

DETROIT RIVER JULY 10-13, 2008

FLW #6

Practice

Finally got to practice the whole allotted time of 4 full days for an event. Previous commitments and or events had prevented me from getting a full practice in all year long and it was much needed as The Great Lakes are a whole different ballgame as far as amount of water to cover. Carpooling w/ Craig in his 24' Chinook camper was tight but we made it work and saved a bunch sharing the expenses. We destroyed his rig on the way up there as we hit every pothole throughout 5 states and into Canada. Problems with leaky propane and broken fans were just a few of the mishaps that arose along the trip. Stayed in Canada for practice to save boat gas as it cut our daily boat rides at least in half. The tourney title is Detroit River but that time of year almost every one either runs east to Lake Erie or west to Lake St. Clair. Split practice 2 days on each which was very beneficial for me. Craig was on the money once again by predicting bigger but less fish on Erie, while St. Clair had numbers but smaller fish on average. If you can get to your fish on Erie and fish them for 3 hours at least you can win, no doubt about that. Weather was great for us on the BIG Lake during practice. First day, at least 3 limits over 20lbs were bagged dragging tubes and senkos. Drop shotting assorted plastics was a blast as well while fishing without the huge waves Erie is famous for. Never thought someone could really be bummed out by catching 3.5lbs smallies but if we weren't getting 4lbs or 5lbs Craig had us on the move looking for them. St. Clair was a challenge for us as the whole lake seemed to have a uniform depth that was covered w/ scattered grass and weeds. After struggling to put anything solid together for 5 hours, Craig got out the big drift sock and began what would be a 5+ mile long drift utilizing the 15-20mph wind. His plan worked as we tried different baits and retrieves keeping a close eye on the side finder and focusing on the subtle differences that were in common every time caught a good fish. The bigger fish liked the 16-18 foot depth with scattered sandy spots amongst the vegetation. Had great confidence going back to the States knowing what to do on either body of water.

DAY ONE 16lbs-9oz

Paired with past Forrest Wood Cup champ Brent Ehrler from Cali, on to St. Clair we rode. Arriving at his first spot after a 45 minute beating due to boat and barge traffic coupled w/ 3-4 footers, fishing was awesome! Both of us had 10-12lbs limits within an hour. Some local guides found us out there and decided they wanted in on the action as well which didn't sit to well with Brent. He kept his cool and proceeded to maneuver the drifts between the two other boats that were leap-frogging us time and time again. It never ceases to amaze me how people would rather fish someone else's fish than work to find their own. Oh well, that is a big part of what this sport has become. It happens on every lake, every place we go. Feeding them a steady diet of tubes and drop shot goby type baits, Brent seemed to stay hooked up constantly. Referring back to what I had caught my bigger fish on in practice, the St. Clair magnums were getting to know a swimming Senko pretty well. Realizing that his fish had seen to much pressure on his

best spot and knowing that he needed 16+lbs to stay in the game for the next day, he gambled on an old spot from previous years and it paid off for both of us. Catching 25-30 keepers that day each and learning new things from a true spinning rod master was well worth the entry fee. Culled up to 16+ and was excited for the next day with a 28th spot after day one.

DAY TWO 12lbs-2oz

Arizona boy Clifford Pirch was the recipient of my gas money this day on Erie. Having electrical problems before blast off is how this mess started. After going 16 miles in 1.5 hrs (only speared 8-10 waves) we arrived at the spot Cliff made a top ten finish the previous year on. One problem, his co-angler from last year was fishing the rock pile from his own boat. Disgusted with the lack of respect, he had a few words about morals with the guy and let him have the spot. Being committed to fishing Erie in 5-7' rollers takes some getting used to, then with some guy that was shown the magic spot the previous year had my partner a little freaked out. Managed to scratch out a fish here and there as we wondered around the big water. Finding a freakin' banana in his cooler that afternoon summed up my final day of the regular season with only three fish in the box. Cliff was cool to fish with but let the morning's run-in get to him and really messed with his head. Back at the dock, soaked and tired w/ blisters on three fingers, I was thankful to be alive. Bass boats aren't made for water like that and the long line at the various service trailers proved it.

SUMMARY

Sore and tired with a new found respect for the power of wind and water I wanted more for some reason. Those big brown fish make you crazy and willing to do stupid things to your boat and equipment. Craig fished Erie both days and his boat paid the price. His rub rail tore out on one side, Power Pole broke and rivets popped loose that hold the cap and hull together. Not to mention he lost all power to his gauges in the process and his starter went out on the motor. When asked after receiving my check for 35th place if I wanted to come back next year, without hesitation I said HECK YEH! Their just isn't another place that you can bag 20+lbs of smallies every day of the season. Maybe I can find a home for the loose screws in my head somewhere in my lower back as that place will beat you down. Finishing fifth overall in the AOY point race was neat and it qualified me to fish next year as a pro in the FLW TOUR. Next is the Forest Wood Cup at Lake Murray in South Carolina Aug. 14-17. Looking forward to the year end championship and a smaller field (77 boats vs. 200 boats). Sorry for taking so long to get the stories done, guess I bit off more than I could chew with the hectic schedule this year.