

## Bassmaster Classic In Knoxville Shatters Economic Impact Records, According To Report

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Long considered the most important event in sportfishing, the Bassmaster Classic also has established itself as a huge economic boon for host communities, exceeding economic impacts from every host city for the first weekend of March Madness, according to reports.

The 2019 GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods generated an economic impact of \$32.2 million for Knoxville and east Tennessee, according to a report released today by the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission, host of the 49th world championship.

The impact reflects a 34 percent increase over the \$24 million recorded for Greenville and Anderson, S.C., in 2018. The Classic on Lake Hartwell, S.C., drew a record attendance of 143,000. That record was shattered March 15-17, when 153,800 were counted at the various Classic venues in Knoxville, according to officials at each of the locations.

"The 2019 Bassmaster Classic really blew us out of the water," said Kim Bumpas, President of Visit Knoxville. "The crowds, the enthusiasm, the economic impact were all but unprecedented."

According to the study, the Classic provided a direct economic impact of \$17.7 million and an indirect boost in business sales of \$14.5 million. The event is credited with generating \$2.75 million in state and local tax revenue, including taxes on sales, restaurant purchases and lodging. Classic attendees, who traveled to Knoxville from almost every state and foreign countries as far away as Australia, Japan and Italy, paid for 29,232 room nights in local hotels, according to Visit Knoxville.

"From the first morning, when more than 5,500 fishing fans braved frigid temperatures to stand on the banks of the Tennessee River for the Classic takeoff ceremony, we knew this Classic would be special," said Bruce Akin, B.A.S.S. CEO. "From there, it just got bigger and better."

Mark Ezell, Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourism, attributes some of the success to the quality of bass fishing resources in his state.

"We are grateful to Visit Knoxville, B.A.S.S. and our hospitality partners who delivered a world-class, record-breaking event," he said. "Fishing strengthens our economy and brings jobs to our citizens, and the Bassmaster Classic was the perfect opportunity to show visitors from across the globe why millions fish here each year."

Ezell and Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee participated in the opening of the Bassmaster Classic Outdoors Expo presented by DICK'S Sporting Goods, which drew a record total attendance of 92,819 over three days to the Knoxville Convention Center and World's Fair Exhibition Hall, according to turnstile counts.

Sales were brisk at the Expo, which is recognized as the biggest consumer show in sportfishing. One retailer reported a 30 percent increase in sales over the previous year, and several exhibitors said they sold out of key items the first day. Sales at the B.A.S.S. merchandise booth exceeded the amount at the last two Classic Expos combined.

First Lady Maria Lee skipped the ceremony at the Expo, choosing to go fishing instead with Knoxville pro angler Brandon Coulter. “I grew up fishing with my dad and have enjoyed it as long as I can remember,” she said. “It is always great when a Tennessee city like Knoxville has the chance to showcase our state and its beauty on a worldwide scale.”

Showcasing Knoxville and its fishing opportunities provide additional economic benefits beyond the initial impact.

“What’s really exceptional about the Classic is how Knoxville was positively affected not only during the event, but we expect to see continuing visitation as a result for years to come,” said Bumpas. “From fishing enthusiasts who want to experience the Tennessee River waterways to casual leisure travelers, we know Knoxville is on the map as a premier outdoor destination.”

In addition to coverage in B.A.S.S.-owned media — including five hours of original programming on ESPN2 — the event attracted more than 250 credentialed media from 28 states and six foreign countries.

“Drawing record-breaking crowds for the Bassmaster Classic, bass fishing’s largest event of the year, Knox County once again shines in the national spotlight,” noted Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs.

“What an exciting and thrilling event to host!” added Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero. “The excitement and interest that the 2019 Bassmasters Classic generated among visitors and Knoxvilleans alike could be felt throughout the city.”

### **About B.A.S.S.**

B.A.S.S. is the worldwide authority on bass fishing and keeper of the culture of the sport. With more than 510,000 members internationally, B.A.S.S. is not only home to the nation’s premier fishing tournament trails, but it also boasts the most expansive and comprehensive media network in the fishing industry. Its media include *The Bassmasters* on the ESPN networks, more than 130 hours of tournament programming on the Pursuit Channel, 250 hours of on-the-water streaming coverage on *Bassmaster LIVE* and 1 million monthly visitors to the flagship website on bass fishing – [Bassmaster.com](http://Bassmaster.com). B.A.S.S. also provides more than 4.4 million readers with the best in bass fishing coverage through *Bassmaster* and *B.A.S.S. Times*, and its radio and social media programs and events reach hundreds of thousands each month.

The Bassmaster Tournament Trail includes the most prestigious events at each level of competition, culminating in the ultimate event on the biggest stage for competitive anglers, the GEICO Bassmaster Classic presented by DICK’S Sporting Goods. The trail also includes the

Bassmaster Elite Series, [BassPro.com](http://BassPro.com) Bassmaster Open Series, TNT Fireworks B.A.S.S. Nation Series, Carhartt Bassmaster College Series presented by Bass Pro Shops, Mossy Oak Fishing Bassmaster High School Series, and the Bassmaster Team Championship.