



2024 TOURNAMENT RULES & GUIDELINES

Acceptance of Rules | Captain's Meeting

It is the sole responsibility of participating boat owners, captains, anglers, crews, and guests to know and abide by these printed rules. Any rule changes or additions at the Captain's Meeting will take precedence over these printed rules.

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.

Fishing Days | Times | Weather | Territories

Fishing Days: Thursday, June 20 –Saturday, June 22

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 a participating boat leaves the dock will be counted as a fish day unless withdrawal and/or a lay day is reported by radio to a Committee Boat and/or contact the tournament director by text or e-mail (843.568.5230 or lweston@charlestonharborresort.com) by "lines in" that same day.

Lay Days: Lay Days must be reported by 8 am on declared lay day by one of the following: emailing lweston@charlestonharborresort.com, govcup@dnr.sc.gov, submitted on the Carolina Classic app by ReelTimeApps, text Loyd at 843.568.5230, Amy at 843.209.9053, or Elizabeth at 843.494.0901.

Fishing Hours: 8 am - 3 pm each day

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. **Scanning sonars will be allowed; however, they cannot be used prior to lines in at 8:00 am or after lines out at 3:00 pm.** All boats must return to docks at the end of each day's fishing hours.

Weigh Station Hours:

- **Gamefish:** 5 – 7 pm each day.
- **Blue Marlin:** Opens 8:00 am on the first eligible day of fishing and closes 7 pm on Saturday, June 22. No exceptions
- Boats should pass Red Buoy #34 which is located about 250 yards south of Charleston Harbor Marina. Boats that do not pass red buoy #34 by 7:00 p.m. will not be eligible to weigh their fish. GPS time will be the official time.

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 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.

Breakdowns

The Governor's Cup Series does not allow the substitution of boats; however, the Carolina Billfish Classic will allow a substitute of a boat provided: 1) the originally registered boat has not entered any fishing lines into the water; and 2) the Tournament Director is notified immediately upon realizing need for change.

Weather

The safety of the participating vessel is ultimately the responsibility of the Captain, and it is the Captain's responsibility to monitor the NOAA Weather updates to determine if the day is an eligible fishing day. In consideration for the safety of all participants, if the NOAA National Weather Service 6:00 AM update, posts a Small Craft Advisory (winds 25 to 33 knots and/or seas 6 feet or higher), the tournament director or committee boat will cancel that day's fishing.

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 hours to have any boated fish considered for competition. Eligible fish must return on the boat on which it was caught.

Angling Rules

All fish must be caught in accordance with all state and federal fishing laws, and under IGFA Rules with the exception of passing the rod to qualify to earn SC Governor's Cup points / awards. **In addition, every individual (age 16 and above) aboard the vessel must have a valid official S.C Saltwater Recreational Fishing License in their possession.** 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 the disqualification of any fish caught on any fishing day where the violation would apply. Any day when the violation would apply will be counted as an eligible fishing day for the tournament.**

Knowingly fishing on a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD - is defined by NOAA as a floating object(s) that is designed and strategically placed to attract pelagic fish) during a series tournament is prohibited and will lead to disqualification. Burden of proof falls upon the protesting vessel, and clear and convincing evidence must be provided by the protesting vessel to the individual Tournament Rules Committee. Disqualification for fishing on a FAD shall be determined by the Tournament Rules Committee.

Youth Anglers

Any angler who has not passed his/her 16th birthday by April 1 of the 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.

Junior Anglers

Any angler who has not passed his/her 10th birthday by April 1 of the 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.

Eligible Species | Points | Disqualifications

Eligible Billfish Species in this tournament are Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Spearfish, and Sailfish.

Other eligible species are Dolphin, Wahoo, and Tuna. To remain consistent with the SC Governor's Cup Series, eligible Tuna Species include Yellowfin, Bluefin, Blackfin, and Bigeye.

Dolphin - Creel limit - 10 per angler per day with a limit of 54 per boat per day, with a minimum size limit of 20 inches fork length

Yellowfin Tuna - Creel limit - 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.

Wahoo - Creel limit - 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.

All registered boats and anglers must be in compliance with vessel registration / documentation and with Federal (HMS Permit) and State Regulations (saltwater fishing license) regarding recreational fishing, as well as SC Governor's Cup Tournament Series Fishing Guidelines.

