

TakeMeFishing.org presents *Recasting a Sports Star*

BASS MASTER

Ever since his childhood in the South Carolina Low Country, wide receiver A.J. Green has loved fishing for largemouth and stripers

A.J. Green is all about the big catch. On the football field, that means leaping one-handed touchdown receptions, 2,619 career receiving yards in three seasons at the University of Georgia and a bright future with the Cincinnati Bengals, who took him with the fourth pick in this year's NFL Draft.

Yet Green also has an off-field definition for "big catch" that involves a rod and reel, a lake full of bass and his father, Woodrow, or his friends in the boat with him. Ask him about fishing, and he easily and fondly recalls the trophy largemouth bass he caught while fishing with his father around his home in Summerville, S.C., about 25 miles northwest of Charleston. "Ten pounds," notes Green. "I caught him on bait—a live minnow—in a little pond out in the country."

"We'd eat those bass," Green says, so catching one big enough to take home meant the world to him.



**AFTERNOON
RETREAT:** Green and his friends enjoyed fishing Lake Pleasant.

Green's home turf is commonly considered part of South Carolina's Low Country. The area is famous for its culture and cuisine, and the region's numerous small lakes and water holes have some tremendous bass roaming around them.

At age 11, Green recalls, he caught his first big largemouth. "We'd eat those bass," he adds, so catching one big enough to take home meant the world to him.

Father and son would also try to outdo each other on the water. It's not really surprising that an elite athlete would have a competitive streak. But Green learned from a very talented teacher. "He's a better fisherman," Green says of Woodrow. "He'd always win."

When A.J. Green reached Summerville High, his football career took off, but he never lost his love of the bass water. Earlier this year, while working out in Phoenix ahead of the NFL combine, Green befriended a couple of other players training in the area who also shared a love of fishing.

Anytime Green needed a break from the challenges of grueling physical training sessions and the emotional pressures that come with preparing for the draft, he and his new fishing buddies would grab rods and jump in a boat. "We fished Lake Pleasant a couple of times," Green says, referring to a reservoir 30 miles north of Phoenix that offers healthy populations of striped and largemouth bass. "After a long workout, we'd go out on the boat, just fishing and talking."

Green and his mates used bait—Green's childhood specialty—and got into the fish. But they left aside any hint of competition, focusing instead on the pleasures of a peaceful afternoon with friends on the water. "Just fishing," says Green, "and chillin' with the guys."

That kind of game plan works every time. No doubt Woodrow Green would approve. ●



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