

Van Ert Overcomes Adversity to Capture 2026 WISCO CROWN; Loewe Secures AOY Title

MINOCQUA, Wis. — The final day of the 2026 WISCO CROWN Championship delivered two dramatic finishes on the Minocqua Chain. Mitch Van Ert overcame early boat trouble to claim the CROWN, while Luke Loewe closed the season with a strong final-day performance to secure the WISCO BASS Angler of the Year title.

Van Ert entered Sunday with a narrow lead after weighing **17.21 pounds** on Day 1. His championship hopes quickly encountered trouble, however, as his morning began with only one fish in the livewell before mechanical issues forced him off his boat.

With the tournament clock running, fellow competitor **Hunter Van Duyse** stepped forward.

With the approval of tournament directors, Van Duyse gave up his boat early on Day 2, allowing Van Ert to continue fishing. The generous act of sportsmanship helped preserve Van Ert's opportunity to compete for the championship. Without it, the final day—and perhaps the outcome of the tournament—could have looked much different.

Given another opportunity, Van Ert made the most of it.

He battled through the disruption and assembled a **17.23-pound Day 2 limit**, the heaviest bag of the tournament's final day. His catch was anchored by a massive **5.81-pound largemouth**, which also stood as the biggest bass weighed during the championship.

Van Ert finished with 10 bass totaling **34.44 pounds**, defeating runner-up Tyler Cory by **5.20 pounds**. Cory recorded a two-day total of 29.24 pounds, while Loewe climbed into third place with 28.38 pounds.

The victory completed a remarkable wire-to-wire performance for Van Ert, whose Day 2 weight exceeded his opening-round catch by just two-hundredths of a pound. More importantly, it demonstrated his ability to remain composed when a championship appeared capable of slipping away for reasons beyond his control.

Van Ert's victory will be remembered not only for the winning weight, but also for the resilience and sportsmanship that defined the final day. Van Duyse's willingness to surrender his boat gave a fellow competitor the chance to settle the championship on the water, and Van Ert responded with a performance worthy of the opportunity.

Loewe Delivers Under Pressure to Win Angler of the Year

While Van Ert claimed the CROWN, another closely watched battle reached its conclusion as **Luke Loewe, Casey Hoffman and Patrick Koffler** entered the final day competing for the 2026 WISCO BASS Angler of the Year title.

Loewe answered the pressure with one of the strongest performances of the day.

After beginning the championship with **12.10 pounds**, Loewe brought **16.28 pounds** to the scales on Day 2—an improvement of more than four pounds. His final-day limit, anchored by a 3.69-pound bass, moved him into third place in the CROWN standings with **28.38 pounds**.

More importantly, the performance solidified his place atop the season-long AOY standings.

Loewe completed the five-event season with **727 points**, finishing 10 points ahead of Hoffman, who ended the year with **717 points**. Koffler remained firmly in contention and finished third with **709 points**, just 18 points behind Loewe.

Hoffman weighed 12.16 pounds on the final day and placed ninth in the CROWN with 23.28 pounds. Koffler brought 12.40 pounds to the scales, finishing fifth with a two-day total of 25.20 pounds. But Loewe's 16.28-pound Day 2 catch ultimately created the separation he needed to capture the AOY championship.

Across five events, Loewe weighed 30 bass for a cumulative **87.34 pounds**, the highest season-long weight among the three AOY contenders. Hoffman finished with 83.21 pounds, while Koffler recorded 82.34 pounds.

The final standings reflected just how competitive the race had been throughout the season. Every finish and every point mattered, and Loewe saved one of his best performances for the moment when the championship was on the line.

A Championship Finish to the 2026 Season

The final day of the WISCO CROWN provided a fitting conclusion to the 2026 WISCO BASS season.

Van Ert overcame mechanical adversity, received an extraordinary act of sportsmanship and delivered the tournament's heaviest final-day bag to become the **2026 WISCO CROWN Champion**. Loewe rose to the pressure of a three-angler points battle and used a 16.28-pound limit to secure the **2026 WISCO BASS Angler of the Year title**.

Two champions were crowned on the Minocqua Chain, but the day will also be remembered for Van Duyse's generosity—a moment that demonstrated how competition and sportsmanship can share the sport's biggest stage.

When the final weights were recorded, Van Ert stood atop the 50-boat championship field with 34.44 pounds, while Loewe finished the season atop the AOY standings with 727 points.

It was a dramatic ending worthy of the WISCO CROWN and a memorable conclusion to the 2026 WISCO BASS season.

