

# Van Ert Takes Command on Day 1 of the 2026 WISCO CROWN

*Minocqua, Wisconsin — September 12, 2026*

The opening day of the 2026 WISCO CROWN Championship, presented by Minocqua.org and Crush City Rapala, delivered a tightly contested battle across the Minocqua Chain—but Mitch Van Ert found a way to separate himself from the field.

Van Ert brought a five-bass limit weighing **17.21 pounds** to the scales, establishing a **1.33-pound advantage** heading into Championship Sunday. His impressive opening-day performance put him ahead of Tyler Cory, who finished second with **15.88 pounds**.

Behind the top two, the standings remain crowded. Reed Fredrick occupies third place with **12.98 pounds**, while Tucker Cory and Steve Lopez are tied at **12.84 pounds**. Patrick Koffler is only four hundredths of a pound behind them with **12.80**, keeping several anglers firmly within striking distance.

Roger Xiong delivered one of Saturday's biggest moments when he weighed a **5.07-pound largemouth**, earning Day 1 Big Bass honors. That fish helped Xiong finish the day in seventh place with a total of **12.50 pounds**.

## Day 1 Leaders

1. Mitch Van Ert — 17.21 lbs.
2. Tyler Cory — 15.88 lbs.
3. Reed Fredrick — 12.98 lbs.
4. Tucker Cory — 12.84 lbs.
5. Steve Lopez — 12.84 lbs.
6. Patrick Koffler — 12.80 lbs.

7. Roger Xiong — 12.50 lbs.
8. Jared Mataczynski — 12.33 lbs.
9. Trevor Gantz — 12.11 lbs.
10. Luke Loewe — 12.10 lbs.

The 50-angler championship field weighed **195 bass totaling 441.50 pounds**, with every fish successfully released. Although Van Ert created some breathing room at the top, the tightly packed weights behind him leave plenty of opportunity for the standings to change.

Adding another layer of uncertainty is a cold front expected to move through the area overnight. Changing temperatures and conditions could alter fish positioning, disrupt productive patterns and force the competitors to make critical adjustments on Day 2. Van Ert will attempt to protect his lead, while the anglers chasing him will look for the decisions—and bites—that could change the championship.

## AOY Race Comes Down to the Final Day

Championship Sunday will also determine the 2026 WISCO BASS Angler of the Year.

Luke Loewe entered the CROWN with **579 points**, followed closely by Casey Hoffman with **575** and Patrick Koffler with **563**—putting all three anglers within just **16 points** of one another. Their Day 1 finishes added even more intrigue: Koffler stands sixth, Loewe is 10th and Hoffman is 19th.

With the final day of competition remaining, every bass and every position gained could prove decisive in the season-long race.

Day 2 now offers everything a championship finale should: changing weather, a strong leader facing a determined field, tightly grouped contenders and an Angler of the Year title still hanging in the balance.

On Sunday, WISCO BASS will crown its 2026 WISCO CROWN champion and reveal who has earned Angler of the Year honors—bringing an exciting season to a fitting conclusion on the Minocqua Chain.

*Official results and championship coverage are available at [www.wiscobass.com](http://www.wiscobass.com).*

