

Despite disabilities, Dyer feels called to pro fishing circuit

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Professional fisherman Clay Dyer learned determination at an early age—a lesson he often shares when he speaks to church groups. (Photos by George Henson)

Despite disabilities, Dyer feels called to pro fishing circuit

By George Henson

Staff Writer

ROCKWALL—Clay Dyer believes without a doubt God called him to become a professional fisherman—and not just the “fisher of men” variety.

Making his living with a rod and reel and tricked-out bass boat—complete with a fancy paint job paid for by a sponsor—Dyer would be the envy of most men, except for one thing. He was born with no legs, no left arm, and a right arm that stops above the elbow.

Doctors performed numerous tests on Dyer when he was an infant, but they never determined the cause of his disability.

So, Dyer determined early to “take lemons and make lemonade,” he said. At age 4 or 5, he realized other children could run and do things he couldn’t, but that didn’t stop him from playing their games.



Born with no legs, no left arm and a right arm that stops above the elbow, Clay Dyer refuses to let disabilities interfere with his calling to the pro fishing circuit.

“I’d find the balls they were playing with and figure out how to make them work for me,” he recalled. “I tried to be independent in everything I did.”

He even played T-ball and basketball, always using the same equipment as everyone else because he didn’t want any special allowances.

He follows that same principle on the pro fishing tour. His reels, lures and boat are just like his competitors’, with no special equipment or tailoring.

He started fishing for catfish and bream at age 5 and began fishing in tournaments at about 14.

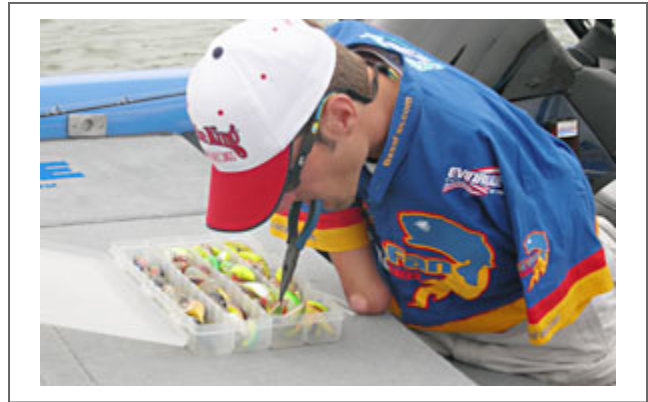
“I’ve tried not to ever let adversity get me down, but push through the adversity,” he said.

“There came a time when I realized either I can choose to be independent, or I can be codependent and have someone else meet all my needs. I decided I wanted to be independent and show people that I could do things.”

One thing he did was go to church with his family, but like many young men, he went through a period in his teen years when he did things he regrets now.

“During my teenage years, I got sidetracked and got involved in things I shouldn’t be doing, but thankfully never drugs or anything like that. Mostly, I was running with the wrong people,” Dyer recalled.

In June following his high school graduation, he was invited to a youth rally, where he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.



He recalls that day vividly, feeling unnaturally nervous and apprehensive. Throughout the rally, he said, the feelings only got more severe.

“I just couldn’t get comfortable, and when the prayer they had at the end was over, I looked up, and I was all by myself, everyone else was at the altar,” he said.

At the altar, a man he had known for most of his life greeted him. “How’s life going?” he asked.

Dyer replied, “It’s going good.”

“No, it’s not,” the man responded.

“I had never had anyone talk that boldly to me before,” Dyer recalled. He made his profession of faith that night and never has looked back.

“When you feel that much power, that much peace, there’s no words to describe it to let anyone know how I felt,” he said. Dyer describes the last 10 years as “the most incredible ride” imaginable. Soon after his conversion, he asked God how he wanted to use him. He vividly remembers a dream in which he saw himself in a shirt with sponsors patches all over it.

“The only two types of people who I had ever seen wearing those kind of shirts were professional fishermen and NASCAR drivers, and I had a feeling it wasn’t NASCAR,” he said with a grin.

But he faced an obstacle.

“Pro bass fishing takes two things, one of which I did not have. It takes a whole lot of commitment and it takes a big-time sponsor, because it takes a whole lot of money,” he said.

That year, he took all the money he had and competed in the Alabama state championship bass tournament. Sponsors at the tournament contacted Dyer and asked him to represent them. Since they were reputable companies, he agreed.

“It’s not about the national exposure for Clay Dyer, but a means of drawing people to Christ,” he said. “People ask me why I fish, and I tell them, it’s my witnessing field, my platform for testifying about what God has done in my life and what he can do in other people’s lives.”

While he loves fishing, he says it’s more important that he knows he is in the center of God’s will for his life.

“I ask God each day, ‘God, is this your will for my life?’ And over and over, he has confirmed it for me,” Dyer said.

Not only has God allowed him to be a witness on the weigh-in stand, but also in the boats with his fellow competitors, many of whom are not Christian.

Dyer has fished primarily in the Stren fishing series, but he also has competed in big-time Wal-Mart FLW events as well.

He’s had 25 first-place finishes and another 25 to 30 top-10 finishes during his career—quite an accomplishment for a guy who ties on lures many times each day using only his mouth and tongue.

Dyer describes that process when he speaks to churches and men’s group and shares his testimony. “I hook myself almost every time I re-tie so that I

can be on the weigh-in stand and be a witness for Christ. I sometimes then ask what kind of effort they are willing to go through so that they can testify to the power of Christ," he said.

One question he often is asked is whether he ever was angry at God for the body he was given, and he said he honestly never has been.

"I don't like drawing attention to myself, but I've often felt like God has made me this way so he could use me the way he wanted. If I had been born differently, I probably wouldn't have the opportunities I've had," Dyer said.

For information about Dyer's availability to speak to church groups, call SMG Outdoors at (214) 632-4416.

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