

NORTHEAST FLORIDA MARLIN ASSOCIATION

Fishing Rules (Effective 1/1/2024)

I. TOURNAMENT YEAR: January 1, thru December 31.

II. GENERAL RULES:

A. Fish must be caught in accordance with IGFA rules except as modified by NEFMA rules.

1. IGFA rules modifications may be issued for individual Mini-tournaments.
2. Treble hooks may be used in combination with natural bait when targeting Kingfish.

B. PORTS: Boats must leave from and return to St. Augustine, Ponce Inlet, Mayport, or Fernandina (St Mary's Entrance). There are no boundaries.

C. Communications: VHF Channel 72 or as directed by the Board of Directors.

D. The General Member must be on board their designated boat for a catch to be awarded points unless the boat has a Designated Captain. In which case, the Designated Captain must be on board their designated boat for a catch to be awarded points.

E. Each General Member/Designated Captain Member must designate their boat at the beginning of the fishing year. If boat ownership changes during the fishing year, the new boat must be designated to the Club as their official boat before any fish caught will be counted. More than one boat change per year must be approved by the board.

F. Fish must be brought in on the designated boat on which they were caught.

G. Fish caught while the boat or Captain is chartered are not eligible for any awards.

1. Chartered Boat: Defined as a vessel that is operated for hire for which there is a payment made for the privilege of fishing. This does not preclude the sharing of expenses with your crew or business associates.
2. Chartered Captain: Defined as one who is paid for the operation of the vessel while fishing. This does not preclude a General Member from having a Designated Captain Member or paying a captain to operate/maintain the vessel.

H. Mechanical Breakdown: Boats must depart and return under their own power for their fish to count for that day. Once a boat is "under tow" it is disqualified for that fishing day.

I. These rules govern our fishing and shootout tournaments only. The Bluewater Tournament has special rules of its' own. Fish caught in the Bluewater Tournament are eligible for year-end awards providing all fish entry forms are properly submitted.

III. FISH: The club awards for the following:

A. SPECIES

1. Blue Marlin
2. White Marlin
3. Swordfish
4. Sailfish
5. Non-Designated Billfish
6. Wahoo
7. Yellowfin Tuna
8. Blackfin Tuna
9. Dolphin
10. Kingfish

B. SIZE: All fish must comply with Federal and state regulations and legal minimums in effect at the time of catch. Any fish brought in not in compliance with those regulations will not count and may result in a fine by the Florida Wildlife Commission or other Federal Agency.

1. **BLUE MARLIN MINIMUM SIZE:** Any Blue Marlin caught and weighed that measures less than 115 inches (tip of lower jaw to fork of tail) will not receive any points.
2. **WHITE MARLIN MINIMUM SIZE:** Any White Marlin caught and weighed in that measures less than 66 inches (tip of lower jaw to fork of tail) will not receive any points.
3. **SWORDFISH MINIMUM SIZE:** The minimum size for Swordfish as set forth by the National Marine Fisheries Service is 47 inches (tip of lower jaw to fork of tail) straight measurement, not curved over the body. It is the Captain's responsibility to know how to measure Swordfish. Any Swordfish caught and weighed in that weighs less than 75 pounds will not receive any points.
4. **SAILFISH MINIMUM SIZE:** Any Sailfish caught and weighed in that measure less than 63 inches (tip of lower jaw to fork of tail) will not receive any points.
5. **YELLOWFIN TUNA MINIMUM SIZE:** In addition to the minimum weight listed below, the minimum size of Yellowfin Tuna is 27-inch Curved Fork Length measured in a line, tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail, which abuts the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin and the dorsal side of the caudal fin. Any Yellowfin Tuna caught and weighed in that weigh less than 20 pounds will not receive any points.
6. **GAMEFISH:** Minimum weights for all other Gamefish are listed below. Any fish weighed in below these minimum weights will not receive any points.
 - a. Wahoo – 15 Pounds
 - b. Dolphin – 15 Pounds
 - c. Blackfin Tuna – 10 Pounds

d. Yellowfin Tuna – 20 pounds

e. Kingfish – 20 Pounds

C. SCORING: The following point system will be used to determine Boat of the Year Winner. The system will also be used to score Shootoutournaments to determine order of finish.

