

53rd ANNUAL BLUEWATER TOURNAMENT RULES

May 7 - 11, 2024

Northeast Florida Marlin Association Clubhouse – Camachee Cove Yacht Harbor

PART 1 - GENERAL FISHING RULES AND PROCEDURES

CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES:

1. Boats may depart from St. Augustine, Mayport, or Ponce Inlets.
2. Departure is permitted at any time on the declared fishing day.

FISHING DAYS AND HOURS:

3. Boats must declare their fishing days via the tournament app by 9:00 PM the day before. Changes must be texted to (904) 545-9048 by this deadline.
4. **Lines In:** 7:30 AM | **Lines Out:** 3:30 PM (subject to modification due to weather). A minimum of four hours of fishing constitutes a full fishing day.
5. Teasers are not permitted in the water before "Lines In."

EXTENSIONS:

6. Boats hooked up within the last 15 minutes must notify a committee boat before "Lines Out."
7. If a fish remains hooked past "Lines Out," notification must be sent via VHF Channel 72 or text. In the absence of confirmation, a video with timestamp and GPS must be provided.

CHECK-IN PROCEDURES:

8. Boats with fish to weigh or released billfish must proceed directly to the weigh station at St. Augustine Inlet.
9. All boats must check in via VHF Channel 72 when abeam of the St. Augustine Sea Buoy by 6:00 PM unless granted an extension.
10. Boats not returning to St. Augustine must check in via text if they have no fish to weigh or releases to report.
11. Gamefish weighed will be used for the Friday night fish fry.

WEATHER:

12. The Tournament Committee reserves the right to cancel fishing due to unsafe conditions. If a NOAA "Small Craft Advisory" or greater is posted for the 20-60 mile forecast, fishing will be canceled for that day. "Small Craft Exercise Caution" does not automatically cancel fishing.
13. If a fishing day is canceled post "Lines In," all boats must cease fishing and return to port. Extensions for ongoing fights will be granted per the tournament rules.
14. "Go/No-Go" decisions will be made by 4:00 AM on fishing days.

PART 2 - SPECIFIC FISHING RULES - BILLFISH DIVISION

TACKLE & BAIT REGULATIONS:

1. IGFA rules apply unless otherwise specified.
2. Rod passing is permitted **only once** after initial hook-up.
3. Wire lines and electric reels are prohibited.
4. Live bait is permitted.
5. Only non-offset circle hooks are allowed with natural bait. J-hooks are permitted with artificial lures.
6. Leader length is limited to 30 feet.

SIZE LIMITS:

7. Blue Marlin must exceed **105 inches** (measured from lower jaw to fork of tail). Smaller fish will not be weighed and remain the responsibility of the captain.

BILLFISH RELEASE PROCEDURES:

8. All billfish releases must be reported immediately via VHF Channel 72.
9. Photo or video evidence with timestamp and identifiable species is required for release points. Failure to provide this evidence will result in default sailfish points.

PART 3 - GAMEFISH DIVISION RULES

1. Only rod and reel fishing is permitted. Electric reels are prohibited.
2. Downriggers, planers, and wire lines are allowed. No line restrictions.
3. Once a gamefish is hooked, the rod may be passed **once** before angling must be completed.
4. Mutilated fish (damaged by sharks, mammals, or propellers) will be disqualified. The Tournament Committee has sole discretion.

PART 4 - SCORING SYSTEM

BILLFISH DIVISION POINTS:

- **Blue Marlin:** 400 points
- **White Marlin:** 200 points
- **Spearfish:** 200 points
- **Sailfish:** 125 points
- **Swordfish:** 200 points

Tie-breakers: First to accumulate points wins.

GAMEFISH DIVISION POINTS:

- 1 point per pound (Dolphin, Wahoo, Tuna).
 - Two fish of each species may be weighed per day; heaviest two will determine winners.
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PART 5 - TOURNAMENT CONDUCT & PROTESTS

1. Substitute boats must be registered if an original vessel becomes disabled.
 2. Boats under tow post "Lines In" are disqualified for that day. Self-repairs may continue fishing.
 3. Protest must be submitted in writing with a \$500 cash fee before weigh station closure. If upheld, the fee is refunded.
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PART 6 - DISQUALIFICATION & POLYGRAPH

1. Unsportsmanlike conduct or rule violations may result in single-day or full tournament disqualification. No refunds.
 2. Random polygraph testing may be required. Failure to comply results in full team disqualification with forfeited prizes.
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PART 7 - PRIZES & AWARDS

BILLFISH DIVISION PRIZES:

1. **Overall:** Top boats with most accumulated points (released and boated).
2. **Lady Angler:** Highest-scoring female angler.
3. **Junior Angler:** Highest-scoring angler (16 & under).

GAMEFISH DIVISION PRIZES:

1. **Overall:** Top boats with most points (Dolphin, Wahoo, Tuna).
 2. **Lady Angler:** Highest-scoring female angler.
 3. **Junior Angler:** Highest-scoring angler (16 & under).
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All final decisions rest with the **Tournament Committee**. Any changes will be announced at the **Captain's Meeting**. The ultimate responsibility for vessel safety lies with the **captain**.

For more details: www.nefma.com | Email: clubnefma@gmail.com