



Virginia Beach Sport Fishing Bluewater Classic Official Rules

A - General Rules

- The Virginia Beach Sportfishing Bluewater Classic is a 3 day Modified Captain's choice event, awarding prize money to anglers for qualifying billfish releases and gamefish captures. Anglers will choose to fish two of three days, Friday, August 15th, Saturday August 16th or Sunday, August 17th. Anglers will compete in three separate divisions, Billfish, Offshore Gamefish and Inshore Gamefish. The following rules and regulations will apply to all participants, and the Honor system will govern the catch, release and reporting of all fish.

- Each team shall declare a team Captain on the entry form. The Captain will be responsible for communicating with the Tournament Committee, attending meetings, reporting releases, completing the proper scoring forms and delivering them to the Official Weigh Master. The captain is also a registered angler, and may function as such

- All prizes will be paid directly to the Team Captain listed on the entry form. The Team Captain assumes responsibility for payment of all taxes and/or duties on prize money.

- There is no limit to the number of crew on a team, however each team is limited to 4 tee shirts per entry fee. Each registered angler will receive an entry pass to Tournament functions, including the awards banquet. Additional shirts and entry passes will be available for purchase.

- **IGFA rules shall apply**, with only the following exceptions:

- A rod may be passed immediately one time by any crewmember to the designated angler to strike and fight the fish until it is released, boated, or lost. After passing the rod, no one else may touch the rod, reel, line and angler, except the leader to boat or release the fish."

- Spreader Bars may be directly attached to the fishing line (in lieu of IGFA rule # 6 in section I).

- Digital pictures of released billfish and boated gamefish are very desirable. Digital pictures of the Fish, fight and or release may be posted on the Tournament Website, distributed to the media or otherwise used by the Tournament.

B - Billfish Division

- The GPS coordinates of each billfish hookup, as well as the water temp and bait and hook type and color are to be recorded on the official scoring sheet. This information is for research purposes only, and will not be revealed to the general public.

- Any boat that has reported a **billfish** hookup prior to lines out may continue to play the fish until either released or lost.



- Blue Marlin must be released, and shall be awarded **200 points per release.**
- White Marlin, Sailfish, and Spearfish must be released, and shall be awarded **100 points per release.**
- Legally caught Swordfish may be boated without penalty, however boated swordfish are not eligible for tournament points or awards. Released Swordfish shall be awarded **100 points per release.**
- There shall be a 5 point bonus awarded for any billfish successfully tagged prior to release.
- ALL BILLFISH MUST REMAIN IN THE WATER as per NOAA Fisheries directives for releasing billfish. Boated billfish are not eligible for points or awards from the Tournament and teams boating a billfish (other than Swordfish)

shall be disqualified.

- A billfish shall be considered boated when it breaks the vertical plane of the gunwale of the boat. Billfish that break the plane of the gunwale of their own volition are not considered to be disqualifying.

- All fish must be hooked within a 100 nautical mile radius of the Rudee Inlet "Sea" buoy. Fish hooked within this limit may continue to be fought, and will be considered valid captures or releases, even if the fish and boat exceed the boundary during the fight.

- Payout for the Billfish Division shall be: 60% of available funds for First Place and 40% for Second Place

- In the event of a single team reporting billfish release, that team will be awarded the entire amount of funds allotted for billfish prizes. In the event that no billfish are released, the allotted funds for billfish prizes will be added to the gamefish pool and distributed accordingly.

Retrieval of hooks from released fish is encouraged, but not required. In the event of a tie, the winner shall be determined by the first boat/team scoring the tied point total earliest (determined by time of release) in the respective eligible days of fishing, regardless of which day points were scored (*time of last release each day, not date of catch.*)

- A billfish is considered officially released when the leader connection is wound to the tip of the rod, or another crew member touches the leader.

- Acceptable angling methods include trolling of artificial lures and natural baits only.

- NMFS circle hook regulations for Billfish Tournaments are in effect. Regardless of targeted species, non offset circle hooks **MUST** be used when trolling with natural bait or lure/natural bait combinations. This includes all live baits, dead baits and strip baits that are derived from natural sources. J hooks may be used with artificial baits only.

C - Offshore Game Fish

Offshore Gamefish prizes will be awarded for the largest Tuna, Dolphin and Wahoo weighted in. Allotted Gamefish funds will be awarded as follows: Largest Tuna (any eligible species): 33%, largest Dolphin (mahi-mahi): 33%, largest Wahoo: 33%.



