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Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306

Jen Carroll
photo by Chris Johnson



Breaking Stereotypes with a Rod & Reel

By Jennifer Nelson

HAULING 50-POUND BAGS of goat and chicken feed, camping in a tent on your honeymoon, baiting a line and fishing 'til four in the morning—sounds like a guy's idea of fun, right? Well, it's also fun for Jen Carroll who is a pro-fisherman on the Women's Bassmaster Tour, a five-event competition for bass fishing. She and her husband, Jason, live on a farm in Celina, and yes, they spent their honeymoon camping and fishing along the Buffalo River.

Along with her love for the outdoors, Jen's also quite the feminine gal. Just check out her pink cowboy hat or her tackle box. Amidst the lures, fishing line and plastic worms, the box contains lip gloss and a self-installed mirror. Jen isn't afraid to go without makeup, but she

does like wearing it. "My rationale is that fish don't know whether you're a man or a woman, so that gives me an edge because I can enjoy being who I am and still being fashionable," said Jen. "I can still be me and wear lip gloss. I can still be girly and enjoy fishing."

Jen credits her parents with her love of the outdoors and the confidence she has to be herself. Growing up in Oklahoma with 11 siblings, the family was always fishing and camping, and Jen's parents encouraged her in all of her endeavors.

Fishing became more than just a pastime about two years ago when Jen's brother, John, encouraged her to get involved in the new Women's Bassmaster Tour. She learned it was going to be a great opportunity for women fishermen to

gain experience in tournaments. Jen took John's advice and it's been a whirlwind since then. She received a lot of publicity after the first few competitions on the tour and began receiving sponsorship offers. One company, Boats.net, even provided her with a boat, allowing Jen to turn pro. Since then, Jen has received numerous sponsors. "I wouldn't be able to do what I do without them. They're the ones who believed in what I could do when I was nobody," said Jen. "I'm very fortunate to have them."

Fishing in tournaments has allowed Jen to do what she enjoys. "I really love the challenge of it all," said Jen. "But I also love that after the bell rings and the 200 boaters have gone in and the motors are blaring and you can smell the smoke in the air from the engines, you drive as fast as you can to a spot before someone else gets there. It's a rush of excitement followed by complete silence, where you're out there and it's just you and the fish." Jen says fishing has taught her a few things, including to simply slow down. "I find that when I fish, it forces me into the mode of living in the now and enjoying the moment for what it is."

And what is it like competing in such a male-dominated sport? Jen says it's fun. "I know a lot of the guys on the pro tour and they're just so supportive and excited that we're getting off the ground," said Jen.

This summer, Jen is taking a break from the tour to learn techniques for small-mouth bass fishing. This break will also give her the opportunity to work with her numerous sponsors and two charity organizations: Camp Fire USA and Challenge Sportsmen of America. Jen will pick back up on the last stop on the Women's Bassmaster Tour in Shreveport, Louisiana, September 20-22. For more on Jen and fishing, visit her website at www.jenhuntsfish.com.

Jennifer Nelson is a freelance writer living in Frisco.