



Costa FLW Series Championship 2019

August Lingnau, Gregory Schluep, Giulio Nolli and Pieter Khourie at registration

>> **Hannes Lindeque***

Images: FLW Communications, Jodie White, Curtis Niedermier, Rob Matsuura, FLW RSA

The highlight of the FLW Cast-for-Cash bass angling tournament trail for most anglers is participation at the annual FLW RSA National Championship. There the top four anglers each earn a slot to the international FLW Series Championship in the USA.

The Costa FLW Series Championship took place on Lake Cumberland, Burnside, Kentucky. Top anglers from USA, Canada, China, Italia, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal, Spain, South Korea, South Africa and Zimbabwe competed with only the top ten pro- and co-anglers going through to day three of the championship.

FLW Southern Africa was represented by FLW South Africa, FLW Namibia and FLW Zimbabwe.

The FLW RSA team consisted of Pieter Khourie, August Lingnau, Gregory Schluep, Giulio Nolli, who were accompanied by the FLW RSA International Friendship Tournament anglers; Chris Greenland, Vaughn Kendall, Tom Berrington and Johan Joubert.

The FLW Namibian anglers were Johan Coetzee and



Neil Engelbrech with Roger Cousens and Denis Todd fishing for FLW Zimbabwe.

>> **FLW Communications**

BURNSIDE, Ky. – A tournament field of 193 boats – each featuring a pro- and a co-angler – began their three-day competition for a top cash award of \$100,000 at the Costa FLW Series Championship on Lake Cumberland, in Burnside, Kentucky, Thursday. The international bass-fishing championship, hosted by the Somerset Tourist & Convention Commission and the Burnside Tourism Commission, featured the top 40 professionals and top 40 co-anglers from each of five U.S. FLW Series divisions, plus two pros and two co-anglers from each international country that competes in the FLW Series.

International angler Roger Cousens of Harare, Zimbabwe, weighed a five-bass limit totaling 17 pounds, 2 ounces to take the early lead after Day One of the three day event. Cousens held a slim 3-ounce, lead over pro Robert Nakatomi of Sacramento, California, who caught



August Lingnau on stage weighing his bag for the day

five bass weighing 16 pounds, 15 ounces, good for second place.

Cousens competed in the U.S. a few times in the 1990s, but the Evinrude and Mercury outboard technician has never fished a pro-level event with as much on the line as this one. Cousens' limit that he weighed in Thursday included a mix bag of largemouths and smallmouths.

"It feels fantastic right now," Cousens said. "It's pretty hard to believe that I'm leading a tournament of this caliber with this number of anglers. It's pretty amazing."

Cousens said he's a big-bass specialist, which he's proven in his last two FLW events. To qualify for this week's championship, he weighed in more than 100 pounds in three days of fishing at the FLW Zimbabwe Championship.

Thursday, despite miserable, rainy, windy weather, he caught a better quality of bass than many of his competitors.

"I fish for big fish back home," Cousens said. "My game plan is not to go and catch five little fish. I go and throw big baits, and I want to catch five big fish. I fish a lot of tournaments back home, and it's paid off over the years; just going for big fish.

"A bass is a bass," he continued. "I brought my style of fishing from home. When I was preparing to come here, I looked at the lake on Google Earth and spent a lot of time studying it. I purposely did not look at any sort of fishing hints. I just wanted to come here with a totally open mind

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FLW RSA & FLW China, we all understood the language of bass fishing

and just do my own thing. My practice was tough, but I caught a couple of nice fish and left the areas immediately. As soon as I'd catch a fish I'd leave. I went back to those areas today, and they panned out."

Though he caught most of his fish in one area on day one, Cousens said he does have a pattern that's working. He was able to get a couple of key bites on the way back to the ramp in the afternoon. He's admittedly uncertain of what to expect from Cumberland on day two, when wind and rain will be replaced with sunshine, slick-calm water and temperatures that might dip below freezing in



Nick Ratliff, Tom Berrington and Chris Greenland on stage with MC, Chris Jones



FLW Namibia was represented by Neil Engelbrecht and Johan Coetzee



Giulio Nolli was all smiles on stage despite the cold weather



Pieter Khourie's bag placed him in 4th place on day one in the International Division

the morning, but he's still confident in his ability to get big bites.

