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FLW tournament starts

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Forrest L. Wood Stren Series officials direct anglers Thursday morning during the start of the bass tournament on Norfolk Lake. The event, which had originally been scheduled to start Wednesday, was delayed until Thursday due to snowy weather. It was unknown at press time whether today's qualifying round would take place, and the final weigh-in is scheduled for 4 p.m. Saturday at Wal-Mart. The event saw 80 professionals and 43 co-anglers weigh in bass Thursday.

Dodson holds lead at FLW tourney

NEAL DENTON
Bulletin Sports Writer



Bulletin Photo by Neal Denton

Ryan Chandler of Hobart, Ind., (left) weighs in his catch at the FLW Outdoors Stren Series Tournament on Norfolk Lake Thursday at Henderson Marina while tournament director Ron Lappin looks on. Harrison's Robbie Dodson currently leads the event with four fish weighing 10 pounds, 12 ounces.

HENDERSON — Eighty professionals and 43 co-anglers weathered the winter elements and weighed in fish after the first day of the FLW Outdoors Stren Series Tournament on Norfolk Lake.

Harrison's Robbie Dodson holds the lead after his four-fish catch on Thursday. Dodson weighed in 10 pounds and 12 ounces of bass at the weigh-in at Henderson Marina.

"It's been slow all week," Dodson said, "so it was a little better than normal. The deepest one I caught was in about 15 feet. The biggest one was probably caught in just 2 feet of water."

The second- and third-place finishers among the professionals behind Dodson each caught a five-fish limit.

Wes Endicott, of Joplin, Mo., caught 10 pounds and 1 ounce of bass to place second and, like many others, has had a slow prefish.

"My practice has been awful," Endicott said. "I had a stomach virus and wasn't able to fish until Saturday afternoon. Then the storm and rain cut it short, but my practices got a little better as they went on. Today was the best by far. I'm shocked at the numbers that haven't been caught. I thought that 16 or 17 pounds would be leading this thing."

Mike Foree, of Osage Beach, Mo., who sits in third place with 8 pounds, 14 ounces, actually had a good week, which continued through Thursday.

"I've been catching them good all week," Foree said. "The last couple of days have been kind of slow. At about 1:30 today, though, I got on them and stayed with them. I maybe could've had another pound and a half, but I'll take what I got."

Jamie Alan Horne, of Jonesboro, currently sits atop the co-angler division with a three-fish catch

of 6 pounds, 1 ounce.

"I was very lucky," Horne said. "It's been pretty tough. I was just hoping to get to weigh a fish. We were in about 30 feet of water and we were catching them right off the bank in about 2 or 3 feet, before the (bait) had even hit the bottom."

Tim Fleetwood, of Forsyth, Mo., who won the event last year when it was held on Bull Shoals Lake, caught all four of his keepers on jerk baits.

Fleetwood is currently in fourth place with 8 pounds and 11 ounces.

"The water has really jumped up," Fleetwood said. "I haven't practiced since last week, and the water has risen 8 feet since last Thursday. I found fish in my regular places, but only a couple places had fish. For me they haven't moved at all, but they've moved a little deeper and off the bank."

Mark Rose of Marion rounds out the top-five professionals with a four-fish catch of 8 pounds, 1 ounce.

Second place in the co-angler division, behind Horne, is Robert Prebeck of Norwood, Mo., with three fish weighing 5 pounds, 5 ounces.

Third place among the co-anglers is Mountain Home's Todd McCoy with 4 pounds, 9 ounces.

This week's tournament is the first of four qualifying events this year for the Central Division of the Stren Series, which culminates with the FLW Outdoors Stren Series \$1 million Championship in November on Table Rock Lake.

The Stren Series is a stepping stone to the FLW Tour which is named after Ranger Boats founder Forrest L. Wood.

ndenton@baxterbulletin.com

Dodson maintains lead at FLW tourney

NEAL DENTON
Bulletin Sports Writer



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Travis Fox of Springdale shows off two of the five bass he caught Friday to move him into second place of the FLW Outdoors Stren Series Central Division Tournament on Norfolk Lake. Robbie Dodson of Harrison leads the tournament for the second straight day with 18 pounds and 4 ounces of bass. The final weigh-in is today at 4 p.m. at Henderson Marina.

HENDERSON — Robbie Dodson may be only getting four or five bites each day, but so far, it has been enough to land him in first place through the first two days of the FLW Outdoors Stren Series Central Division event on Norfolk Lake.

Dodson, of Harrison, made the most of his opportunities again Friday, netting four more keeper bass weighing 7 pounds, 8 ounces, bringing his two-day, professional first-place total to 18 pounds, 4 ounces.

