

Pam Martin-Wells — Countdown to the Classic

By Tammy Sapp

Tom Petty knew what he was talking about when he wailed “The waiting is the hardest part.” Pro angler Pam Martin-Wells of Bainbridge, Ga., knows that feeling, too. Since she claimed the Angler of the Year title last October in the Women’s Bassmaster Tour, she’s had four months to think about becoming the second woman in history to fish the Bassmaster Classic, which will be held Feb. 19-21 on Alabama’s Lay Lake.

In an interview after Pam qualified for the 2010 Bassmaster Classic, she said, “Words can’t describe this. I can walk through the living room and see a commercial on TV for the Bassmaster Classic – I freeze, watch it and get goose bumps. Now I’m going to get them for real. It’s going to be an awesome experience.”

And indeed Pam does have goose bumps and not just because it’s the thrill of a lifetime. The practice period at Lay Lake last weekend was marked by icy temperatures and even snow.

“It was another first for me — first Classic and first time I’ve been fishing in snow,” Pam said.

Despite the falling snow, she stayed on the water most of the day Friday. “I came in about 3,” she said, “and only because my sixth pair of gloves got wet, and I couldn’t keep my hands warm.”

On Saturday morning, she said, the rod lockers on her boat were frozen shut, and she had to pour hot water over her trailer hitch to free the lock and hook up her boat.

Today, as Pam heads into her last day of practice before the 2010 Classic begins, she’ll get another chance to test her strategy in a lake recently described by longtime Coosa River lakes guide Reed Montgomery as “Cold, muddy water.” That’s tough fishing by any standards.

Weather be damned, this four-time WBT winner is no namby-pamby. Pam said she has prepared 110 percent for the Classic just like she does for every tournament. While she hasn’t fished Lay Lake in 15 years, she has had success on other Coosa River lakes including victories at Lake Neely Henry and Lake Mitchell. In preparation for this weekend, she has gathered and evaluated her tackle and considered all the different weather and water scenarios she may have to deal with. In short, she’s doing everything in her power to win.

Pam said she subscribes to the philosophy “you go to win or you stay at home.” And that’s how she’s played it throughout the 22 years of her pro angler career. Pam is committed to doing the best she can for her sponsors and fans.

Her biggest fan is husband Steven, who will be cheering her on at the Classic. It’s hard to say how Pam’s male competitors will receive her, though. Last year, Kim Bain-Moore experienced a warm welcome by many of the men when she was the first woman in history to fish the Classic. There were some guys who fell short of friendly where Kim was concerned, though. However,

Pam said she's fished with these guys for a long time, and she hopes for mutual respect at the event.

"I can't worry about them," Pam said. "I can only worry about me. And my plan is to do the best I can and catch as many fish as I can."

According to a story in the BASS Reporter's Notebook this week, Pam was impressed with the kindness of a fellow competitor Sunday during the practice period.

"He did something that made me feel welcome," she said. "The angler met Steven at the ramp as he was loading his boat on his trailer. He was telling Steven where he'd seen me, and then said he was going to wait with him to make sure I got in all right."

"I don't know him — I know his name, but hadn't met him," Pam said. "It was a nice gesture, and I appreciated it."

Pam said she's looking forward to the slightly milder weather that is forecast for competition days.

"Some sun would be great to warm the water up a bit," she said. "When I was out there, it (water temperature) was 42 to 44 degrees, except one place, where I saw it was 46 degrees."

After the hullabaloo of the Classic, Pam will fish the Southern and Central Open division events this year with Steven, who competes as a co-angler.

When they're not fishing, Pam said they love to duck hunt and bow hunt for deer. She also has fond memories of learning to turkey hunt with her grandfather, which is why she's so passionate about encouraging families to get outdoors and "enjoy what the good Lord above has provided us all."

Pam admits she is living her dream, which she attributes to a positive attitude, belief in herself and faith in God. And though she didn't say it, it's clear her drive and commitment to giving everything she's got is an important part of what makes Pam Martin-Wells a winner.