- In the event of no qualifying entry for one or more species, the allotted funds will be added to the remaining gamefish species. In the event that no qualifying entries of any species are made, all allotted prize money will be refunded, less unrecoverable tournament expenses.

- Eligible tuna species are yellowfin, bluefin, blackfin and big eye.

- Acceptable angling methods include trolling of artificial lures and natural baits only.

- NMFS circle hook regulations for Billfish Tournaments are in effect. Regardless of targeted species, non offset circle hooks MUST be used when trolling with natural bait or lure/natural bait combinations. This includes all live baits, dead baits and strip baits that are derived from natural sources. J hooks may be used with artificial baits only.

D - Inshore Game Fish

Inshore Gamefish prizes will be awarded for the largest cobia, flounder and Spanish mackerel weighed in. Allotted Gamefish funds will be awarded as follows: Largest cobia: 33%, largest flounder: 33%, largest Spanish mackerel: 33%.

- In the event of no qualifying entry for one or more species, the allotted funds will be added to the remaining gamefish species. In the event that no qualifying entries of any species are made, all allotted prize money will be refunded, less unrecoverable tournament expenses.

- Acceptable angling methods include trolling, drifting, casting, jigging, still fishing, chunking and chumming. Natural bait, both alive and dead is permitted. Local, state and federal rules regarding the use of juvenile gamefish as bait apply. Anglers not trolling are limited to 2 rods per person in the water at any given time. Hand lines shall be considered a fishing rod.

- Bait may not be caught on any boat entered in the Tournament, using rod and reel or hand line, prior to 8:00 AM on any fishing day. Cast nets, minnow traps and other legal methods may be used. Bait may be caught by rod and reel the day before any fishing day, or after the tournament scales are closed on any fishing day. Rods used for catching bait during tournament fishing hours are to be counted toward that anglers maximum of 2.

- All Virginia Territorial Waters are eligible for fishing. This includes the entire portion of the Chesapeake Bay lying within the State of Virginia, all of its tributaries up to the fall line, the Eastern Shore and all ocean waters out to the 3 mile Territorial Sea Boundary with Federal waters. Boats fishing beyond the Territorial Sea boundary will be disqualified.

E - Eligible Departure Ports and Times:

All Virginia ports are eligible departure ports. ***No boat may cross the Colregs demarcation line applicable to their chosen departure port prior to 4:00 AM on any fishing day.*** For all ports located on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, the applicable line shall be the Chesapeake Bay Colregs Demarcation Line. Boats crossing said line prior to 4:00 AM will be disqualified.

F - Fishing Times/Days:



Eligible fishing days are Friday, August 15th, Saturday, August 16th and Sunday, August 17th. Fishing will begin promptly at 8:00 AM and end at 3:00 PM. **No lines or teasers in the water prior to 8:00 AM or after 3:00 PM.** Violators will be disqualified.

G - Weigh-In & Score Sheets:

All Billfish release/Game Fish must be turned in at the official tournament scales located at LONG BAY POINT MARINA or the FISHERMANS WHARF MARINA only. Fish may be transported by land from the dock to the weigh station. Each fish to be weighed will be accompanied by the scorecard to be filled out and signed by the captain or his designee. Billfish score sheets must be signed by the team captain. ***Only one fish of each species is eligible to be weighed in per boat per fishing day.*** ***All fish submitted for weigh-in will be returned to the proper team immediately after weighing.*** Any team member can request that a fish be re-weighed so long as the request is made to the weigh master while the fish is still hanging. Once the weight is recorded, it is final.

Weigh Station Hours: The weigh station will be open each day from 3:00PM until 6:30PM each fishing day. ***All boats and/or anglers in line at the scales at closing time will have their fish weighed and recorded. Fish arriving after the closing of the scales will not be weighed. Evidence of weight tampering will result in disqualification.***

H - Weather Contingency:

The Tournament does not provide a weather committee. All team captains and co-captains, boat owners and their participants, are advised and encouraged to be familiar with the current local weather conditions and forecasts to determine if conditions permit the safe operation of their respective boat. Safety of the boat, crew, anglers and guests is entirely the responsibility of the Captain.

- Poor Weather Contingency will be defined as: the NOAA Weather Radio station Wakefield 5 PM report forecasts small craft advisories at any time during scheduled fishing hours for the following day.
- If small craft advisories are forecast for a given area, that area becomes off limits for all tournament fishing for the entire day, regardless of actual conditions.
- In the event that forecast conditions prevent offshore fishing, boats may transfer their entry fees to the inshore division and fish accordingly, provided the weather conditions permit inshore fishing. Transfer from one division to another must be made by the end of the Captain's Meeting and must fish in that division for the remainder of the tournament.
- In the event the tournament is declared un-fishable due to weather, all entry fees will be refunded, less 20% unrecoverable tournament expenses.