1. **BILLFISH DIVISION:** The following point structure will apply for all boated and weighed billfish.

SPECIES	1ST PLACE	2ND PLACE	3RD PLACE	4TH PLACE	5TH PLACE
Blue Marlin	500	425	350	275	200
White Marlin	200	175	150	125	100
Sailfish	125	100	75	50	25
Non-Designated Billfish	125	100	75	50	25

Release Points will be awarded for all Billfish released in accordance with NEFMA rules. The points awarded per release will be equal to the first place points for the respective species as defined above.

SWORDFISH MINIMUM SIZE: The minimum size for Swordfish as set forth by the National Marine Fisheries Service is 47 inches (tip of lower jaw to fork of tail) straight measurement, not curved over the body. It is the Captain's responsibility to know how to measure Swordfish. Any Swordfish caught and weighed in that weighs less than 75 pounds will not receive any points.

All released Swordfish will receive 75 Points. All weighed Swordfish will receive 1 point per pound.

The Boat with the most points at the end of the year will win our Swordfish Division.

2. **GAMEFISH DIVISION:** The following point structure will apply for all boated and weighed gamefish.

SPECIES	1ST PLACE	2ND PLACE	3RD PLACE	4TH PLACE	5TH PLACE
Wahoo	250	200	150	100	75
Dolphin	250	200	150	100	75
Yellowfin Tuna	250	200	150	100	75
Blackfin Tuna	150	125	100	75	50
Kingfish	100	75	50	20	10

3. **New Club Records:** Any boat catching a fish that breaks the current club record for any species, including Blue Marlin will be awarded a bonus equivalent to the first place points for that species. If a record is broken more than once during the fishing year, each boat that breaks a record will receive and keep their bonus points..

4. For year-end and Mini-tournament awards, points are awarded at the time of weigh-in or when fish are released. If no time is entered, 11:59pm will be used. Ties will be broken by the time of accumulation of points. In the case of tie weights, the fish weighed in first is the winner.

D. RELEASING:

1. To qualify and receive Year End Tournament Points, released Billfish must be photographed in accordance with the following rules:
 - a. Photographing and Releasing Fish: To qualify as a "Released" fish, a digital photograph(s) of the fish must be submitted within 72 hours of the catch via <https://www.reeltimeapps.com/login> (The photo may be taken with a personal camera. The photo must allow the Tournament Director or Board of Directors to identify the species of the fish and to determine that the fish is "under control" of the crew. "Under Control" means that the crew has leader in hand, the fish is close enough to the boat and is in a position that a tag could be used if desired.
2. General Releasing Rules:
 - a. The fish must be intentionally released. The recommended method is to remove the hook. If your hook cannot be easily and safely removed, the alternative method is to cut the leader as close to the hook as possible. If the leader breaks or the fish gets off the hook while in control of the leader the fish qualifies as a release. The key word is "intent". If your intent is to release the fish, then the fish will count. If your intent is to boat the fish, and the fish gets off then the fish does not count.
 - b. The fish may not be removed from the water in its entirety at any time. The head of the fish may be lifted to facilitate its release. The less time the fish spends alongside the boat the greater the chance for survival. Fish that are weak should be revived along side with the dorsal fin in a vertical position. This procedure may take several minutes but may make the difference between death and survival. If the fish cannot be revived, the fish may be released and points will still be awarded.

E. RECORDING:

1. Each Captain is responsible for weighing and certifying the boat's catch. Entries must be submitted on the official web-site (<https://www.reeltimeapps.com/login>) All catches must be submitted within 72 hours of the time of release or weigh-in.
2. By doing so, the Captain is certifying that all criteria in these rules have been met. Also, in the case of a release, it is the opinion of the Captain, the fish was released in a condition that afforded the fish a reasonable chance of survival.
3. In tournaments, Captains should enter all their fish which are above the minimum weights, even though they think their fish is not the largest. This information will help in our yearly catch records which will improve fishing for all. Please print angler's name on the form.
4. In order to receive Boat of the Year or Mini Tournament points, a picture of the fish must be submitted. Pictures are required for both Billfish and Gamefish.