Per HMS compliance guide published April 2019, anglers fishing from Atlantic HMS permitted vessels and participating in Atlantic billfish tournaments must use only non-offset circle hooks when deploying natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. A billfish tournament is defined as any fishing tournament that awards points or prizes for billfishes, even if billfishes are not the main species targeted in the tournament. Billfish tournament anglers may deploy "J"-hooks only if they are fishing with artificial lures.

Catch and Release

White marlin, sailfish, and spearfish are catch and release only. Tagging is optional and not required for points.

Only blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and spearfish are eligible for billfish catch and release points. Billfish boated for any reason will not qualify for release points. Scoring for billfish caught and released in good condition is as follows:

Blue Marlin		600 pts		*If Landed, see below under Boating Billfish
White Marlin		300 pts		Release Only
Spearfish		300 pts		Release Only
Sailfish		200 pts		Release Only

A billfish is considered caught 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 released 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.

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.

Boating Billfish

Registered boats 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").

Note: 105 inches exceeds the federally mandated minimum size limit. Should the federal size limit be increased, the minimum size for blue marlin eligible for weighing in S.C. Governor's Cup Series tournaments will be increased automatically to exceed the new minimum size by two (2) inches if required.

Boats earn One Point per Pound and fraction of a pound for their SINGLE Heaviest Blue Marlin weighed. 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).

A billfish may not be brought into the boat unless it is to be brought to the dock for weigh-in. Any boated Blue Marlin must be weighed in at Charleston Harbor Marina.

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.

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 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.

All landed fish are to be iced or refrigerated until such time as the edible tissue can be processed and the carcass disposed of. Boats landing Blue Marlin will have a maximum of three hours to complete this task after the fish is released by Series staff or Tournament officials.

Fish must be fresh, not frozen, fit for human consumption, not mutilated, nor its weight altered in any manner. Hook and gaff marks are acceptable. It is the sole responsibility of the crew to remove all hooks, lures, and leaders prior to presenting the fish for weigh-in.

Boats found guilty of wanton waste of fish taken will be disqualified from earning points in tournament.

Points

Prizes will be awarded to the boat accumulating the most points during the competition.

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 for the heaviest eligible meat fish species measured to the nearest tenth of a pound. In the event of a meat fish tie, the winner will be determined by the earliest weigh-in date and time.

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, 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).

Radio Channels

VHF channel 72 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.

Affidavits & Photographs

For a vessel to qualify any billfish for points, every person aboard the vessel 18 years of age or older must sign an official GCBS Released/Tagged and Released Billfish Affidavit or Landed Billfish 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. In addition, all released billfish must be clearly digitally photographed or videoed (preferable image 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 date and time stamp that corresponds to the date and time of release recorded by the designated tournament committee boats. Photos/videos must be provided on a removable storage device and will be used to confirm species identification and release information and will be used to resolve potential conflicts or formal protests.

A designated DNR check station will be located at Charleston Harbor Marina to receive / qualify affidavits and photos / videos. Affidavits must be completed and submitted to DNR staff no later than one hour after scales close the day the catch and release or landing occurs, 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 (10) days of the catch and release. The boats fishing, including boats out of other marinas or ports, must hand-deliver to tournament headquarters or email to Series staff (GovCup@dnr.sc.gov) the completed official GCBS Released/Tagged and Released Billfish Affidavit, digital billfish release images, and required licenses and permits no later than one hour after the scales close on the day of catch with the exception as noted above. **No call-ins or text messages will be accepted.**

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

Polygraph | Judging | Protests

Polygraph

Polygraph tests will be administered at the sole discretion of the tournament committee. Captains and an occupant of the winning boats must be available for a polygraph test on Saturday June 22, 2024. Refusal by any participant or occupant of a registered boat will result in disqualification. All decisions of the polygraph examiner are final.

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. The tournament director and tournament judges, at their discretion, can enforce the rules or make decisions on any other circumstances that may arise during the course of the event. The tournament director and/or the tournament judge's decisions are final.

Unsportsman-like conduct during the tournament or at any function will be grounds for immediate disqualification.

Protests

Only a registered boat's owner or captain may protest any fish entered in the tournament. All protests must be submitted in writing to the Tournament Director on the day of the protested catch no later than one hour after scales close. The Tournament Director will convene the official Tournament Rules Committee to consider the protest. The ruling of this Committee is final. All protests must be accompanied by a nonrefundable cash fee of \$1,000. The individual(s) who submit any protest must provide indisputable evidence to prove the infraction.