

High School League Fishing, TBF/SAF, and MLF expect strict adherence to the following rules by all contestants. In the event of an emergency, please call 911 first and then notify the tournament director.

2026 High School & Jr. Fishing League Event Rules:

- 1. INTERPRETATION & ENFORCEMENT** – These rules will remain unchanged during the 2026 High School Fishing season. Interpretation and enforcement of these rules will be left exclusively to the tournament director. Decisions of the tournament director are final in all matters and are not subject to appeal. Each contestant, coach, and boat captain agree to report any suspected rule violation to the tournament director immediately upon discovery. Failure to report a violation may be cause for disqualification. The violation of a tournament rule may result in, but is not limited to, disqualification from the event, weight loss (in whole or in part, for part of a day or for one or more days, for a heaviest bag, single fish or largest fish, or any combination thereof) or ineligibility to participate in future tournaments. Protests and/or alleged rule violations are to be documented in writing by a witness or boat captain within 30 minutes of the check-in time of the final flight of each tournament day. Tournament officials, in their sole discretion, reserve the right to consider rule violations reported or discovered at any time for any reason, by any persons, before or after a tournament has ended.
- 2. PARTICIPATION & ELIGIBILITY** – Participation for High School Division is open to all 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade high school students through July 1st of their graduating year. This includes mid-term graduates in good standings. High school teams may consist of one Junior angler per team (note: teams will only be eligible for TBF High School Nationals/Worlds if team consists two high school anglers or one in 8th grade and the other in high school, no team with a 7th grade or lower will be eligible.) Junior teams may fish in High School Division, but they will not be eligible for TBF National Championship. Junior Division teams may consist of any combination of 5th-8th grade students. Each team will consist of two contestants and one boat captain. Pursuant to federal law guidelines under the Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017, there MUST be three people to a boat at all times. No exceptions. No angler may register or plan to fish alone. In the case of a verifiable, unplanned emergency, where one partner is unable to attend, only then may a tournament official, at their sole discretion, allow an observer in the boat in place of a fishing partner. The observer may not fish. Contestants must be Student Angler Federation members. There is no entry fee to participate for SAF members. Contestants must have in their possession a valid fishing license for the waters they fish if required by law. Random checks may be conducted at each tournament. Failure to provide proof of a valid fishing license within a reasonable amount of time when requested, will result in disqualification for that day and any preceding days in which the license was required for the tournament. Contestants are required to follow all applicable federal, state, and local regulations and laws. Any violation of such regulations and laws may result in disqualification. There is no limit to the number of teams accepted into a tournament from each school or club. Accepted teams will be confirmed and notified via email to their school's head representative, prior to each tournament. Tournament officials reserve the right to reject any application to compete for any reason whatsoever.
- 3. PURCHASING OF INFORMATION** – The purchasing of, or bartering for, or soliciting for information about locating or catching fish on tournament waters, including but not limited to GPS waypoints (other than through commercially available sources) is not allowed within 10 days of the start of any tournament. The hiring of fishing guide services is not permitted by contestants, coaches, boat captains, or anyone working on a team's behalf within 30 days of the start of any tournament. Information may be shared amongst those who are registered for said tournament. Violation of this rule may result in disqualification. A team may not pay a boat captain for their services. A team may

reimburse a boat captain for actual fuel and travel expenses related to the tournament. However, a team or anyone acting on a team's behalf may NOT pay or "hire" a boat captain for their time or knowledge. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of all points and receive zero points for that tournament.)

