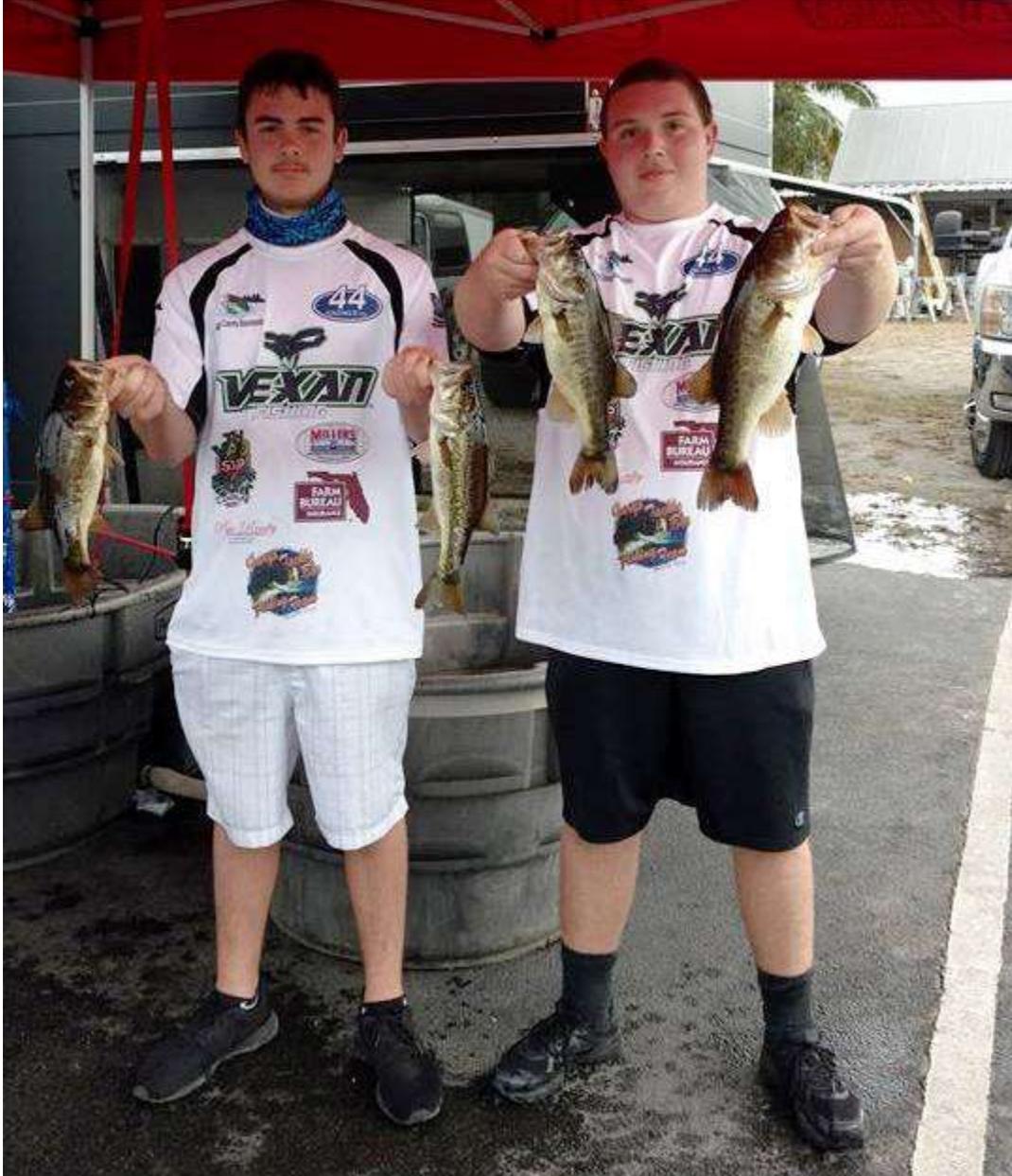


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Two Williston teens compete in national fishing tournament



Collin Rich (left) and Zack Barrera hold their top bass caught in Lake Okeechobee as they started a set of tournaments leading to their final world competition this summer in Alabama.

By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 19, 2017 at 3:37 p.m.

Photos Provided by Joe Barrera

WILLISTON -- Two teenage boys performed well in a national fishing tournament this summer as they represented Williston Middle High School.

Even though WMHS does not have a fishing team yet, Zack Barrera, 15, and Collin Rich, 15,

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listed the school as their home point in the Fishing League Worldwide (FLW) tournaments.

These two young fishermen are participants in the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society's (BASS) Bassmasters High School Nation tournaments as well.

The FLW National Tournament was five days, from June 25 to July 2 on Pickwick Lake in Florence, Alabama.

Pickwick Lake is the reservoir created by Pickwick Landing Dam as part of the Tennessee Valley Authority's properties in Alabama.

The two-teen team from Williston finished 107th out of 332 boats from 33 states.

More recently, they competed, a couple of weeks ago, and the next contest for this duo is on Aug. 26 at Johns Lake in Clermont. Barrera and Rich are part of the Marion County Bassmasters Club for high school students.



