

~ 2026 NBAA NATIONAL EVENT Tournament Rules ~



**1. OFFICIAL RULES & SAFETY REGULATIONS:** The following rules and safety regulations will remain unchanged, except for special events. Interpretation and enforcement of these rules shall be left exclusively to Tournament Officials. In the event of a rule violation, officials may impose such sanctions, as deemed appropriate including, without limitation, fines, forfeiture of prizes, disqualification and prohibition from participation in future events. Official's decisions shall be final in all matters and will not be subject to appeal. **Be sure to check each individual events fact sheet for any rules/regulations specific to that particular event.**

**2. PARTICIPATION & ELIGIBILITY:** Current NBAA members are eligible to compete; this includes any substitutes. At least one team member must be 18 years of age or older (19 in AL and NE) to participate, however, any under those ages wishes to participate, they must present written permission and official release of liability from a parent or legal guardian. **EACH PARTICIPANT MUST COMPLETE AND SIGN A MEMBERSHIP FORM AND A NBAA LIABILITY RELEASE BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO COMPLETE, THIS INCLUDES DIRECTORS, NO EXCEPTIONS.** All members must carry liability insurance of reasonable amounts on any boat they might use during an NBAA Event. **Proof of insurance must be with the boat at all times. Random checks may be conducted at events.** Failure to do so or reporting of false information will result in disqualification. We reserve the right to refuse participation in any event, to anyone, for any legal reason including, but not limited to, suspension, disqualification or a ban from any event, criminal behavior, violation of game laws, or any unsportsmanlike behavior that would reflect dishonorably.

**3. ENTRY:** Participation in the NBAA Championship is by qualification & invitation only, no buy-ins are allowed. – Eligible NBAA anglers that fish a minimum of 4 of 5 Weekend or 10 of 12 Overtime events can qualify for the NBAA National Championship if they are in that divisions top 10. Additionally, for bigger divisions and to encourage growth, each division will be allowed to qualify (1) additional boat to the championship for each (5) boats over the baseline minimum of 10. Example 11 boats advance at a 15-boat average on the season counting all 5 (or 12) events in a division. (12 boats qualify at 20, 13 at 25, 14 at 30, etc.) Teams with a member who unexpectedly cannot attend the National Championship may utilize a sub from the division qualified from. Substitutes are allowed to participate in the Championship provided that they had previously fished at least (2 out of 5 weekend or 4 out of 12 overtime) regular division events. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the tournament officials in extreme cases such as death or military duties. Local anglers fishing local events solo are **NOT allowed** to advance to the NBAA Championship, except as another team's substitute, if qualified.

**4. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE & COMPETITION:** Tournament waters and off limits are announced prior to each event. It is the competitor's responsibility to know them. For the annual NBAA National Championship, a NO INFO rule goes into effect on Sunday, prior to the first tournament day. Beginning on that Sunday you may only fish with your registered partner, or an immediate family member traveling with you that is NOT considered an "expert" on the tournament waters, when in doubt ASK the Tournament Director, you may NOT fish with a guide and you may only talk "Fishing" with other NBAA contestants in this event.

**5. SAFETY & TOURNAMENT INTEGRITY:** Safe boating conduct must be observed at all times by tournament competitors. Participants must abide by all local navigation laws and avoid restricted areas at all times. All participants are required and agree to wear a Coast Guard-approved type III or greater chest type personal floatation device anytime the combustion engine is running. Tournament officials have the right to delay or cancel the start of an official tournament day because of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors. Tournament waters may also be restricted or changed at any time. In the event of a thunderstorm, lightning, severe weather or any unsafe condition, participants should remove themselves from the competition and seek safety or shelter until it is safe to continue fishing. Participants may not leave their boats during tournament hours except in case of emergency. The horsepower of the engine must not exceed the US Coast Guard rating plate for that boat. All NBAA qualifying tournaments will have published days of competition, unless delayed or shortened due to weather or unforeseen circumstances. If a delay is required additional time will NOT be added to that day's flight or check in times. Tournament boundaries or restricted fishing zones will be announced at the rules meeting and may be further altered or restricted if needed.

