

MSOE FISHING TEAM

FISHING GETS EDUCATIONAL

BY TERRY BITZ OF
OUTDOOR CONVERGENCE

The sight of a student carrying fishing poles along with an assortment of books and a laptop might garner a few side looks on the Milwaukee School of Engineering campus. However, it probably does not capture the attention it would have just a few years ago. That's because the school, like many others around the nation, now has its own fishing team.

The team was founded three years ago by a group of students who approached mathematics professor AbdelNaser Al-Hasan with the idea starting a fishing club. The students needed a faculty sponsor and he was a natural choice. Al-Hasan is known by students as a passionate angler who sprinkles anecdotes of fishing amongst the mathematics lessons he teaches at MSOE, a school highly regarded for its engineering academics.

"I use fishing for entertainment in the class," said Al-Hassan at a fund raising event the club held at Pewaukee Lake just west of Milwaukee. "The students asked if I would be interested in helping to creating a fishing club"

The team started out with eight members. It has since grown to 20 students and two supporting professors.

Al-Hasan said the focus for the club is on bass fishing though there is a growing interest in muskie as well.



According to club president, Steven Day, a primary driver behind the interest in bass fishing is due the team's participating in tournament fishing. In fact, one of the main reasons the club started was because Adam Kaufmann, a freshman at the time, had seen a broadcast of college tournament fishing on TV.

"I researched it and found there was a whole series," said Kaufmann, who was the club's first president.

The team participates in the tournament series National Guard FLW College Fishing. It is a large bass fishing tournament with five divisions. Approximately 40 colleges compete in each tournament.

Justin Pipol, a Senior at MSOE, Fishes for Panfish on Pewaukee Lake for a Fundraiser for the MSOE Fishing Team

The FLW tournaments start in the spring and run into the middle of the summer. The team also competes in tournaments sponsored by UW Madison that take place in the spring and fall.

The FLW tournaments are large events that are televised on ESPN. There is big money at stake. At the regional and national events, the winning school can win a Ranger boat along with tens of thousands of dollars prize money.

College tournament fishing has been growing in popularity. While the sport is relatively new to the upper Midwest, schools in the south have been participating for more than two decades.

Kaufmann says that some of the schools in the south take the sport serious enough that they even offer scholarships to prospective fishing team students.

One of the main issues for the MSOE team continues to be funding. The school does contribute some money to the

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club though not nearly enough to cover the team's expenses.

Fortunately, the teams do not need to provide their own boat in the FLW tournaments as they ride with professional bass anglers who did not make the cut from the previous day's FLW pro events. However, the teams do have to provide all their own fishing gear and pay their own expenses to the events.



Members of the MSOE Fishing Team at Pewaukee Lake for Fundraiser

The club has a handful of sponsors and looks to gain more, but admits it is not easy to capture the attention of contributors who may view fishing as a recreational activity instead of a competitive college sport that positively impacts the student's education.

Al-Hasan believes the club has a positive impact which extends beyond students learning how to fish competitively.

"We have had students who have stayed at MSOE because of the club," said Al-Hasan.

Day said he is one of those students.

"I would have left if it was not for the club;" He said. "That is no joke."

As Kaufmann and the remaining founding members, seniors Justin Pipol and Eric Deering prepare to graduate in late May, they fondly look back on the opportunities the club provided for them and the hard work it took to get the club to where it's at today. They say the team's future is in the hands of the next generation of club members and their ability to secure funding.

"(The club) has given us a lot of opportunities to fish a lot places that we would never fish," said Kaufmann. "We don't want to see our hard work go to waste."

To learn more about the MSOE Fishing Team or to contact them, go to <http://ft.groups.msoe.edu>.