

CAROLINA BILLFISH CLASSIC



2018 TOURNAMENT RULES & GUIDELINES *(subject to change before June 2018)*

WEIGH STATION HOURS
Thursday & Friday 5 – 8 pm
Saturday 5 – 7 pm

Charleston Harbor Marina
(843) 881.0325

Deidre Menefee (843) 345.0369

Applicable Rules and Laws

All fish must be caught in accordance with all state and federal laws, and under IGFA Rules with the exception of passing rod to qualify to earn SC Governor's Cup points/awards. **After a fish strikes, the rod may be passed to one angler one time as soon as possible. All anglers may have the rod passed one time to them. After the rod has been passed, only the angler is allowed to touch the rod/reel/mainline.** Once the leader is brought within the grasp of the crew member or is wound to the rod tip, then the angler may have assistance to catch and release or boat the fish. Series points will accrue towards Series awards for these fish. Vessels may provide assistance to other vessels for boating fish. **Violations of state or federal law will lead to disqualification of all fish caught on that fishing day, and the day will be counted as an eligible fish day for the tournament.**

Fishing Days

The tournament fishing days are Thursday, June 21 – Saturday, June 23, 2018. Boats may compete a maximum of two days. If all three days are non-fishable then Sunday will become a fish day. One day of fishing constitutes a tournament. Any day that a participating boat leaves the dock will be counted as a fish day unless withdrawal is reported by radio to a Committee Boat and/or Charleston Harbor Marina by "lines in" that same day. Fishing hours are 8 am - 3 pm each day (GPS Time).

Overnight fishing is not permitted and no lines or teasers in the water prior to fishing hours. No fishing before 8:00 am or after 3:00 pm during tournament fishing days. All boats must return to docks at the end of each day's fishing hours. Lay Days must be reported to Tournament Director, Deidre Menefee by emailing dm@fishcbc.com or Amy Dukes at DukesA@dnr.sc.gov or texting Deidre 843.345.0369 or Amy 843.209.9053.

All meatfish must arrive to Charleston Harbor Marina aboard the boat on which they were caught, unless special permission is granted by a committee boat or a Rules Committee member. All billfish must arrive to Charleston Harbor Marina aboard the boat on which they were caught.

Eligible Species

Eligible billfish species in this tournament are Sailfish, White Marlin, Spearfish, and Blue Marlin. Other eligible species are Dolphin, Wahoo, and Tuna (**Eligible Tuna Species include: Yellowfin, Bluefin, Blackfin and Bigeye**). All registered boats and anglers must be in compliance with Federal (HMS Permit) and State Regulations (saltwater fishing license) regarding recreational and/or charter fishing as well as SC Governor's Cup Tournament Series Regulations.

Weather

It is the Captain's discretion to fish on any given day, however, if Small Craft Advisories are posted on local NOAA Weather Radio by 6:00 am, that day will not be a tournament fishing day. The tournament director or committee boat captain will announce each day's weather conditions by 6:00 am on VHF Channel 71. *In consideration for the safety of all participants, all Series tournaments have adopted the use of a posted NOAA Weather Service "Small Craft Advisory" (winds 25 - 33 knots **and/or** seas 6 feet or higher) to cancel that day's fishing. Tournaments must set a specific time that can be no later than 6:00 am when a "Small Craft Advisory" will cancel that day's fishing. The safety of the participating vessel is ultimately the responsibility of the Captain.*

Liability

Tournament participants enter at their own risk. All sponsors, officials, committee members, and all persons connected with the tournament shall be exempt from liability for loss, damage, negligence, harm or injury suffered by participant, entrant sport fisherman, his/her companions, boat captain, vessels and equipment which may occur during the tournament

Radio Channels

VHF channel 71 shall be the primary radio channel during this tournament. In addition, an alternate VHF channel will be chosen at the captain's meeting. The primary channel is to be reserved for all official tournament announcements and angler reports of hookups and releases and boated fish meeting minimum requirements. A SSB Channel will be chosen at the Captain's Meeting.

Territorial Limits

There are no territorial limits set for this tournament. However, tournament boats must return to Charleston Harbor Marina by the prescribed weigh-in hour to have any boated fish considered for competition. Eligible fish must return on the boat on which it was caught unless there is a hardship circumstance and that boat has received prior approval from a committee boat or Tournament Official. If a hardship circumstance exists and prior approval was not granted, the tournament committee will then decide if a catch is eligible.

Late Hook-ups & Arrivals

Boats must return to Charleston Harbor Marina each day to weigh any fish eligible for the tournament. In the event of a billfish hook-up prior to the close of fishing, the fish may be fought to completion outside of tournament fishing hours provided the Committee Boat has been notified. Any landed fish must be weighed in during scheduled weigh-in times unless an exception is granted by a tournament official. If a boat has legitimate mechanical or serious medical problems and notifies the Committee Boat or the Marina of its problem, an extension for that boat's weigh-in may be granted except for the last fishing day. All others must meet scale closing times. Weigh master will be as flexible as possible in allowing all eligible fish to be weighed when an exception has been granted; however, no exception will be made on the last fishing day.