4.OFF-LIMITS, PRACTICE & COMPETITION – There is no practice period or off-limits period prior to the start of onsite registration. There are however, specific rules defined below that govern practice within 10 days of each tournament. Contestants, coaches, and boat captains may be on tournament waters until official sunset the day prior to the tournament. Contestants, coaches, and boat captains may not enter tournament waters to locate bass or potential fishing waters or sightsee after the official sunset the day prior to the tournament, except during tournament hours. Testing equipment on tournament waters after the official sunset the day prior to the tournament is permitted only with prior approval from the tournament director. Within 10 days of the tournament, no contestant, coach, or boat captain may practice with, hire, or barter for, or engage in service with, for the purposes of locating or catching bass on the tournament waters, any person who has been a bass guide for hire on the tournament waters within the last 30 days, unless such person is the parent or documented permanent legal guardian of a contestant on a team in the event. Written proof of permanent legal guardianship to the satisfaction of tournament officials may be required. Within 10 days of the tournament, contestants may only practice with another registered participant of the league, that is confirmed in the tournament, their coach, their boat captain, or an immediate family member (mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or grandparent) who also meets the above criteria concerning guides, or a captain that doesn't meet the above criteria that is pre-approved by the E-Board. Nobody else, except a media representative or official approved by the tournament director, is allowed in the boat. Within 10 days of the tournament and extending through competition, contestants, coaches, and boat captains may not solicit information about locating or catching fish on tournament waters from anyone except contestants, coaches, and boat captains confirmed in the tournament and through publicly available sources. Quasi-public websites, blogs, and/or social media pages, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Periscope, set up for the specific purpose of sharing information with individuals or a small group of individuals, are not publicly available sources. Within 10 days of the tournament and extending through competition, contestants, coaches, and boat captains may not follow a non-contestant's boat or participate in the placing of markers, brush, or other physical fish attractors by non-contestants or the practice of "hole sitting" by anyone. Also, within the 10 day off limits period, if the boat captain has another tournament on the same body of water as the league's event, you must notify someone on the E-Board for documentation (it will be allowed but just needs to be noted). During competition days, contestants, coaches, and boat captains may not place brush or other physical fish attractors, including chum of any kind, in tournament waters. Flights over tournament waters, including drones, for the express purpose of locating fish or fishing locations are not permitted on competition days. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of all points and receive zero points for that tournament.)

5. BOAT ASSIGNMENTS – Takeoff order (boat number) is determined by tournament officials. Most events, including all opens, are random draw. Some events may be based on date and time of entry. Each team must be accompanied on the water by a coach or boat captain who will supply a boat, but is not permitted to fish. All tournaments will be a controlled take off unless there is a weather-related safety issue. If there is a weather-related safety issue, the tournament may become a trailering event with teams not being allowed to leave their chosen launch site until official safe light.

6. SAFETY – Safe boating must be observed at all times. Each contestant, coach, and boat captain on the water is required to wear a fastened U.S. Coast Guard approved chest-type personal flotation device any

time the combustion engine is running from boat check until weigh-in each day of the tournament. All boats must be equipped with an emergency ignition-shutoff device that must be securely attached to the driver's body whenever it is on plane or the combustion engine is running and in gear. All persons in a tournament boat shall remain seated in a manufacturer recommended on-plane seating location with a driver behind the steering wheel or at the tiller in full control of the boat whenever it is on plane or the combustion engine is running and in gear. Sitting on pedestal seats while the combustion engine is in operation and in gear is not permitted. Contestants are not permitted to drive the boat when the combustion engine is running. Safe boat conduct must be observed at all times by contestants, coaches, and boat captains. At the discretion of the tournament director, tournament days may be shortened, postponed, or canceled due to unsafe weather or water conditions. Contestants, coaches, and boat captains may leave their boat and seek shelter in bad weather or when danger is imminent. Violation of this rule may result in disqualification. If the event is a two-day event, a team may only be disqualified for one of the days and not both depending on the rule that was broken. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of days catch and receive 20 points less than last place to weigh a fish for that tournament.)

7. SPORTSMANSHIP – All contestants, coaches, and boat captains are required to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, and conservation, and to conduct themselves in a manner that will be a credit to themselves, TBF, SAF, MLF, tournament sponsors, the school the team is representing, the sport of fishing, and our combined efforts to promote the sport. Conduct not complying with these standards includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Violation of, or failure to comply with any of the rules for the High School Fishing season. Consumption and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or cannabis products or any kind of mind-altering substance during registration, the pretournament meeting or during tournament hours extending through the weigh-in procedure.
- Suspension, probation, or ban from any tournament or fishing organization may result in not being permitted to participate in the league.
- Violation of a posted no-wake area.
- Publicly criticizing or questioning the integrity of High School Fishing league, TBF/SAF, or MLF or their officials, including but not limited to any rules, policies, and procedures.
- Dissemination of disparaging content or content that one should reasonably know would harm the reputation of High School Fishing League, TBF/SAF, or MLF companies, officials and sponsors.
- Any other words, conduct, or actions reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with tournament rules, or which fail to comply with the standards set.
- Profanity, vulgar language or music, within all contestants, coaches, and boat captains, is not tolerated.

In case of any conduct not complying with the standards outlined above, tournament officials have the right to refuse an application to compete, to deny a confirmed application to compete, to disqualify a contestant, or impose any penalty outlined herein. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of all points and receive zero points for that tournament.)