It's something he's been able to do consistently throughout his tournament career. If he can keep it up for a couple more days, his career might get a really big boost in central Kentucky.

Pieter Khourie:

FLW RSA Champion 2019 & FLW RSA Skipper at the Costa FLW Series Championship

Having the opportunity to fish as a professional boater in the Costa FLW Series Championship on Lake Cumberland in Kentucky, was an experience I will never forget. I've met so many people and made some good friends. I've learned so much and I'm looking forward to going back someday. I had so much fun catching different species of bass (large mouth-, smallmouth-, spotted- and striped bass).

I want to thank Hannes and Wilma Lindeque from SA Bass magazine and FLW South-Africa who made it possible for me to fish in the Costa FLW Series Championship as well as Garmin SA, Hombre clothing and Buckmaster for their support.



Roger Cousens, taking the overall lead on day one

I am thankful that I could have shared this awesome experience with my wife Rita and for all my friends and family who supported me from home.

Chris Greenland:

TBC Champion 2019 & FLW RSA International Friendship Tournament Angler

Getting to fish a wild lake in the USA was a dream come true, but I was a little worried about adapting to the conditions. The way bass relate to bait is a little different there especially seasonally and the thing is I'm a power fisherman at heart. Targeting bait balls right off the bat was my aim. I setup an Okuma Helios 7ft spinning rod with an Epixor 30, spooled with 30lb Boss Slick braid and various adaptations of a swim head on my Keitech paddle tails. 14,000km away from the fishing I know, with no experience at all, I walked the marina and the canyon and stuck into a spotted bass on a floating dock in 68ft of water and then two nice smallmouths who were hunting the rocky edges for the multitudes of bait fish taking cover. Truly it was a moment for my personal archives. I'm guessing I may factor in more spinning setups in my tournament strategies in future! That's a great thing about bass fishing sometimes you can pivot to something you are less experienced at and have great success...

International Friendship Tournament

This will truly be an experience I will never forget. The International Friendship Tournament was awesome, but sadly as luck would have it we had a 2.5 hour fog delay in the morning that killed our top water pattern. With only 3 hours to run, gun and fish, Tom Berrington and I fought hard and handed in two good fish (a smallie and a largie) when many professionals blanked for the day on the same water... We fell about 100 gram short of China's three fish taking it, bitterly disappointed not to bring back the win.

There's so many upsides to look at though. I got to have an awesome stage moment with weigh-in and met and fished with a really talented up and coming pro by the name of Nick Ratliff... If anybody doesn't follow him...



Andrew Upshaw, the Costa FLW Series Champion for 2019

you SHOULD. Look for big things out of him in the future. I see championship trophies coming his way... The entire FLW staff was so welcoming to us and even the FLW Series Tournament Director, Mark McWha, said he expects us back as pro-anglers one day.

Three different species of bass in one amazing fishery is just next level.... I hope to return back as a pro-boater one day and congratulate Roger Cousens from Zimbabwe on his 2021 invitation to the FLW Tour as a professional boater. I can't thank everyone enough for their unreal support, it was anything but easy and you guys kept us motivated even when the temperature was minus degrees and I had to haul a buzzbait down the banks.

A massive thank you to all FLW South Africa's sponsors and to Sensational Angling Supplies. Without Sensation's equipment I don't think I could have landed a fish... Congratulations to team China on their win, it wasn't easy.

Vaughn Kendall:

FLW RSA International Friendship Tournament Angler

The moment we climbed aboard our connecting flight from Zurich via United Airlines we realized, it was clear the American people are welcoming, super friendly and very helpful! From Walmart staff to pro-anglers, just about everyone has time for a chat and shows great interest in where you're from and where you're going. Time spent in a first world environment was an eye opener! Systems that work, economic strength, feeling safe, all the time... we have lots to learn here!