Breakdowns

The Governor's Cup Tournament does not allow the substitution of boats; however, the Carolina Billfish Classic will allow a substitute of a boat provided the originally registered boat has not entered any fishing lines into the water.

Protests

Only a registered boat's captain or owner may protest any fish entered in the tournament. All protests must be delivered in writing to the weigh master on the day of the protested catch no later than one hour after scales have closed and within thirty minutes on the last day of fishing. All protests will be considered by tournament officials, whose decisions are final. There is a \$300.00 charge for registering a protest. If the protest is validated, the \$300.00 will be returned.

Polygraph

Polygraph tests will be administered at the sole discretion of the Tournament Committee. Refusal by any participant will result in disqualification.

Rule Changes

Any rule changes or additions at the Captain's Meeting will take precedence over these printed rules.

Official Tournament Judges

The official tournament judges are the Tournament Rules Committee. Violation of the tournament rules will subject the boat and angler to disqualification from the entire tournament without refund. Un-sportsman-like conduct during the tournament or at any function will be grounds for immediate disqualification.

Circle Hooks

Effective January 1, 2008, The National Marine Fisheries Service regulations require anglers fishing from HMS permitted vessels and participating in Atlantic Billfish tournaments to use only non-offset circle hooks when deploying natural baits or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. The regulations allow the use of J-hooks (the hook-type traditionally used in this fishery) with artificial lures in tournaments, and do not impose hook requirements on recreational fishermen fishing outside of Atlantic billfish tournaments.

BILLFISH RULES

Catch and Release

The Point System for this tournament is in keeping with the SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series standards. In the interest of promoting conservation, White Marlin, Spearfish, and Sailfish are CATCH & RELEASE ONLY. Tagging is optional and not required for points. A minimum size has been set for Blue Marlin (105" – measured in a curved line along the body from the fork of the tail to the tip of the lower jaw) that encourages catch and release fishing. A billfish shall be considered a "catch" and points awarded when **all** the following have occurred:

- 1) the leader is grasped by the crew or the leader is wound to the rod tip (a leader may be no longer than 30 feet);
- 2) the billfish is positively identified through digital photography/videography (if species cannot be determined yet it is identified as a billfish, 200 points will be awarded); and
- 3) the fish is freed in a healthy condition and the fish is no longer attached to the boat/line. Boats should attempt to remove the hook or to sever the leader as close as possible to the hook.

In keeping with Governor's Cup Rules, only billfish that have been considered "Catch & Release" are eligible for tournament points. Billfish boated for any reason will not qualify for release points.

Boating Billfish

ANY BILLFISH BROUGHT TO THE DOCK WILL BE WEIGHED AT CHARLESTON HARBOR MARINA ONLY. Registered anglers will have the option of boating only Blue Marlin over the course of the event, providing the fish meets or exceeds the prescribed tournament minimum length requirement (105"). Boats will earn One Point per Pound for the **SINGLE** heaviest Blue Marlin weighed. The length of the billfish is to be determined by measuring from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail.

Minimum Qualifying Sizes

Blue Marlin	105 inches
White Marlin/ Spearfish	Catch and Release Only
Sailfish	Catch and Release Only

Prizes will be awarded to the boat accumulating the most points during the competition. In the event of an exact tie, the boat accumulating the most points *first* will be the winner.

Money and prizes will be awarded only for winning categories, one fish per category. A penalty of 600 points will be assessed against a boat for each blue marlin brought to the dock not meeting minimum SC Governor's Cup Series size requirements. All landed fish are to be iced or refrigerated until such time as they are released by tournament officials to the boat after which the edible tissue is to be processed and the carcass is disposed of. Boats landing Blue Marlin will have a maximum of three hours to complete this task. Boats found guilty of wanton waste of fish will be disqualified.

A billfish may not be brought into the boat unless it is to be brought to the dock for weigh-in. **A penalty of 600 points will be assessed against a boat for each billfish if it is determined that the fish was boated and subsequently released.** Any billfish gaffed, harpooned or otherwise injured in an attempt to boat the fish will not qualify for catch and release points. Additionally, if the gaff crosses the vertical plane of the boat in an attempt to land a blue marlin yet it is unsuccessful, the boat will not qualify for catch and release points. **Federal regulation dictates: 635.21 (a) All Atlantic HMS fishing gears. (1) An Atlantic HMS harvested from its management unit that is not retained must be released in a manner that will ensure maximum probability of survival, but without removing the fish from the water. (2) If a billfish is caught by a hook and not retained, the fish must be released by cutting the line near the hook or by using a dehooking device, in either case without removing the fish from the water.**

Any white marlin, spearfish, or sailfish boated will be disqualified. All catch & release efforts on all billfish must be attempted outside of the vessel.

Reporting Billfish

A tournament committee boat must be notified on the radio immediately after an angler hooks-up, and releases or boats a billfish. Release and boated times will serve as a tie-breaker. The tournament Committee Boat will acknowledge the report over the airways and keep a log of all hook-ups, losses, tag and releases, and boated fish. Boats which cannot make radio contact with the Committee Boat for any reason should contact another boat for a relay. Radio failure will not disqualify a participant. (Release time will serve as a tie breaker) Those boats not notifying a committee boat will be given the latest time as a release time.