**6. SPORTSMANSHIP:** Participants will conduct themselves in a true sportsmanlike, courteous, safe and ethical manner at all times maintaining professional demeanor in public and in communication with tournament officials. Any unfavorable conduct, criminal behavior, speech or action by a participant in our efforts to promote sportsmanship, clean waters and conservation could be grounds for disqualification or rejection of entry application. Every competitor is expected to participate in the marshaling of the field in order to maintain the highest integrity to the competition. Use of or possession in the boat of alcohol or marijuana/cannabis products, ("medical" or otherwise) or any drugs (other than those purchased over the counter or prescribed by a licensed physician) by any participant during the official event or tournament days or in our weigh-in process area and/or any use by the final day designated "leaders" until any polygraph examinations are complete will not be tolerated and shall be cause for disqualification. Any incidents observed during tournament hours should be reported to tournament officials for further investigation. Any violation of these basic sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification.

**7. TACKLE & EQUIPMENT:** NBAA participants must possess all necessary fishing licenses and commit to following regulations. All state rules regarding fishing will be observed unless more stringent regulations are specified at the rules meeting. Only artificial lures may be used. No "live bait" or "prepared bait" will be permitted, with the exception of bio-soft baits and pork strips, etc. Only ONE (1) fishing rod (8-foot maximum length from butt of the handle to rod tip) and reel may be used at any one time. All other types prohibited. Other rigs as specified may be in the boat ready to use, however, only ONE is permitted in use at any given time. All bass must be caught alive in a conventional and sporting manner. Anyone guilty of snatching or snagging visible fish will have their day's catch disqualified. When fishing for bass you can see, all bass must be hooked inside the mouth to be counted as a legal fish. No gaffs OR "GRIPPERS" may be used to land bass, Nets are allowed. After checking in a courtesy board will be available which will be the same as the official board used for the event.

**8. BOAT, MOTOR & SAFETY EQUIPMENT:** All tournament boats are required to have in their possession all Coast Guard-required safety equipment, including but not limited to approved chest type personal flotation devices, a type IV throw cushion, fire extinguisher, distress horn/flag/whistle, a bailing device and display tournament decal/credentials (if so supplied by NBAA). Great Lakes and Canadian border water tournaments require flares. In addition, a functioning bilge pump or bailing device is required. All tournament boats must be cleaned of all harmful exotic aquatic species prior to entering the water and upon departure from infected waters. All tournament boats must also be equipped with an emergency ignition-shutoff device that must be securely attached to the driver. The horsepower of the engine must not exceed the US Coast Guard rating plate for that boat. Anytime the combustion engine is operating and in gear, there must be a driver in the driver's seat in full control of the boat. Tournament boats will be inspected for functioning and empty live-wells and operating emergency ignition stop switch. Any raised platforms or decks cannot be higher than the gunnel of the boat. Trolling as a method of fishing is strictly prohibited. Trolling is defined as operating any combustion engine to extend a cast or lengthen a retrieve or using any mechanical propulsion device to move the boat as the sole means of imparting action to the lure. Any type of AUXILIARY gas tanks that are not installed by the boat manufacturer are prohibited. Additional gas tanks that are factory options and installed by an authorized dealer are legal. Boats that do not have factory installed gas tanks are restricted to a maximum of 18 gallons of gasoline in tanks that meet U.S. Coast Guard regulations. Gas tanks must be properly secured or strapped in a boat. Any additional fuel used during the tournament day must be purchased from a retail facility open and available to all contenders and the public.

**9. BOAT IDENTIFICATION:** All angling activities must be done from a previously inspected boat. Each boat MUST be given, prior to each day's start, a livewell and SAFETY INSPECTION check by a tournament official, also a boat fob/bouy or marker MAY be given which MUST remain in or on the boat and be turned in during check-in at the end of each day. Tournament officials reserve sole discretion to assign boat numbers in any manner.