A busy schedule robbed us of much sleep but every moment was worth it especially connecting with some amazing people like local bass pros Nick Ratliff and Ryan Davidson as well as all the friendly FLW (Fishing League Worldwide) staff who run an amazing event and the other international anglers from as far as China! If you are ever in the Lake Cumberland vicinity be sure to check out Pro Bass Burnside. Greg Pullen and his team offer the most outstanding tackle service ever and much more! Truly unreal people that helped us in so many different ways! Thanks for all the support, in particular Francesca Warwick for holding the fort back home, Wakker Kwape and Trak Mac for taking good care of my Sunny boy! Huge thanks to The Outcasts Bass fishing Association and in particular Juan du Toit for the contributions as well as Mohamed James Abramia for your generosity! And of course a massive thanks to FLW South Africa and my team mates for a truly memorable experience! USA will see me again... God Bless America!

Johan Joubert, Christopher Greenland, August Lingnau, Tom Berrington, Giulio Nolli, Greg Schlupe,

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Vaughn Kendall and Johan Joubert taking the lead in the International Friendship Tournament

Pieter & Rita Hourie, Hannes & Wilma Lindeque and Hugo van der Walt.

Johan Joubert

FLW RSA International Friendship Tournament Angler

Most of us have heard the phrase “a bass is a bass”. Can we then say the same about people?

We don't say a human is a human... the culture that surrounds a person has a much bigger effect on a family, community, country than most of us know. We only discover this when travelling. The most insignificant little thing someone might say or do might be the strangest thing to a tourist. This is not because people are trying to be funny; it's just a culture thing. From just the way people greet, eat and live in different countries we realize how far apart our cultures truly are.

To travel from a third world country to a first world country for bass fishing, we did not expect to find our cultural differences so far apart. Yet a common passion for our green friends made all these differences disappear for a short while.

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To see and fish a lake that when you travel from the launch site to the dam wall you enter a different time zone, literally, was truly amazing.

Now with all this said, how do you fish a lake this size, where every inch of the banks is covered with visible structure and cover? A lake in a different country with a different culture... you start by not over thinking it. By not thinking a bass is just a bass!

After we had the privilege of spending time on the water with local pro angler Nick Ratlif, we very quickly discovered our mutual green friends also speak a different language and also have cultural differences. They related different to baitfish and extreme weather changes. Yes we caught them on the same lures we use in our country, we just found them in different areas and used lures we would normally fish in our summer months.

While trying not to be distracted by the beauty the landscape had to offer we tried to take in as much as we possibly could by observing the water and fish movement. Trying to open our minds to all off this, watching Nick, learning new ways of approaching a new body of water, was really something else.

Coming from a small craft fishing platform, The Bass Challenge, seeing over a 190 big American bass boats was just one of the many distractions we had to face on the water! It didn't take us long to make the mental adjustments, after all we came to fish!

The fish were few and far apart, but we understood for the first time what it meant when the American pro anglers say “I covered a lot of water”, Nick only wanted to catch those fish that were ticked off and wanted to bite.

There was not enough time in the day to fish slowly on a lake that size. It made sense after seeing the results.

This was a lake where you could catch largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass. Catching all three species was just one of the missions, when would we ever get a chance like this again. Mission accomplished!

Being able to see all the behind the scenes action at a FLW event that we have been live streaming for years was again, one of the many experiences we brought home with us.

Fishing against anglers from all parts of the world, some who couldn't even speak English yet we all understood the language of bass fishing, was just as much fun.

We thank FLW America for making this possible, for people of different cultures to compete against each other.

It is impossible to mention everything we experienced in one article.

We made new friends on and off the water, met people that changed the way we think, changed the way we will fish. That is priceless!!

Thank you to Hannes and Wilma from FLW South Africa for not only making this possible, but also learning from each event and bringing it back to us to better competitive bass fishing in our country and to expose us to all the wonders the bass fishing world has to offer.

Andrew Upshaw

Costa FLW Series Champion 2019

“What I figured out was main-lake transition bluffs, but it had to have the river channel swing on it – true river-channel swings,” Upshaw said.

The best transitions started at 45 to 50 feet deep adjacent to the wall and shallowed up to 22 to 24 feet deep.

“Right where it started slightly flattening out, that's where they'd be sitting,” Upshaw said. “I had about 15 spots, from about Conley Bottom down. Some of them didn't ever fire like they did in practice, and some did better than they did in practice.”