Catch and Release Scoring

Anglers and Boats will receive the following points for each catch and released fish:

Blue Marlin	600 points
White Marlin/Spearfish	300 points
Sailfish	200 points

For a vessel to qualify any billfish for points, every person aboard the vessel who is 18 years of age or older, must sign an affidavit swearing that all rules and regulations were observed in reference to the described fish. Failure of any person to sign the affidavit, for any reason, disqualifies that fish. To sign an affidavit under false pretenses is an act of fraud punishable under state law. [Affidavits and photos/videos must be submitted to DNR Staff or a designated tournament representative by the close of the weighing scales on the day the fish was caught, except when a medical emergency involving the boat's crew prohibits completion of the form or when a mechanically disabled boat cannot return within the prescribed weigh-in period. In these instances, the forms must be completed and returned within ten days of the catch and release. A designated DNR check station will be located at the host marina to receive/qualify affidavits and photos/videos. If fishing out of an alternate marina \(other than the host marina\), affidavits and photos/videos must be delivered to the DNR check station, or may be submitted via email to Amy Dukes \(\[DukesA@dnr.sc.gov\]\(mailto:DukesA@dnr.sc.gov\)\).](#)

No call-ins or text messages will be accepted. Additionally, the original affidavits and photos/videos must be submitted by the close of the weighing scales on the final fishing day for the catch to be eligible for any tournament awards or prizes with the exception as noted above.

In addition, all released billfish must be clearly digitally photographed or videoed (preferable photo would include a visible dorsal fin) at time of release by each vessel using a digital/video camera provided by the vessel. The image must include a time and date stamp that corresponds to the time of release recorded by the tournament designated committee boats. Photos/videos must be provided on a removable storage device, and will be used to confirm species identification, release information, and will be used to resolve conflicts or formal protests.

Each boat is required to keep their billfish photography available to the tournament and DNR up to ten days after the conclusion of the event.

Boat points are awarded at the time of release or landing (boated). Ties between points are broken by the time of release/landing. The date of the release/landing is based on the boat's fishing day (Day 1 or Day 2).

Prizes will be awarded to the boat accumulating the most points during the competition. In the event of an exact tie, the boat accumulating the most points *first* will be the winner.

TUNA/DOLPHIN/WAHOO RULES

Reporting Meat fish do not need to be reported to the committee boat.

Scoring Prizes will be awarded for the heaviest eligible meat fish species measured to the nearest tenth of a pound. To remain consistent with the SC Governor's Cup Series, **eligible Tuna Species include: Yellowfin, Bluefin, Blackfin, and Bigeye.** Boats choosing to bring fish to the weigh scales by cart may do so only if fish are accompanied by the angler who caught the fish from the vessel on which it was caught and that vessel is docked at the participating marina. Weighing a fish and accepting release affidavits do not constitute a final decision on the legality or acceptance of the fish or the release. Whether the fish or the release qualifies for consideration under the tournament prize categories will be determined by the IGFA rules, the South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Rules, and the tournament rules committee.

Creel limits for dolphin are 10 per angler per day with a limit of 60 per boat per day, with a minimum size limit of 20 inches fork length. Creel limit for yellowfin tuna is 3 per angler per day with a minimum legal size of 27 inches curved body fork length, see current federal size and creel limits for other tuna species. Creel limit for wahoo is 2 per person per day. *Note: Size or creel limits will automatically be changed in SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series tournaments to reflect changes in federal or state laws.*

YOUTH ANGLERS

Any angler who has not passed his/her 16th birthday by April 1 of current year may fish in the Youth Angler division. Any angler in this category is in this category *only* (i.e. An Angler that is female and under sixteen years of age on April 1 of the current tournament year is a *Youth Angler*, not a Lady Angler.) It is the responsibility of the angler to identify a catch as eligible for the Youth angler award. This is typically done at the time of weigh-in.

Fish must be caught in accordance with all state and federal laws, and under IGFA Rules with the exception of passing rod to qualify to earn points or awards.

After a fish strikes, the rod may be passed to one angler one time immediately. All anglers, including Youth Anglers (*under sixteen years of age on April 1 of current tournament year*) and Lady Anglers (*females over sixteen years of age on April 1 of the current tournament year*), may have the rod passed one time to them. After the rod has been passed, only the angler is allowed to touch the rod. Once the leader is brought within the grasp of the crew or is wound to the rod tip, then the angler may have assistance to catch and release or boat the fish. Series points will accrue towards Series awards for these fish. Vessels may provide assistance to other vessels for boating fish. **Any deviation from these guidelines will lead to disqualification.**

JUNIOR ANGLERS

Any angler who has not passed his/her 10th birthday by April 1 of current year may fish in the Junior Angler division. Junior anglers are eligible for all other awards unless they choose not to follow IGFA rules. Those choosing not to follow IGFA rules will only be eligible for Junior Angler awards. Junior Anglers may be assisted as needed to boat a fish for Junior Angler awards only.