**10. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS:** Tournament waters shall be established by the Tournament Officials. Each competitor must obtain this information from the NBAA official. Fishing on Tournament waters is permitted anywhere except: No fishing is allowed within 50-yard circle of another competitor's boat which was first anchored or tied, with its trolling motor out of the water. NO boat is allowed with-in 50-yard circle to the exclusion of another boat if you let one boat fish within your 50-yard circle you must let everyone. An anchored boat is a boat held in a fixed position by a line attached to a weight or tied off or by a pole anchor and with the trolling motor out of the water. Absolutely no hole-setting or holding of a fishing spot will be tolerated. Any water within these tournament boundaries posted "off-limits or no

fishing" by state or federal agencies will be OFF-LIMITS. Also, any live fish release off-limits area established by the Tournament Director will be Off-limits and will be announced at the Tournament Briefing. Competitors may not exit their boat in order to gain access to fishable waters. The use of cables, ropes, chains or any type of block-and-tackle to access fishing waters, other than when first launching prior to take-off, is forbidden. No contestant may "Buy" or "Barter" a fishing location. Only that water open to ALL public fishing will be considered tournament waters. Any water closed to public fishing will be closed to these tournament contestants. All angling must be done from the boat. On tournament days, participants are prohibited from fishing except during designated tournament fishing hours. Participants should stay off tournament waters before and after tournament hours except to navigate to and from the check-in site and launch facilities. If repairs and/or a test-run are needed an NABC staff member, appointed observer or sponsor service technician should ride along.

**11. BREAKDOWN INSTRUCTIONS:** Contestants must not depart the boat to land fish or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Boats must remain in tournament waters during tournament days. Contestants must leave and return to official checkpoint by boat. No tournament boat may be loaded on a trailer before the team using the boat presents their catch for weigh-in, except with the permission\direction of the tournament director. Both competitors must remain in boat at all times except in case of dire emergency, if they wish their fish to be counted for the day. In case of break down or emergency, in which a team is not able to travel back to the weigh-in site under main power, anglers should contact tournament officials. The only legal way to return for weigh-in without your own power is by being towed in by a boat operated by another competitor in the event or a designated rescue boat, or by a team member transferring their clearly marked fish to another competitor's boat and coming directly to the weigh-in with their fish. No fishing is allowed during this time by any involved party. Arriving late, even with the aid of an official boat, as the towed boat or the towing or rescue boat is still late and all late penalties will apply. No exceptions.

**12. OFFICIAL SAFETY CHECKPOINT:** There shall be an official safety checkpoint for checkout in the morning/check-in in the afternoon and this point shall be designated at the tournament briefing. At the time of check-out all competitors and their boats shall be in full conformance with all safety and tournament rules set forth by officials. At check-in all boats shall identify themselves to the check in official and proceed immediately to the designated weigh-in area. **YOU MUST CHECK-IN EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FISH.** Failure to check in at the end of the day could result in a \$50 fine or prohibition from future participation. It is each angler's responsibility to know what time they are due in.

**13. LATE PENALTY:** Competitors who are not at the official safety check in point as described above at the appointed return time shall be penalized at the rate of one pound per minute to be deducted from the total weight of their catch that day, including any "Big Fish Award". Any competitors more than fifteen (15) minutes late shall lose all credit for that day's catch. There shall be no excuse for tardiness and in no case will a competitor be allowed to make up "lost time." Return time shall be defined as off-plane and plainly visible by the official timekeepers.

