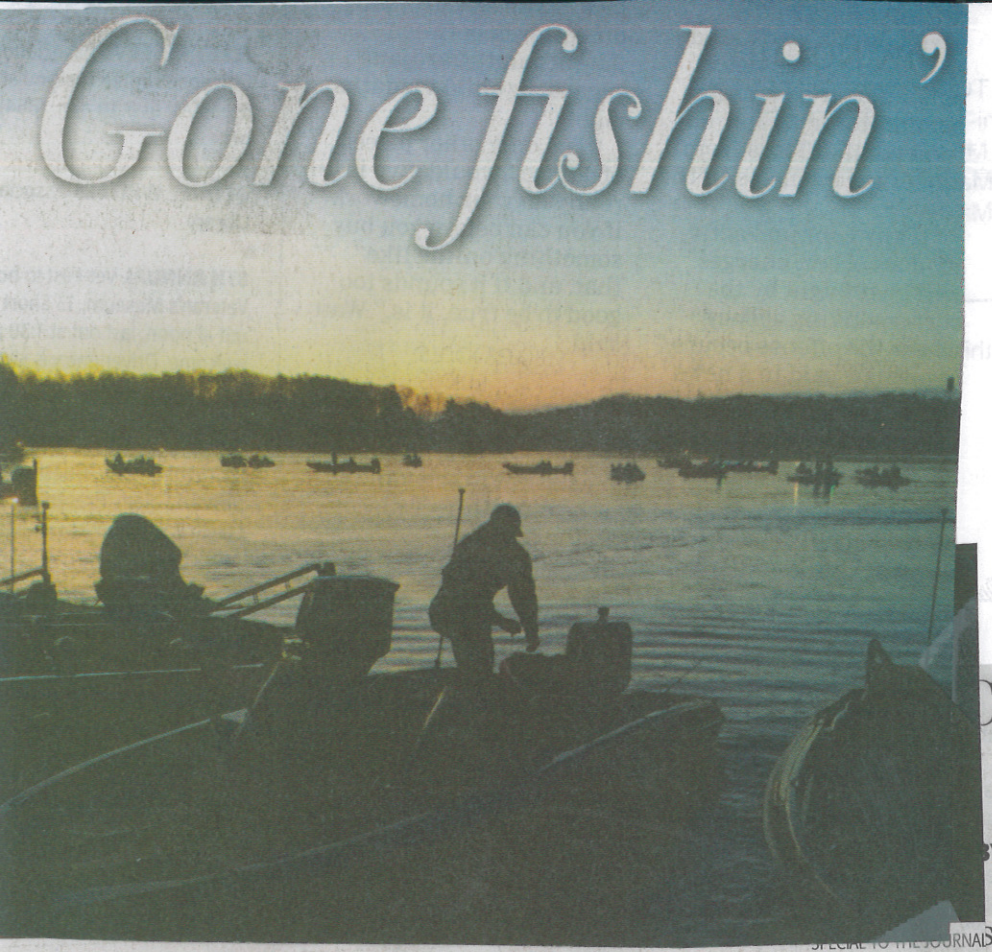
Gone fishin'



SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Anglers from across the nation launched from the South Cove County Park boat ramp on Lake Keowee for the FLW College National Championship early Thursday morning.

College National Championship launches on Lake Keowee

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — At dawn Thursday morning, 54 boats launched from the South Cove County Park boat ramp in search of the largest bass in the lake.

College teams from all over the nation flocked to Lake Keowee for the FLW College National Championship, including three teams from the Palmetto State — the Clemson Tigers, the South Carolina Gamecocks and the Western Carolina Catamounts.

Dedicated friends and family stood alongside the shoreline in the early morning hours to see their fishermen off for the big catch. One of those families had traveled over 17 hours from Rhode Island.

Mary and Bob Desrochers had driven their motor home down to the Upstate to support their son, Dillon Falardeau. They'd arrived around 1 a.m., slept for four hours and were up before sunrise. And they weren't the only ones who made the trip.

Dillon's older brother, Jared, and two of his aunts, Michelle Perreault and Nancy Lamoureux, had hitched a ride with the proud parents. Dillon's girlfriend had flown in from Buffalo, N.Y. And an uncle was on his way down and would arrive by the afternoon weigh-in.

A member of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga bass fishing team, Dillon has ranked as a regional, state and national champion. Just last week he came in third out of 430 anglers in a tournament in Paris, Tenn.

"Dillon has had a passion for fishing since he could hold a fishing pole at the age of 2," Mary said. "He learned how to fish by watch fishing shows and reading fishing magazines, that's probably the only thing he's read in his life because any books he was required to read he listened to on tape while he was fishing."

Dillon's whole life revolved around this water sport. He'd fish before school in the morning and after school in the afternoon.

"He had a collapsible fishing pole, and the school bus would pick him up down the street," Mary said.

"He'd put the fishing pole behind the bus driver's seat, he'd go to school

SEE **FISHIN'**, PAGE **A5**