  
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active school during the short time they decide to chew on your lures, you'll be wasting your time.

Jim had told me to bring light line (six to eight-pound), and he promised to bring plenty of plastic baits. Most fisher-



men were throwing some sort of minnow-style bait, but I knew in my heart that I could make a Senko work. (As I write this story the word "stubborn" comes to mind.) Once Jim pushed his advantage to something like twelve fish to nothing, I politely asked (begged) him for one of his anonymous plastic lures. I figured my fingers would burn in the fires of Hell for touching something other than a Senko, but at that point I was willing to endure the pain.

It didn't take long after that to put my first striper into the boat, and as you know, the first fish is always the

most important, at least at the time. But I had figured out what I'd been doing wrong with the ½-ounce jig prior to my first fish - and what the heck - I put the Senko back on (I did change colors from chartreuse and white laminate to 303 Pearl w/gold and black fleck; forgive me, I don't know the number there are too many for me to remember). **GOOD** - Jim was willing to try the rainbow Senko (again, sorry, can't remember that number either). Jim quickly caught on, and I stuck another.

There are stories, along with photos, of very large stripers in this river. But so far we hadn't been fishing for them...or not fishing for them right. At first, I thought I might be writing about snagging the bottom, but Jim assured me there weren't any snags in this area of the river...hmmm. With the boat moving in the current and then the snag (wink, wink), okay so I was a little slow on the uptake. That headshake was **BAD**; I mean really **BAD**. And then it was gone that fast, but the **GOOD** thing was that **Striper-zilla** had hit my Senko!

The **UGLY** thing (other than the auto traffic) was worrying what Heidi (Assistant Editor and wickedly good photographer) might think of my photos of the trip. Like any true fisherman I have an excuse for every negative aspect of a fishing trip. The day was snowy and very cloudy, but hopefully she will find some way of salvaging some of this day's work (fishing and photography can't be considered work, not really, unless you have to catch fish and get the money shot).

All in all, to fish with a new friend and have the chance to be with my two best buds in one fishing season was not only **GOOD**; it was **GREAT!** 🐟

*Too often fond memories are all we have to remind us of those we miss. For all who know and love Jeff and Carol Malkiewicz, this story is dedicated to the memory of their loving daughter, Lindsay.*