8. BOAT OPERATION – To qualify as a coach or boat captain, the person or persons accompanying a team must be at least 19 years old and reside in the same state as the students comprising the team or be an immediate family member (mother, father, brother, sister, aunt/uncle or grandparent) that is at least 19 years old. In the event of boat or engine failure, after a team is onsite for a tournament, the tournament director may at his sole discretion, arrange for a volunteer boat captain to assist a team.

Bass guides who operate or have operated for hire at any time during the previous 30 days from the tournament date on the designated tournament waters are not permitted as boat captains unless they are the parent or documented permanent legal guardian of one of the contestants on a team in the event. A guide is defined as anyone who is paid for his or her time and knowledge to take someone fishing. Written proof of permanent legal guardianship to the satisfaction of the tournament director may be required. The use of a guide as defined above will result in disqualification. Contestants may operate the trolling motor. Coaches and boat captains may provide assistance, including information about locating and catching fish, but are not permitted to fish on competition days. Boat captains may net fish, aid in culling of fish/fish care, tie on lures (teaching kids how), and assist with back-lashes by removing the reel from the rod and while sitting in the driver or passenger seat of the boat. Contestants, coaches, and boat captains may not use mobile communication devices of any kind, including but not limited to phone, tablets, radios, etc. to communicate with anyone who is NOT a registered contestant in the tournament, about locating or catching fish on tournament waters during tournament hours. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of days catch and receive 20 points less than last place to weigh a fish for that tournament.)

9. BOAT & HORSEPOWER REGULATION – All boats must be propeller-driven and a minimum of 16 feet in length. Pontoon and tri-toon boats that meet all other requirements under this rule are permitted. Each boat must have all required U.S. Coast Guard safety equipment. Boats must contain a properly aerated livewell space to maintain alive, a limit catch of bass. Maximum horsepower for all outboards used in tournament competition shall not exceed the horsepower capacity set forth on the “Maximum Capacities” placard described below. Each boat must have a clearly legible “Maximum Capacities” (or comparably titled) placard that includes a maximum horsepower rating affixed to the boat by the manufacturer. The horsepower of the outboard engine must not exceed the maximum horsepower capacity specified on this placard. By signing the entry form, contestants, coaches, and boat captains agree to submit their boat and/or motor to an inspection by tournament officials. Falsifying information on entry forms or altering the horsepower numbers on the motor or rating placard will be cause for disqualification from the tournament and may result in ineligibility to compete in future High School Fishing tournaments. Fishing platforms must be factory-installed equipment or commercially available aftermarket equipment that is permanently installed in the boat. No portable platforms may be used in tournament competition. Fuel may be carried only in factory-installed (built-in) fuel tanks or auxiliary fuel tanks that are securely strapped or otherwise fastened to the boat. Any additional fuel used during the tournament day must be purchased from a retail facility open to the public and pumped through a hose with a nozzle in contestant boats during tournament hours. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of days catch and receive 20 points less than last place to weigh a fish for that tournament.)

10. PERMITTED FISHING METHODS – Fishing is defined as having a lure attached to a line and a rod and reel with the rod in hand. All bass must be caught alive in a conventional sporting manner. All lures must adhere to state regulations. Only artificial lures may be used, with the exception of pork trailers and biodegradable soft baits. Only ONE fishing rod may be used at a time. 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. All bass caught while visibly-fishing for bass must be hooked inside the mouth and immediately shown to your coach or boat captain for verification. . (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of days catch and receive 20 points less than last place to weigh a fish for that tournament.)

