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NBC Upstate Points Championship Down To The Wire On Lake Keowee

With the points championship in the balance, the top five teams will be jockeying for a strong finish in the final tournament of the National Bass Circuit 2009 Pro Series South Carolina Upstate Division tournament on Lake Keowee Sunday.

"We have a five-point lead and we would love to win it, but our main goal is to finish in the top four Sunday," said Tommy Guthke who is teamed with Jason Woodring in the series. "We'll try to fish a little safe this weekend and just try to keep the points lead."

According to the standings posted on the NBC website, a scant 11 points separates the top five teams. Here's how the points race stacks up going into the final tournament which is also a double-points tournament:

Guthke and Woodring are in first place, followed by Bradley Rhodes and Chris Dorlan just five points back. Bobby Ayers and Ryan Bowman are two points behind Rhodes and Dorlan; Jerry Perkins and Ron Dickerson are one point behind Ayers and Bowman; and Mike Cooper and Joe Williams are just three points behind Perkins and Dickerson.

Guthke pointed out that he and Woodring have not won a single tournament this year, but in 2008 they won two events and finished third in the points.

Although they have not taken any firsts, he and Woodring have come a long way since the first tournament of the year Jan. 18 on Lake Keowee when they finished 14th with four bass that weighed just 5.35 pounds.

"We changed our game plan and focused on big fish after that," he said. "It paid off. We have had four big fish of the tournament in the series and that helped us move up in the points with that weight."

Guthke said he and Woodring are "basically largemouth fishermen," so they have tried to concentrate their efforts all year in dirty, shallow water where the largemouths prefer to hide.

"If we are practicing and we start catching a bunch of fish that are not good keeper fish, we leave those and try to target bigger fish elsewhere," he said.

That strategy will have to change somewhat this weekend on Keowee, he noted, because it is a deep, clear water lake with a healthy population of spotted bass as well as the native largemouths.

"This time of year on Keowee you have to fish deep or fish for bass feeding on top," he said. "We plan to fish for those fish feeding on top, schooling fish. We'll target humps early in the morning and points next to the channels," he said. "We are still going after largemouths, but you have to go after whatever is on top on this lake."

Sunday's tournament wraps up the regular season for the Upstate Division. The top anglers will qualify for the 2009 National Bass Circuit Championship Nov. 13-15 on Lake Norman.

National Bass Circuit 2009 Pro Series - SC Upstate Division
Lake Keowee
Gap Hill
Sun. Jul. 26, 2009
http://www.national-bass.com/2009ProSeriesSCUpState.html

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