**14. SCORING:** Scoring shall be determined by the pound weight of each team's catch during the tournament. Only Black Bass species will be weighed. Length and bag limits of eligible fish will be set for each tournament and announced for each event. All fish weighed must be kept in aerated livewells to keep fish alive and as fresh as possible for release. Any fish mauled, mashed, frozen, stringered, containing foreign or unnaturally placed matter to add weight or showing white gills, soft flesh or other signs of decomposition in the tournament official's sole discretion will result in disqualification. At no time shall a competitor have in possession more than the stated tournament possession limit. Tournament Officials will conduct checks for violations of this provision. In the event a competitor has in their possession more than the stated limit, officials shall cull, starting with the largest fish first, down to the stated limit. Fish will be measured by a tournament official with fish's mouth closed and longest straight line. Only fish which measure the official length(s) shall be weighed-in. Any fish presented for weigh-in which fails to measure the official length limits shall accrue penalties at the rate of one pound for each non-legal. Once a competitor's catch has been presented to tournament officials, that team may not alter, nor add to their catch or return to their boat until their catch has been weighed and recorded. Competitors may choose only one bass out of their bag as an entry into the "big bass side pots".

**15. PROTESTS & TRUTH VERIFICATION TESTS:** RANDOM TRUTH VERIFICATION TESTS MAY BE GIVEN. Any witness has a right to protest a team. An official written protest with \$40 fee must be made with a tournament official within 30 minutes of the last flight check in time OR within 10 minutes of the last fish being weighed that day, whichever is latest. The fee will be returned if the protest is found valid. Tournament officials, in their sole discretion, reserve the right to consider rule violations reported or not and discovered at any time for any reason, by any persons, before or after a tournament has ended and assess penalties for any past or future event including denying entry to compete. Following interviews with concerned parties, a ruling will be made. In the event rules infractions occurred a penalty of daily and/or tournament weight may be applied, and cash, prizes and awards must be returned if so requested. If a protest is found valid, the disqualified party must pay any investigative costs. Each competitor or participant agrees by their signature on the entry forms and by their participation in the tournament to submit to a polygraph or voice stress analyzer test (I.E., a truth verification test) should they be asked to for any reason and to abide by its conclusion. Tournament officials shall have sole discretion to select scope, when, where and who shall administer such an exam. Participant will make themselves available at their own expense for testing as scheduled. In the official's sole discretion, refusal to submit to exam or failure to pass a truth verification exam will result in disqualification. The tournament officials will interpret these rules according to the spirit and intent of the rule and their decision in any matter of rule or conduct of the event is final.

**16. CATCH & RELEASE:** An 8-ounce deduction will be made for each legal fish presented to the bump master for weighing that is determined to be dead. Every boat must have adequate livewell space, properly aerated, to sufficiently maintain, in a healthy condition a limit catch by competitors using the boat. NABC recommends the use of livewell additives such as G-Juice and ice, in warmer water months to improve oxygen levels and promote a healthy release of fish into natural habitat. Tournament Officials shall have the sole responsibility for determining whether aeration and capacity is "proper and adequate" and for assessing penalty points.

**17. TIES:** Tie breakers are as follows. Most number of fish, most number of fish alive, heaviest single days catch, second heaviest single days catch, means selected by the tournament officials. Other than for first place, champions, or cut positions, if still tied at this point teams will remain tied and a flip of the coin will award payout\prizes\plaques ties will NOT be combined and split.

**18. Division Points Champions (TOY):** Each NBAA Division will crown a "Team of the Year" (TOY) Points Champion, based on the total number of points each team accumulated during the year. No solos anglers or substitutes may accumulate TOY points. Divisions will be required to drop their "lowest score(s)" (1) out of 5 for weekend and (2) out of 12 for overtime, from each team's final points. All TOY Division Points Champions or highest finisher who attends the championship will compete for a separate "Cash Pot".

**19. PRO/GUIDE EXCLUSIONS:** Anglers who entered more than two bass fishing events in the preceding 12-month period, with an entry fee in excess of \$2,500.00 per event (does not apply to amateurs in pro/am events) OR individuals' serving as guides or who are paid for guiding on tournament waters within the preceding 30-day period are not eligible to participate in events held on those waters for tournaments with a guaranteed 1<sup>st</sup> Place prize in excess of \$2,500.00.