Upshaw figured a lot of these fish were already in or near their wintertime holes. Some might eventually have shifted over to the deeper water near the bluffs, but others were staying put. More fish were transitioning into these areas during the tournament, which meant he had new bass coming to him. He was on so many fish that Upshaw actually left them biting after multiple culls for ounces. He was consistently on more fish than his fellow competitors, and by getting more bites, he eventually was able to assemble limits of the quality fish needed to win.

To get bit, Upshaw sometimes used a Ned-rig, which is what he caught most of his winning fish on at Cherokee in April, but he caught most of his bass on a classic Cumberland bait: a jig.

He rigged the Ned-rig with a Strike King Ned Ocho Wormin green pumpkin on a 1/8-ounce Gene Larew

Ned Rig Pighead Jig Head. His jig was either a 3/8- or 1/2-ounce Strike King Bitsy Flip Jig, which has a bigger hook than the standard Bitsy Bug. He paired it with a green pumpkin Strike King Baby Rage Craw.

The jig bite was a “timing deal,” said Upshaw. The fish really weren't up on the bluffs in the first hour or two in the morning. The first day, in the rain and wind, he spent the opening hour or so throwing a buzzbait, but after that, he simply fished the jig and hoped to get a bonus bite or two before the better smallies finally moved up.

The timing factor was probably a benefit for Upshaw more than anyone else, since a two-hour fog delay held up takeoff on day three. Many of the top ten pros reported a strong morning bite, but they didn't get there in time. Upshaw's fish fired like clockwork.

“Typically, bluff bites, for me, they just don't eat early,” he added. “I've never caught them early. I know other guys do, but I don't.”

“The timing deal, when they really bite on those bluffs, is anywhere between 10 o'clock and about 3. Then, as the sun goes down, they stop biting on them. I don't know what they do; they just don't bite.”

FLW RSA Tournament partners and support

Without the support of our tournament partners this experience wouldn't have been possible. We thank Garmin South Africa, SA BASS magazine, Hombre Clothing, Buckmaster shoes and Ballistic eyewear for supporting FLW South Africa.

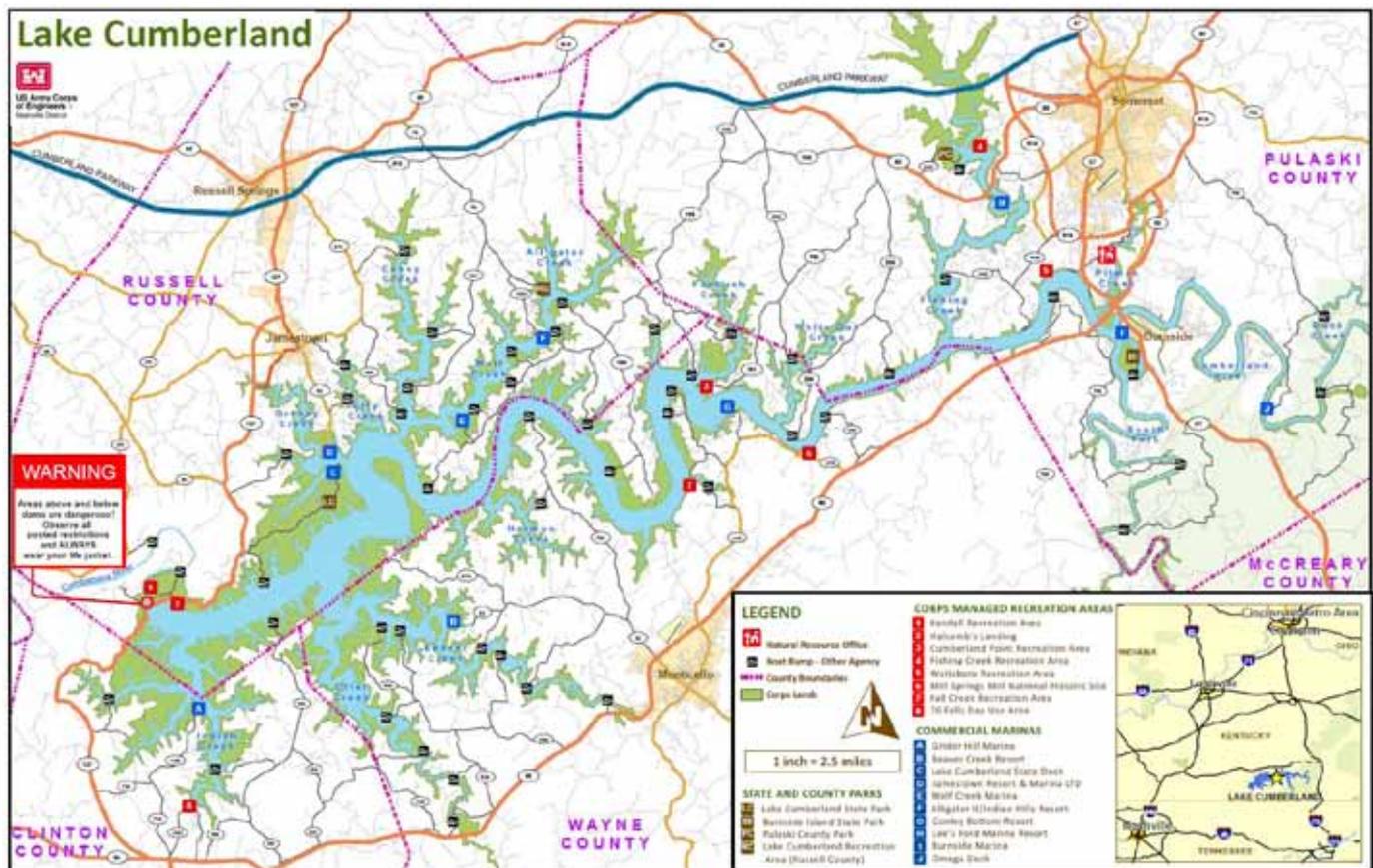
A special word of appreciation towards FLW USA for their hospitality, the international dinner, for providing fully rigged boats to our skippers and to our International Friendship Tournament anglers. The FLW Series Championships is truly a prestigious annual event.