I - Committee Boats:

There may be a volunteer Committee Boat assigned each day of fishing to record billfish hookups and releases. In the event that a tournament boat is unable to contact a committee boat on a direct basis then they should relay their information to another tournament boat, and confirm the official GPS time. **** Note: Committee boats are volunteers only and will not interpret any rules nor offer any decisions.***



J). Radio Frequencies

VHF frequencies will be announced at the Captains Meeting. As a courtesy, all boats are requested to switch to another operating channel for non-tournament conversations, particularly the last 15 minutes of fishing each day, to enable the reporting of hookups.

K). Protests/Disputes:

Protests must be submitted in writing and turned in to the Tournament Committee **prior to 6:30PM on the day of the infraction.** The Tournament Committee, at their discretion may utilize witch doctors, psychics and/or examine goat entrails for omens to reach a final decision. **By virtue of signing the Tournament entry form all participants agree to the final decision of the Tournament Committee.** It is understood that the spirit intended for the tournament is to be enjoyable and in good fellowship for all participants.

L). Captains Meeting:

The Captain's Meeting shall be held at 7:00 PM on the Thursday preceding the tournament, with the location to be announced. **At least one representative from each team must be present. - It is the sole responsibility of the team captain and anglers to understand and abide by the Tournament's rules, including any special instructions or changes that may be announced during the Captain's meeting.**

M). Mechanical Breakdown:

- Boats suffering mechanical breakdown may substitute another boat without penalty. There is no refund of tournament fees for boats unable to fish due to mechanical breakdown.

In the event that a boat experiences mechanical difficulties that may hinder its ability to return to a weigh station, that team may transfer their fish or billfish score sheet to another boat for delivery. The catch must be accompanied by at least one member of the original team.

N). Mutilated/Injured Fish

IGFA Rules shall apply. The decision of the Tournament Weigh Master shall be final.

O). Honor System and Disqualification

The Tournament is designed to provide competition in a fun, friendly atmosphere. The Word of Honor of each Captain, that all rules and intent set forth within this document were followed, shall be accepted as truth by the Tournament Committee unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary. Where more than one truth is found to exist, the decision of the Tournament Committee and/or Weigh Master shall be final and binding in all matters. Upon Declaration of Disqualification, the offending team gives up all rights to any appeal and all entry fees and prizes.

P). Federal & State Regulations:



The weight and/or length of each eligible species submitted for weigh-in may be subject to State of Virginia and/or Federal laws and regulations. It is the responsibility of each team to be familiar with, and abide by, all such laws and regulations. All boats fishing offshore must possess current and valid Federal HMS permits or any other permits as required by applicable law by species at time of weigh-in. Any team without valid permitting and/or in violation of State and/or Federal law may be disqualified at time of weigh-in.

Q). Waiver/ Disclaimer:

It is understood that all participants in this tournament enter at their own risk, and that the Virginia Beach Sport Fishing Tournaments Inc., its Officers and Directors, the Tournament Committee, Sponsors, Volunteers, and all persons connected directly or indirectly with the operation of said tournament, shall be exempt from any liability whatsoever for libel, slander, property loss or damage, negligence, harm, injury or death suffered by any participant, entrant, vessel and/or equipment, companions and guests, boat captains, mates, crew members, or innocent bystanders which may occur during or in conjunction with this Tournament or Tournament related events.

R). Conservation Efforts:

It is the intent of this Tournament to promote marine resource conservation and sportsmanship through both competition and education. To that end, the Tournament Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

- Use of non offset circle hooks for all gamefish, particularly where release is the intent. Non offset circle hooks have been shown to significantly lessen the mortality of all released gamefish, especially billfish. They have also been proven to increase hookup rates when rigged properly. The use of circle hooks is required by law for all permitted vessels fishing in an Offshore Billfish Tournament. They also have inshore applications. Please consider using them.
- Use of non-Stainless Steel hooks. Stainless Steel hooks degrade at a much slower rate than mild steel or hardened steel hooks do. If imbedded in a fish's mouth or throat they can impede the fish's ability to breathe and/or feed for extended periods, causing excessive stress and increased mortality. Mild steel or hardened steel hooks corrode at a much faster rate.
- Proper equipment selection for billfish. Please make sure the equipment you are using is adequate for the job. Equipment should be sized for a quick fight and release.