

Father-Daughter Team Faces Fishing Challenges Together

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
ANTHONY VINSON SMITH



Caitlan and Scott Rubow make up the Challenger Fishing Team.

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Caitlin is one young lady not afraid of bait - nor gruelling fishing tournament hours.

A polite, athletic and bright young lady, Caitlin attends W.C. Friday Middle School in Dallas, NC, is on the Gymnastics Competition Team, plays softball, the piano and enjoys riding her American saddlebred horses, Lucy, Lady and Commander. The family also has two dogs, a cat, and Caitlin has a hamster and two rabbits. With a menagerie like that and Caitlin's fondness for animals, it is no wonder she is thinking about becoming a veterinarian. She says her brother Justin, 18, is great with computers and is a computer technology student at E.C.P.I. in Charlotte. Also an avid fisherman, he used to fish with dad in some of the saltwater tournaments during the '90s.

Caitlin's dad Scott is a veteran tournament angler who started fishing king mackerel tournaments in 1979. Born in Wisconsin, his fam-



Rubow readies his equipment.

ily moved south during Rubow's youth. Their destination was South Florida outside of Miami in the mid-60s. The young Rubow inherited his passion for fishing from his dad. He points out that with the Everglades on one side and the Gulf on the other, fishing was their life. Rubow went to school near Asheville at Black Mountain's Montreat-Anderson College. His affiliation with Acosta Sales & Marketing brought them to Charlotte, and eventually Dallas, NC where Captain Rubow, his wife Lisa, Caitlin and her brother Justin now reside.

Captain Rubow is a member and big fan of the National Striped Bass Association (NSBA). He says it really promotes family and fellowship. The organization was formed in September 2001 to unite local striper clubs and to protect and preserve the freshwater

Dark and foreboding rain clouds hover on the horizon. A blue Expedition sits backed on a Mooresville boat ramp while a figure in a raincoat readies his vessel for a morning on Lake Norman. Meanwhile in the truck's cab, a young girl snoozes contentedly in the front passenger seat oblivious to the blustery weather. She is Caitlin, daughter of Captain Scott Rubow and the younger half of the Challenger Fishing Team. It is late summer and not exactly prime time for striper fishing, but the Rubows have graciously agreed to meet and chat with me despite the conditions.

"There are not a lot of female fishermen, and there are definitely not a lot of father-daughter striper teams," Rubow says. Thirteen-year-old Caitlin began fishing with her dad at an early age and gradually became interested in the tournaments. They tried it out as team partners and found they liked it and had fun.

Caitlin says she enjoys fishing wherever it may take place. She prefers fall and spring outings because she is not crazy about wearing the big rubber insulated suits during winter tournaments. She is less squeamish about dealing with baits and hooks than most girls her age. Rubow recalls that on a trip to the beach last year his daughter was fishing with friends at the dock on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). "Caitlin was the only one who would take the fish off the hook," he says with a chuckle.

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lake and river fisheries among some 37 states that stock striped bass and/or hybrid striped bass. Members of "The Lake Norman Striper Swipers," Scott and Caitlin fish about eight to 10 striper tournaments a year and about a dozen Southern Kingfish Association (S.K.A.) tournaments a year.

Rubow uses his flexible schedule and ample vacation time to swing it.

"King [mackerel] tournaments, that's probably the next level. Caitlin enjoys going out there even though it is a little more grueling. You're up at three o'clock, you're catching bait, rough conditions, you have still got to fish. She gets experience out here on the lakes so she'll be ready for the ocean," he says."

Rubow's boat is a 20-foot Kencraft built in Wilson, NC. Ken Vick owns the company and has been in operation for about 25 years. "It's a great boat, I get comments from everybody when I'm out on the water," says Rubow. As far as the versatility, you can trailer it, but it's still big enough to take off shore, if conditions are right. Rubow fishes the 23-foot and under class on the SKA Trail. It makes a great striper boat because you can fish 360 degrees



The team on the Striper Tour.

and that's what he likes about it. Rubow says he would like to eventually expand his horizons by keeping his current boat and move up to a larger center-console boat for the king tournaments.

Kencraft has a lot of notoriety on the coast as far as the Southern Kingfish Association. The SKA has been touted as the premiere saltwater fishing organization in the country. The quarry here is king mackerel, which are abundant and can be found up and down the

Atlantic Coast. In this regard, "kings" have been called "the bass of the ocean," a comparison to their freshwater cousin, the largemouth bass.

Over the last 12 years Rubow has been a guide on Lake Norman and Lake Murray (South Carolina, near Columbia). During the mid-80s Rubow skipped a bassboat and angled for largemouths.

The challenge with Lake Norman, according to Rubow is that when they built the lake they clear-cut so much of the timber that it is not as conducive to bait or forage fish. So you don't have the high shad population like you do down at Murray and other lakes. "The stripers at Norman get up to that

four or five-pound weight and they just stop," he says.

Some folks who have not competed in these events may not realize all the work involved.

"Sometimes we'll leave on a Thursday, pre-fish on Friday, fish on Saturday and sometimes even Sunday. It's grueling, ya' gotta love it, because it's not as glamorous as people think it is. We just enjoy the fellowship, we meet a lot of good people."

The father daughter team hopes to take it up a notch this year, fishing the Pro Cup in the N.S.B.A.

Despite the fact that the Challenger Fishing Team has not actually won yet, they have had several top 10 and top 20 finishes. More importantly they get to spend time together and Rubow hopes to instill in Caitlin some good qualities such as respect for the outdoors. "You know, unfortunately a lot of kids get going in different directions so I just hope this is going to set values for her as she gets older. And again, there're women in the sport but there're not a lot of women. 2006 is the first year that the Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society (B.A.S.S.) will have their women's division. The W.B.A.S.S. will grow our sport as far as the striper fishery," says Rubow. "I think if this is something that Caitlin sticks with, she has a pretty good opportunity to do something with it - if she wants to."

In addition to Captain Rubow's Lake Norman & Lake Murray SC striper guiding, he is starting up Challenger Offshore Adventures based out of Southport/Oak Island, NC specializing in light tackle/live bait fishing for kings, spanish and dolphin and bottom reef/wreck fishing for snapper, grouper, amberjack and black bass.

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