

## MILLER GROOMING NEXT LEGEND?



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By Doug Newhoff

W.A.T. Media Director

BELLEVUE -- Harry Miller has won more Walleye Anglers Trail tournaments in his career than anyone.

Many of those victories, including nine wins since 2004, came with good friend and accomplished pro angler Rob Lampman.

But while every victory is special in its own way, the first W.A.T. event Miller fished with his high school-aged grandson Mason Jackson stands on its own. Miller and Jackson won the Genoa tournament on the Mississippi River to start the 2016 season with a five-walleye limit of 26.97 pounds that included an 11.03-pound kicker fish.

"He took to fishing like a duck to water," says Miller, who was also the original founder of the W.A.T. back in 1996. "That seawall at Bellevue is shiny from him wearing out his jeans sliding on it since he was six years old."

Jackson had to prove to his grandfather that he was ready to join the competitive scene. That day came last spring.

"I wanted him to be a certain age so he could absorb some of the knowledge and not take anything lightly," Miller explains. "I wanted him to be mature enough to understand that it's important to do anything you can to help other individuals learn to love the sport whether it's sheepshead or walleye ... and he does."

Miller and Jackson finished their first season the way they began, with another

big win in the season championship tournament on their home waters at Bellevue.

"I tell you, it was awesome," Miller relates. "We do keep it at a fun level, but we fish hard. And with Mason being 16 years old, it takes a lot of snacks and fluids in the boat."

More than anything, Miller wants to pass along some of what he has learned in more than 50 years of fishing the Mississippi. That angling education began at a young age.

"My daddy broke me in when I was five or six years old with a cane pole and creek fishing," Miller explains. "That got me really started. Then in the 50s when we had to oar our boat out to fish the sloughs, that was a real thrill for me just to get off the bank."

"I still remember when we got our first three-horsepower Sea King. If you wanted reverse, you turned the engine around. When I talk to the grandkids about the olden days, our telephone number was three longs and a short." Miller began fishing small local tournaments in the late 1970s and then developed the W.A.T. in 1996 as a venue to provide some of the accomplished and aspiring area anglers with exposure on a regional and national level. Meanwhile, he won his share of events, including two championship tournaments, with partners like Robert Schmerbach, Lampman and now Jackson.

"What I'm really pleased about is seeing some younger people getting into it," says Miller. "My grandson, Paul Devoss' daughter Katie, some of the young teams that are fishing now. They are the future of our sport."

Meanwhile, Miller's love for the mighty Mississippi is as strong as ever.

"I feel like it exposes you to five different levels of walleye fishing -- water level, water clarity, wind factor, structure and current," he relates. "To me, a river fisherman can adapt to a lake a lot faster than a lake fisherman can adapt to a river."

"My best info to these young anglers is learn to read the water, especially on a river system."

And the keys to Miller's sustained success?

"I would honestly say it's nothing more than time on the water," he offers. "I'm not very good on electronics, although my grandson knows it great. It's awesome what you can do with electronics, but my advantage is time on the water. I've been on that water since I was a very young individual."

"We are fortunate that we live in this Midwest area if you are an outdoorsperson. Some people have to drive two to four hours to go to some water."

"My own personal feeling is that the slot in these pools of the Mississippi (from

Dubuque south) has really worked. Our walleye fishing is really awesome compared to what it was 20 years ago when you struggled to catch 23-, 24-, 25-inch fish.

"Today you can take 10-, 12-year-old kids out and catch some walleyes. That's something that will keep them interested in fishing, too."