

Float tuber in championship

By **ANDY CRAWFORD**
BASS Times Senior Writer

PENNGROVE, Calif. — Tournament fishing is often perceived as a run-and-gun sport of fast, flashy boats, but one B.A.S.S. Federation Nation angler is proving that it doesn't take big money to be successful.

"I just have an old round float tube I bought for about \$100," California Federation Nation member Pat Wilson told *BASS Times*.

Wilson is just one step away from the 2009 Bassmaster Classic, having secured a berth in the B.A.S.S. Federation Nation Championship next month on Kansas' Milford Lake. If he places the highest among Western Divisional anglers, he moves on to the Classic.

The 38-year-old police officer, who didn't fish a tournament until he joined the Sonoma County Belly Boat Bass Club in 1994, credited his success to the time he's spent in a tube.

"It really makes me methodical," Wilson said. "If fish aren't biting where I'm fishing, I can't just run to another area. I really have to pick my spot where I'm going to fish and pick it apart."

And while anglers on boats can carry almost unlimited amounts of tackle, float tubers



Wilson will represent California in the Federation Nation Championship. The float tuber will compete in a boat.

Photo courtesy of Pat Wilson

have very limited space. "I like to have four rods: I just stick them on my lap and I look like a porcupine," Wilson said.

Surprisingly, that's exactly how he approaches tournaments fished from boats, such as pro-am formats in which he has won several boats.

"When he steps on the back of a boat, he generally has three or four rods and a handful of baits," said Rich Caro, president of the Sonoma County Belly Boat Bass Club. "He keeps it extremely simple."

Key to this simple approach is knowing a fishery long before competition begins.

"I research the time of year I'll be fishing, the predominant species of bass I'll be fishing for and the lake I'll be fishing, and that really helps me determine what I'm going to be doing once I get there," Wilson said.

Although most of Wilson's time is spent kicking around in his tube, the angler has captained boats in team tournaments and other pro-pro events.

"He's very comfortable running a trolling motor," Caro said. "He's got a lot of experience with a boat, even though he chooses not to own one." He added that Triton Boats will provide a boat for the Federation Nation championship event.

Caro said he can't wait to see how far Wilson can go.

"Twenty-five years ago, I would have never thought our club would reach the level it has and that one of our members would make it to the Federation Nation Championship," Caro said.

Caro said he wouldn't be surprised to see Wilson in the Bassmaster Classic.

"If anybody can do it, this guy Pat can," Caro said.