We also thank the staff, Greg and James, at Lake Cumberland Pro Bass in Bronston, KY for better than excellent customer service, and the moonshine (an American version of mampoor). Greg took some of the South African anglers on his boat for a “last cast” social fishing after the championship.

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About Lake Cumberland

Lake Cumberland is a reservoir in Clinton, Laurel, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, and Wayne counties in Kentucky. The primary reasons for its construction were a means for flood control and the production of hydroelectric power. Its shoreline measures 2,020km and the lake covers 265km² at the maximum power pool elevation. The reservoir ranks 9th in the U.S. in size. The main lake is 163km long and over 1.6km across at its widest point.

The lake has become a major source of tourism and an economic engine for south-central Kentucky. In 1999, approximately 4.75 million visitors added more than \$152.4 million to the local economy. Lake Cumberland ranks 4th in the nation for the number of visitor hours. Over 1,500 houseboats float on Lake Cumberland and numerous power boats play in its waters.

About FLW

FLW is the world's largest tournament-fishing organization, providing anglers of all skill levels the opportunity to compete for millions in prize money in 2019 across five tournament circuits. Headquartered in Benton, Kentucky, with offices in Minneapolis, FLW and their partners conduct more than 290 bass-fishing tournaments annually around the world, including the United States, Canada, China, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Zimbabwe. FLW tournament fishing can be seen on the Emmy-nominated "FLW" television show while FLW Bass Fishing magazine delivers cutting-edge tips from top pros. For more information visit FLWFishing.com and follow FLW at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. 🐟

Conditions

The water level was extremely low and our anglers found the pre-fishing very tough, or so did everybody say. During day one of the championship a cold front moved in and we saw the temperature drop with 18 degrees within a few hours to far below zero. To make things worse it started raining, leaving the anglers soaked to the bone. Thanks to the FLW RSA team clothing and fishing bibs provided by Hombre clothing our anglers managed to stay dry.

After a rainy, windy and cold day one, day two promised drier weather, but it wasn't any warmer. The temperature barely went above freezing as anglers took off, and the afternoon highs were unlikely to touch 10°C.

**Hannes Lindeque is the founder and publisher of SA BASS magazine since 2001, the tournament director of the FLW Cast-for-Cash bass angling tournament trial and licensee of FLW Southern Africa.*