- 11. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS & BOUNDARIES** – Teams may fish anywhere on tournament waters within the boundaries defined by the tournament director that are available to the public and accessible by boat except areas designated as “off-limits,” “no boats,” “keep out,” “restricted,” “no trespassing,” or “no fishing” (or similar language or markings intended to restrict public access) by tournament officials, commercial property owners and/or local, state, or federal officials, or within 50 yards of a contestant’s boat that was first anchored. An anchored boat is a boat held in a stable position by a line attached to a weight or by a Power-Pole, Talon, or similar shallow water anchor with the trolling motor in the up position. All fishing must be conducted from the boat. At no time may a contestant leave the boat to land a fish or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. The cutting of trees, bushes, and/or logs after the start of the tournament, and/or the removal of official commercial, local, state, or federal barricades at any time to make an area more accessible by boat or gain access for fishing is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification from the tournament. The use of cables, ropes, chains, or any type of block and tackle system to maneuver a boat into fishing waters is strictly prohibited and will result in disqualification from the tournament. Teams must leave and return to the check-in by boat unless during trailering-initiated tournament. The boat must remain in the tournament waters during the tournament day. In the event of equipment failure or emergency, the tournament director must be notified as soon as it is safe to do so. There are then three permitted methods of returning to the check-in: (1) by both contestants remaining in their boat and being towed by water, (2) with permission from the tournament director, by both contestants entering the boat of another team or (3) both contestants entering a rescue (non-tournament affiliated) boat so designated by the tournament director. Under these three conditions, the team’s catch may be counted without a penalty (except for late penalties, dead-fish penalties, or other penalties pertaining to other tournament rules) provided each team’s fish are adequately marked or separated so as to provide clear distinction of each catch to the tournament director. Teams that elect to return to the check-in by any other means than cited above, will forfeit their day’s catch to that point in time of the tournament day. Abandoning a boat and leaving it adrift without proper tie-off, or anchoring after a mechanical failure, may result in disqualification of that day’s weight. Any team returning to the check-in point will be eligible to restart and resume competition under the supervision of the tournament director or his designated tournament official. It is the sole responsibility of the teams to locate the tournament director to request a restart. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of days catch and receive 20 points less than last place to weigh a fish for that tournament.)
- 12. CHECKPOINTS** – There will be only one check point for boat check in the morning and one check-in point in the afternoon. Failure to go through boat check and checkout in the morning or failure to check in at the check-in point will result in a zero for that day’s weight and team will receive last place points. All fishing must cease upon check-in.
- 13. LATE PENALTY** – Teams that are not at the designated afternoon checkpoint at the appointed time will be penalized 1 pound per minute, deducted from the total weight. Teams more than 15 minutes late will lose credit for that day’s weight, and receive last place points.
- 14. LIVE FISH** – Every effort must be made to keep bass alive through the use of a properly aerated livewell. Eight ounces (1/2 pound) will be deducted from the total weight for each dead bass presented for weigh-in.

- 15. SCORING** – Scoring is determined by the pounds and ounces of each team's catch during each tournament. Only largemouth, spotted, or redeye bass are accepted species. No regurgitated forage or other foreign matter may be placed in a bass. The daily limit will be five bass per team unless conditions dictate a reduced limit or the state or lake limit is less than five, in which case those limits will prevail. After possessing the daily limit, upon teams next catch, teams must stop fishing and cull immediately. Teams possessing more than the daily limit must notify the tournament director immediately upon discovery of the infraction, and reduce their catch to the daily limit by releasing live bass. Teams possessing more than the daily limit will be penalized 2 pounds for each bass over the limit. The minimum length limit for bass will be 12 inches unless the state or lake limit is more than 12 inches, or tournament officials set a longer limit for a specific tournament, in which case the state or lake limit, or longer limit set by tournament officials for the tournament will prevail. Bass presented for weigh-in that fail to measure the prescribed length limit will be penalized at the rate of 1 pound for each short bass presented, plus the loss of the short fish. After competitors check in at the official checkpoint, they must present all fish in possession that meet the tournament size limit to tournament officials to be counted, measured, and weighed. Once a team's catch has been presented to tournament officials, that day's catch is final. No one may return to a boat to retrieve a bass mistakenly left behind. After being weighed, each team's catch must be turned over to tournament officials unless otherwise instructed. Each team's catch must be presented in an official weigh-in bag. The winning team is determined by the day's heaviest catch.
- 16. TIES** – Total number of fish for the tournament will break ties followed by the total number of live fish, and then big fish. If a tie remains, points and prizes will be split equally.
- 17. LOGO DISPLAY & MEDIA COVERAGE** – Contestants, coaches, and boat captains may wear their own apparel. Tournament officials reserve the right, in their sole discretion, to prohibit any contestant, coach, or boat captain's apparel that is determined to be offensive.
- 18. TRUTH VERIFICATION TEST** – Each contestant and coach agree to submit by signature on the tournament entry form, to a polygraph or voice stress analysis examination and to abide by its conclusion. Failure to pass an examination will result in disqualification from the tournament. Truth verification tests will be used at the sole discretion of tournament officials, and the determination of the meaning of the results will be made solely by tournament officials. (Penalty for violation of this rule will be loss of day's catch and zero points for that tournament and possible future ineligibility to fish in this league).
- 19. INSURANCE** – Liability insurance with coverage in reasonable amounts is required on all bass boats used in High School Fishing tournaments. Proof of insurance must be with the boat being used, and must cover all passengers in the boat. Random checks may be conducted. Failure to provide proof of insurance when requested by the tournament director may result in disqualification.