Zack Barrera is glad to show a healthy bass he caught while fishing in competition with other fishermen.

ZACK BARRERA

Barrera is a student at Williston Central Christian Academy and Rich is a student at Williston Middle High School.

Barrera is also on the WMHS Varsity Football Team, where he plays right guard on defense and nose guard on offense.

Barrera began his fishing experiences at about the age of 4 years old, he said, when he would go fishing with his father Joe Barrera. The young man said he went fishing a lot with his Dad in both saltwater and fresh water.

He started participating in the tournament competition in January of this year.

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He and Rich competed in the FLW and BASS high school level of competition in tournaments. The first tournament was in Lake Okeechobee.

After winning the ability to continue competing, the two teens went on to the State Championship in Leesburg, and were among the few teens qualified to compete in the FLW World Finals in Florence, Ala., this past summer.

His method of preparing for the contests is to put in many hours a few weeks before the competition on the tournament lakes where he will be fishing.

After high school, Barrera said he would like to attend college and major in marine biology. He also wants to continue fishing in competition as he gets older.

As for advice that he would give other young anglers, "Spend a lot of hours on the lake. Get used to the lakes you have to fish. Just get comfortable with everything and have tons of patience."

Another bid of sage advice from this young man is "Keep a positive mental attitude."

The next FLW and BASS season starts in November.

COLLIN RICH

Rich said he first began fishing when he was around 6 years old. He started fishing with his father James Campbell. Rich also fished with his Mom when he was younger. Her name is Heather Troup.

The 10th grade WMHS student said he started fishing in tournaments this year when his friend Barrera asked him.

"He (Barrera) called me and asked me if I wanted to do it," Rich said. "And I said 'Sure. I'll give it a shot.' And I started fishing with him. And I loved it."

His method of training includes casting lures into buckets placed at different points in the back yard.

Like his friend and tournament partner Barrera, Rich said he intends to go to college and study marine biology. Likewise, this young angler will be fishing in college competition too, if possible.

His advice to young fishermen is "Don't stop following the dream. Keep trying."



(Pictures above and immediately below) Zack Barrera (left) and Collin Rich hold

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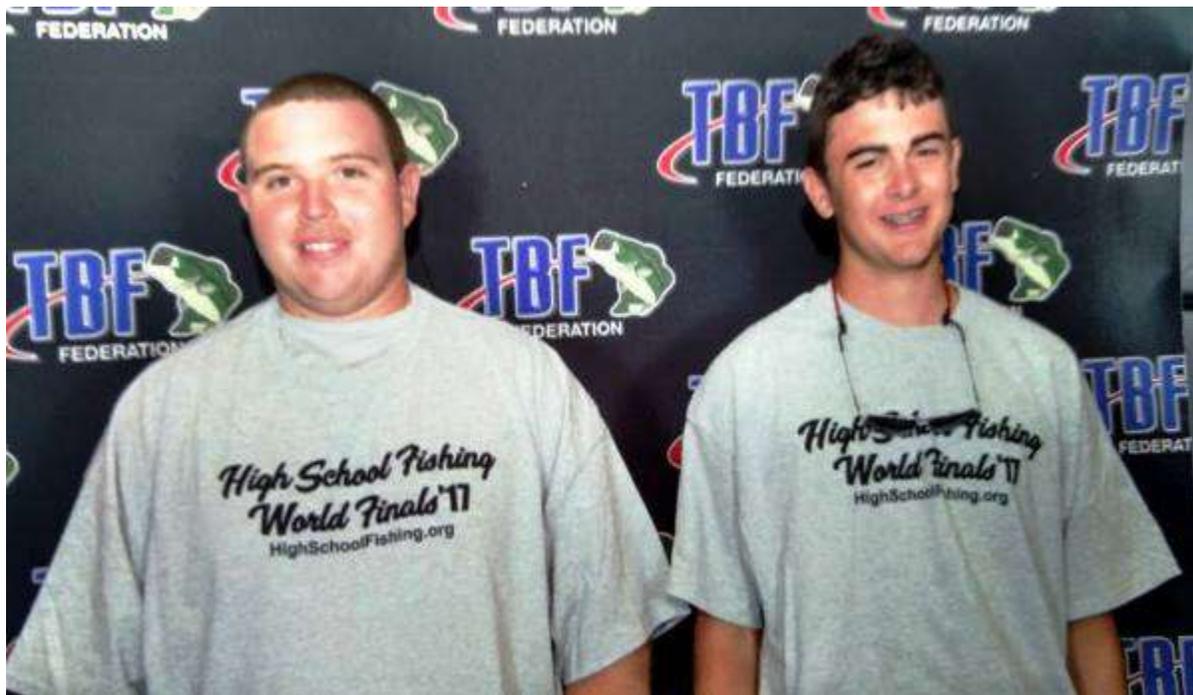
some fish they caught at Lake Harris in Leesburg as they competed and won the chance to continue past this state level of competition.



In the next set of four pictures (below), the two young fishermen (with Joe Barrera in the third photo down) enjoy the national contest.



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