IV. TOURNAMENTS:

A. BLUEWATER: Our most prestigious tournament. The tournament is an open tournament therefore club membership is not required. Fish caught during the Bluewater Tournament are eligible for yearend awards. Additionally, the order of finish of NEFMA member boats will be used to award bonus points towards the Tournament Series Championship.

B. Mini TOURNAMENTS:

The Board will set 4 Mini Tournament dates at the beginning of each year. Mini's can be open to non-members but will require entry into at least 1 TWT.

NEFMA boats finishing in the Top 10 of each tournament will be awarded the following points: 1st - 300, 2nd - 250, 3rd - 200, 4th - 150, 5th - 125, 6th - 100, 7th - 80, 8th - 60, 9th - 40, and 10th - 20.

The order of finish of only Club boats will be awarded points the same as listed above

V. AWARDS: To be eligible for yearly awards or Mini tournament awards, you must be a dues paid general member. No fish will count until dues are paid.

A. BILLFISH BOAT OF THE YEAR: The Award is based on one Tournament Year. All Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Sailfish, and Non-Designated Billfish caught will count toward this Award. The points per fish are listed on our Year End Fishing Board. Awards will be presented to the Top 3 boats. Current standings are posted on the website and will be sent each month in the Newsletter. There are no ties as the boat first accumulating the most points wins.

B. GAMEFISH BOAT OF THE YEAR: This Award is based on one Tournament Year. Wahoo, Dolphin, Yellowfin Tuna, Blackfin Tuna, and Kingfish caught will count toward this Award. The points per fish are listed on our Year End Fishing Board. Awards will be presented to the Top 3 boats. Current standings are posted on the website and will be sent each month in the Newsletter. There are no ties as the boat first accumulating the most points wins.

C. TOURNAMENT SERIES CHAMPION: This Award is based on bonus points accumulated during the MiniTournaments and the Bluewater Tournament. Fish points accumulated during the tournaments will not be included for this award. The Tournament Series Championship is based entirely on the accumulated bonus points listed below according to the participants' final standing in each tournament.

1. Mini Tournaments: The point system listed in Mini Tournaments will be used to determine order of finish in the Mini tournaments, unless specific Mini tournament rules apply.
2. Bluewater Tournament: The Bluewater point system will be used to determine the order of finish for the Bluewater Tournament.
3. NEFMA boats finishing in the Top 10 of each tournament will be awarded the following points: 1st - 501, 2nd - 300, 3rd - 200, 4th - 150, 5th - 125, 6th - 100, 7th - 80, 8th - 60, 9th - 40, and 10th - 20.
4. The order of finish of only Club boats will be awarded points the same as listed above.
5. These points only count towards the Tournament Series Championship and have no impact to any other awards.
6. In the case of a tie at the end of the tournament year, the winner will be determined by whoever placed higher in the earliest tournament.

D. ANGLER-OF-THE-YEAR: Year-end awards will be given to the top angler who accumulates the most board points in each of the following categories:

1. Billfish Angler of the Year
2. Gamefish Angler of the Year
3. Billfish Lady Angler of the Year
4. Gamefish Lady Angler of the Year
5. Billfish Junior Angler of the Year (Ages 13 to 18)
6. Gamefish Junior Angler of the Year (Ages 13 to 18)
7. Billfish Junior Angler of the Year (Ages 12 and Under)
8. Gamefish Junior Angler of the Year (Ages 12 and Under)

Angler Points will be awarded in accordance with the Billfish Boat of the Year and Gamefish Boat of the Year sections listed above. To qualify, the anglers must be either a General or Associate Member when the fish is caught. For the purpose of this award, spouses, children and grandchildren who are 18 years and younger are considered Associate Members. Children or grandchildren who have their 19th Birthday during the fishing year will NOT be disqualified.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Protests: All protests must be made in writing within 72 hours of discovery of the infraction. All protests and decisions concerning fishing will be voted on by the Board of Directors. The decision of the Board of Directors on all rule interpretation will be final.

B. Children and Grandchildren of General Members age 19 or older at the start of the fishing year must become an Associate Member to be eligible for year-end Awards.