BASSMASTER CLASSIC

Weather a 'minor inconvenience' for Classic anglers



BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF

Local pro Casey Ashley of Donalds, right, braved cold temperatures on the opening day of the 2008 Classic at Lake Hartwell.

Bassmaster goes forward with practice plans today

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The weather won't exactly be balmy for the Bassmaster Classic this week, but a chill in the air probably won't impact the tournament or today's practice day.

"When we're planning an event in February, we know that it's probably going to be cold with a chance of snow, but it doesn't really affect us," said Eric Lopez, director of event operations for the Classic. "Weather is an issue the anglers have to contend with, but these are the best anglers in the world, and weather conditions factor in if they want to call themselves the best."

There's a remote possibility that today's practice could be delayed, but that would be attributable to gusty winds rather than cold temperatures. Today's forecast calls for a high of 42 degrees, but wind gusts of 20-30 mph, with occasional gusts of 40 mph or more.

"We're all systems go right now," Lopez said Tuesday afternoon. "We monitor everything and we know that conditions can be completely different in one end of the lake than they are in the other end.

"We want to make sure everyone's safe, but there's nothing from a competition standpoint that would cause us to make any changes at this point. One thing we've seen in the past 24 hours is that the forecast has changed a lot. We have plans and procedures in place, but until we actually see the conditions we can't come up with what we're going to do the next day."

Friday's forecast calls for a partly cloudy day with a high of 35 while Saturday's high will be 48 on an overcast day, with a 50 percent chance of evening rain. The temperature could reach 55 degrees on Sunday, although the Classic appears bound for a wet finish — there's a 90 percent chance of rain.

It was rainy and chilly on the first day of the Bassmaster Classic at Lake Hartwell in 2008 and a few years ago it snowed in Del Rio, Texas, for a Bassmaster event, but Lopez termed it "more of a

See BASSMASTER, Page 4C