

# Fishing leads Bila to Drury University



Louisburg senior Brock Bila has racked up a lot of accomplishments in his young fishing career and he is excited to take the next step as he signed his letter of intent to join the bass fishing team at Drury earlier this month.

Fishing has been a big part of Brock Bila's life for as long as he could remember.

So when it came down to figuring out what to do after high school, it only made sense that fishing was involved somehow. For some, deciding what to do after graduation is one of the most stressful decisions they will have to make.

For Bila, it was one of the easiest.

During a signing ceremony in front of family and friends on April 3, Bila signed his letter of intent to join the bass fishing team at Drury University in Springfield, Mo. It was a moment that was a long time coming for the Louisburg High School senior.

"This is a huge step for me," Bila said. "Figuring out where I was going to college and pursue my fishing dreams is a big deal. I didn't know the team I was going to go to and how I

was going to go about making the decision. It is a relief knowing that I am going to go to college in Springfield, fish on the Drury team and it just makes me really happy.”

Bila, who is a state fishing champion on the high school and adult level, had several choices to choose from, but when it came down to it Drury made the most sense as it is located near the Lake of the Ozarks.

“There were 5-plus schools that I was considering, but Drury is just the best option for me because of the presence that team has in the fishing industry, their coach and just being able to be around all those lakes,” Bila said.

“Drury is currently 21<sup>st</sup> in the nation in bass fishing and they have a great team. K-State was another option for me, but the reason I didn’t go that route was because Drury has a selected team and you don’t have to fish any qualifiers to be a part of their team. At K-State you have to fish the qualifier to get on the team to be able to fish in the tournament. Drury was just a better fit.”

Bila also hopes fishing in college will open new doors for him and his future. He will be a part of Drury team that will travel all over the country competing in tournaments and will allow him to fish in different climates.

He also has a dream of fishing professionally when he gets out of college, but if that doesn’t work out, Bila plans to major

in business and still be involved in the fishing world.



Louisburg senior Brock Bila signed his letter of intent to fish at Drury University on April 3. Sitting next to Brock (from left) is coach and boat captain Larry Brumley, family friend Richard Neubauer, Brock's mother Rena and Kansas BASS Nation high school director, Richard Heflin.

"I am really excited to be able to travel," Bila said. "I have traveled to some of the southern states to fish, but in college we are going east, west, north, south – just everywhere. Being able to experience those different lakes and that world is just exciting.

"I want to major in business and marketing. I know if I can't make it professional, then hopefully I can get in the fishing industry. I just love everything about it. Drury's coach is the marketing director for Bass Pro and that is a big thing because he has a lot of connections with the pros and he has pros come talk to us and teach us about different things. Everything about Drury was just the best."

Bila also got a chance to share

his special day with all the people that have helped improve in fishing. Along with his mother, Rena, he was also joined by his fishing coach and boat captain, Larry Brumley.

Family friend Bernard Neubauer, who introduced Bila to the sport, was on hand, as was Kansas BASS high school and college director, Richard Heflin. All of those individuals had a big impact on his fishing career.

“Bernard is who got me into fishing and Larry has been like a dad to me on the water and learning how to fish,” Bila said. “Everywhere we go, whether it was in state or out of state, no matter what time he was always ready to go. Whenever I would fish in team tournaments, I would always have Larry as my boat captain and he was a constant when other teams have random boaters and coaches every single time. No matter where I was going to fish, Larry was always ready to go with me and he means a lot to me.

“Richard Heflin is the high school and college director for Kansas BASS. Since I have grown up, he has been there and he has turned that program around and he has seen a 40 to 50 percent growth, which is really big for Kansas.”

Before he goes to college, he will have one more high school adventure left. Bila, along with Louisburg senior Eli Minster, qualified for nationals on April 7 and will fish in the BASS High School National Championship.

It is an exciting time for Bila and he is ready to take the next step in his fishing journey.

“After I went to Blue Valley Northwest my freshman and sophomore year, I didn’t really know what I was going to do,” Bila said. “When I moved here, and I kept on fishing, I realized that

fishing was an actual possibility in college and get a scholarship. That is when I took it seriously, but I have always loved fishing. I know I just can't wait to do it on the college level."