Atkins finesses way to victory

By Scott Keepfer
OUTDOORS WRITER
skeepfer@greenvillenews.com

Having fished his "backyard" lake countless times, Daniel Atkins is quite familiar with Lake Keowee.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that the Seneca bass fisherman is ready to call the reservoir his favorite.

"It's not that much fun to fish," Atkins said. "It's a very stressful lake. The fish are deep and it's hard to catch them."

True enough, but that didn't prevent Atkins from winning the Bass Fishing League's Savannah River Division season-opening tournament last Saturday at Keowee.

Atkins, a 28-year-old Duke Energy nuclear plant worker, may upgrade Keowee on his favorites' list after out-fishing a field of 300 anglers to claim his first BFL victory. He earned a $4,915 payday by weighing in a limit of five bass totaling 11 pounds, 7 ounces.

"There were areas I knew where the fish were," Atkins said. "It was a matter of catching them."

Atkins' co-angler for the tournament – Anderson's Lesley Childers – had three bass in the boat before Atkins got his first bite.



/ KEN SLOAN PHOTO

Daniel Atkins displays part of his winning catch.

"She was using something different than I was," Atkins said. "Then I ended up catching four fish off the finesse worm she gave me."

By day's end, Atkins had caught seven bass, Childers five. And they both wound up with the same result – Childers won the co-angler division, defending the title she won at Keowee last season.

Childers finished with 10 pounds, 14 ounces – seven ounces ahead of Anderson's Edward Singleton – and pocketed $2,458.

"We stayed in one area all day, then finally moved to another spot around 2:30," Atkins said. "It was a good move. She finished her limit and I caught my two best fish in the final hour."

Atkins caught his fish on finesse and trick worms fished on a jighead between 40 and 60 feet deep. All of his keepers were spotted bass.

Atkins knew he had close to 12 pounds and that Childers had close to 11 pounds, but he only expected Childers to win. Yet Atkins wound up 1 pound, 3 ounces ahead of runner-up Anthony Brooks of Cornelia, Ga.

Randy Childers, Lesley's husband, tied for third place with John Bolton of Central and Easley's Steven James. Each caught five bass totaling 10 pounds.

"I was very surprised," Atkins said. "I didn't think I'd win with that. But it's pretty exciting. I hope I can keep it up. I want to qualify to fish the All-American – that's the goal."

BFL Savannah River Division
Lake Keowee, Feb. 27
Boater Division

1. Daniel Atkins, Seneca, 5 bass, 11 pounds, 7 ounces, $4,915; 2. Anthony Brooks, Cornelia, Ga., 5, 10-4, $2,458; 3. (tie) John Bolton, Central, 5, 10-0, Randy Childers, Anderson, 5, 10-0, and Steven James, Easley, 5, 10-0, $1,256; 6. Chris Baxter, Winder, Ga., 5-9-13, $901; 7. Jayme Rampey, Liberty, 5, 9-10, $819; 8. Roger Vinson, Flowery Branch, Ga., 5, 9-7, $737; 9. David Vaughn, Royston, Ga., 4, 9-6, $655; 10. (tie) Michael Hughes, Greenville, 4, 9-3, and Kevin Dearth, Cumming, Ga., 5, 9-3, $544.

Co-Angler Division

1. Lesley Childers, Anderson, 5, 10-14, $2,458; 2. Edward Singleton, Anderson, 4, 10-7, $1,229; 3. Jaris McGee, Belton, 5, 9-9, $817; 4. Greg Glouse, Liberty, 5, 7-13, $573; 5. Mike Harris, Fairview, N.C., 4, 7-11, $492; 6. (tie) Zach Hyder, Landrum, 1, 7-9, and Phillip Bogart, West Union, 3, 7-9, $430; 8. Michael Hanna, Belton, 5, 7-8, $369; 9. Chanley Barrett, Cleveland, Ga., 4, 7-7, $328; 10. Donald E. Sosebee, Jr., Cornelia, Ga., 4, 7-4, $287.