

Chong comes up second best in classic

So close and yet so far.

That was the story describing David Chong's fortunes when he competed in this year's Chevy-Mercury Bass Tour Classic Championship on Rice Lake.

In the three years that the 42-year-old Thornhill resident has qualified for the classic, a second-place effort in last weekend's gruelling three-day competition was his best finish.

At the same time though, the six-year tournament angler came within 5.20 pounds of taking home the top prize, which included a full-sized Silverado and fully rigged Triton boat with a 200-horsepower Mercury outboard motor.

That honour went to Jim Estabrooks of Grimsby who finished the event with 56.30 lbs. of live bass entered.

"Finishing second isn't bad," said Chong after pocketing \$5,000 and some extra money for the big fish pot in landing the biggest bass during the tournament at 5.95 lbs. "But there's nothing like being in first, especially with the separation and payback."

Entering the tournament as the 14th overall seed in the 54-angler field, Chong was third after the first round of action. However, he slipped into sixth place after the second day of angling. With one day remaining, Chong acknowledged he needed to haul in some big fish if he hoped to get back into contention.

"I knew I had a lot of work to do," conceded Chong. "I felt that I would have to weight at least 22 lbs."

As in the first two rounds, Chong hauled in his five-fish limit. And when the final weigh-in took place in Peterborough, his catch was 51.50 lbs.

Among other York Region piscators, last year's classic champion Carlo Alessandrini of Thornhill finished sixth with 43.55 lbs., Paul Kryskow of Bradford was 24th with 29.30 lbs., Gary Miller of Stouffville, 25th with 29.20 lbs., Dwayne Zammit of Bradford, 50th at 6.30 lbs. and Oliver Giggull of Newmarket, 51st, zero lbs.

Entering the tournament, Chong confessed he was a little apprehensive. During the three days he was allowed to prefish, Chong said he didn't have much luck in finding potential hotspots.

"I was just hoping to slug it out and



Mike Hayakawa

limit each day and have a decent showing. Then on the first day everything started happening. I had a 5.95-lb. smallie and a 5.60-lb. largemouth."

Chong felt he had ample opportunities to win the title as he lost several good fish that might have put him over the hump.

"Over the course of any tournament it comes down to about 12 guys who are on fish and who will make the least amount of mistakes. I made four mistakes too many," he lamented.

In explaining his success, Chong relied on his instincts in refusing to vacate a particular spot that he speculated would hold fish. These areas included offshore areas that possessed rock humps and adjacent weedlines.

"It was just a matter of waiting them out," he said.

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