"It's slow," Dodson said at Friday's weigh-in at Henderson Marina, "and I'm doing all I can do. Four or five's as many bites as I've been getting. It's just slow. Tomorrow's a new day. I caught two out of bushes, flipping a jig, and I got the other two swimming a snow-colored, single-tailed grub."

Today is the final day of the tournament, and the weigh-in takes place at 4 p.m. at Henderson Marina, rather than Wal-Mart, as previously scheduled.

Travis Fox of Springdale caught a five-bass limit Friday to pull him all the way from 27th place into second in the professional division.

Fox's bass weighed 10 pounds, 10 ounces on Friday to put his two-day total at 14 pounds, 11 ounces.

"I got to start in my starting spot," Fox said. "That helped quite a bit. I really focused hard and tried not to lose any fish and to make every bite count. I had caught them in there in practice. Today, I caught three in a row real quick, then I had one more that I missed.

"I put the pedal to the metal today and ran the whole way and got in there and had some luck. It wasn't just off of one spot. We figured something out late in the day and got to cull a few times and that made a difference. Some days you're on them, and some days you aren't."

Tim Fleetwood of Forsyth, Mo., who won the event when it was on Bull Shoals Lake last year, currently sits in third place with 13 pounds, 11 ounces after two days.

Mountain Home's Preston Havens caught only three bass Friday, but they were big enough to move him into fourth place.

Havens' two-day total is 13 pounds, 5 ounces, and Jeremy Lawyer, of Sarcoxie, Mo., is currently fifth in the professional division with 13 pounds, 3 ounces.

"I went to the back end of a creek today," Havens said. "Yesterday, I was on the main lake, and I caught a limit on crappie jigs. Today, I was at the back of a creek and used crankbaits and jigs."

Weather fronts and a steadily rising lake level made for low weights from the tourney's anglers.

"There weren't that many fish out there originally," Havens said, "then 6 feet of water on top of that scatters them worse."

Josh Wray of Harrison landed Friday's big bass on the professional side, at 4 pounds, 3 ounces, after Dodson landed a 4-pound, 9-ounce big bass on Thursday.

Hardy's Kurt Evans caught four bass weighing 9 pounds to pull him way ahead in first place with a two-day total of 12 pounds, 9 ounces in the co-angler division. The one bass Evans caught Thursday was the big bass for the day in the co-angler division at 3 pounds, 9 ounces.

Jamie Alan Horne of Jonesboro remains in second place among co-anglers, despite not catching a bass Friday, and Steven McFarland of Mountain Home is just 1 ounce behind Horne at 6 pounds, in third place.

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Havens started his weigh in with the smallmouth and Dodson became concerned.

"I figured he had his five fish, and if he did, he would have had me there," Dodson said. "Preston's a good fisherman, he lives here and fishes this lake all the time. He's beat me a lot here. It was just a toss-up, but I knew Preston would be tough."

Dodson's five-fish limit proved to be the difference and the final fish didn't come until late in the day.

"I caught my last keeper with 10 minutes to go, and if I hadn't caught that, I wouldn't have won," he explained. "I had almost given up. It was right at the end of where I usually catch them at. I threw it out there and almost had it back to the boat. I was swimming a grub and it just got heavy. I set the hook and it was that Kentucky."

Third place in the professional division went to Travis Fox of Springdale with 24 pounds, 9 ounces. Wes Endicott of Joplin, Mo., was fourth with 22 pounds, 13 ounces and Steven Ruff of Wentzville, Mo., rounded out the top five with 21 pounds, 12 ounces.

Anglers had a tough time as changing conditions made the fishing tough.

"Going out this morning, if I told you I had three bites, I'd probably been happy," said Dodson. "The sun was out and they were biting better. I ended up with five keepers, lost a good one and had two or three more to bite."

A Tim Hughes' custom-painted rogue lure and a Lucky Strike 3-inch, perch-colored grub were Dodson's weapons of choice on the decisive day.

The co-angler championship went to Howard Fulgham Jr. of Ash Flat with 14 pounds, 7 ounces over the three-day event, which netted him the \$5,000 first prize.

Kurt Evans of Hardy came home second with 12 pounds, 9 ounces to earn \$3,177, and Chuck Lee took third with 7 pounds, 10 ounces. Jamie Alan Horne of Jonesboro was fourth with 7 pounds, 8 ounces. Brad Baldwin of Dayton, Ohio, rounded out the top five with \$1,589.

The tournament was the first of four qualifying events for the Stren Series' Central Division. The series will be capped off by the FLW Outdoors Stren Series \$1 million Championship in November on Table Rock Lake.

The FLW Tour is named after Ranger Boats founder and Flippin resident Forrest L. Wood.