

# Pairings promote success of WBT

Pro relationship with co-angler important to proliferation of tour

- By Alex Wilson  
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SHERWOORD, Ark. —  
Professional anglers and co-anglers alike develop a variety of strategies in a fishing tournament, but one common denominator is the relationship that can be built after a day of fishing. Audrey McQueen and co-angler Brande Branine fish on Day One.



"Even as a pro you never stop learning," Cheryl "Lalu" Lalumandier said. "There've been times when I wasn't catching a thing, and I said (to a co-angler) 'what are you throwing?'"

Pam Martin-Wells, who is currently first in the Toyota Tundra Women's Bassmaster Tour Angler of the Year race, knows how important these relationships can be. She explained a particular incident on the tour when nothing seemed to be working for her.

"Monica Altman cut her bait off, gave it to me and said, 'Here, you try it.' That's the kind of camaraderie we look for," said Martin-Wells, who went on to explain how the angler-co-angler relationship is essential to the expansion of the sport.

In a sport where co-anglers are no longer present in the men's division, the opportunity for amateurs to fish in a professional tournament with a cash prize is getting rarer and rarer, and female anglers know that more attention from newcomers means bigger tournaments and a brighter future for the sport.

"I've been doing this for 22 years," Martin-Wells said. "And anything we can do to help is important in making the sport grow."

One pairing that definitely led to success early on in the tournament was Lisa Sternard, who is in sixth-place on the professional side while her first-day partner Diane Smith is in second place in the co-angler standings.

"If you can't catch anything with Lisa, then you might as well go ahead and stay (home) on the porch," Smith said after catching a 9-pound, 3-ounce limit.

Brande Branine of Haysville, Kan., is a newcomer to WBT events, fishing as a co-angler for the first time. Receiving the entry fee as a high school graduation present from her parents, she fished with pro Audrey McQueen and is currently in third place with 8-2.

Brande Branine received the co-angler entry fee into the WBT event as a high school graduation present.

"She's so nice," Branine said of McQueen. "We learn a lot from each other."

"I've been fishing BASS Youth since I was old enough (to compete)."

And she's done well. Branine, the only girl competing in a field of 20, finished first in the Kansas BASS Youth tournament senior division in 2007. In 2008, she finished her BASS Youth career with a second-place finish at Marion County Lake.



Pleased that she received such a unique graduation present, she has quickly caught on to the advantages of pairing up with a professional in practice.

"You can eliminate baits a lot more, which saves a lot of time," Branine said.

The atmosphere of the top women's tournament also has its disadvantages.

"You feel the pressure when you've got such professional women around," she said.

Branine knows what doing well in this tournament means for not only the sport but for her own future.

"I plan on going to either Kansas University or Oklahoma University and fishing on their team," Branine said.

