

2023 55th ANNUAL GEORGETOWN BLUE MARLIN TOURNAMENT RULES

Registration/Check-in: All registered boats must be checked-in with the Tournament Committee and entry fee paid by 6:30pm, Wednesday May 24th to qualify for prizes and trophies. Any boat entered in the Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament shall not be entered in another tournament simultaneously. The Tournament reserves the right to deny entry to anyone. All registered boats and anglers must be in compliance with Federal and State Regulations regarding recreational and/or charter fishing as well as SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Tournament Fishing Guidelines.

Rules Meeting: At least one person from each boat will be present at the Captain's meeting and is responsible for knowing the tournament rules including any changes that may take place at the meeting on the Wednesday evening prior to the tournament.

General Tournament Rules:

1. Boats are required to leave from Georgetown, South Carolina/Winyah Bay, must fish in the coastal waters of South Carolina, and may not leave the dock before 3:00 a.m. No lines in the water before 8:00 a.m., including teasers and fishing for live bait. Lines out of the water each day at 3:00 p.m. **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.** Boats must declare a fishing or non-fishing day by VHF, telephone, cell phone or in person prior to leaving its slip/dock or before 6:00 a.m. of that day. If a boat has not declared, and is not in its slip/dock, it is considered a fishing day for that craft. If necessary, a boat may notify a committee boat before lines-in time.
2. Boats may fish two-out-of-three eligible fishing days, Captain's Choice. Eligible fishing days are: Thursday May 25th, Friday May 26th & Saturday May 27th. In the event these three days of fishing are canceled, then Sunday May 28th shall be a fishing day (weather day). One day of fishing constitutes a tournament.
3. Small Craft Advisory as defined and posted by NOAA Weather Service cancels that day's fishing. This will be determined no later than 6:00 a.m. each fish day. It is understood that the safety of a participating vessel is ultimately the responsibility of the Captain.
4. Official Tournament Time will be continuous GPS time.
5. Tournament VHF channel will be announced at the captains meeting.
6. In order to accommodate mechanical or other unforeseen problems, boats may be substituted up until the end of the Captain's meeting. Boats will be allowed to withdraw from the tournament up until start of fishing the first day with a prorated portion of the entry fee retained for socials and services provided.
7. 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 or 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, line.** Once the leader is brought within the grasp of the mate 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 all fish caught on that fishing day and the day will be counted as an eligible fish day for the tournament.**
8. This is a rod and reel, hook and line tournament. Double line and leader may not exceed 40ft; neither of which may exceed 30ft. The following practices are illegal in this tournament: a) use of hand line or rope attached to the line or leader, b) shooting, harpooning, or lancing.
9. 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 with artificial lures in tournaments. All tournament entries will adhere to the NOAA and National Fisheries Service definitions of a "non-offset circle hook".

10. Boats earn one point per pound and fraction of a pound for their single Heaviest Blue Marlin weighed in the tournament. No points are awarded for any additional Blue Marlin weighed. The minimum size for landed Blue Marlin is 105 inches measured in a curved line along the body from the fork of the tail to the tip of the lower jaw. A penalty of 600 points will be assessed against a boat for each blue marlin brought to the dock not meeting the minimum South Carolina Governor's Cup Series size requirements. 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 SC Governor's Cup Series tournaments will be increased automatically to exceed the new minimum size by two (2) inches if required.

11. Billfish boated for any reason will not qualify for release points. A billfish may not be brought into the boat unless it is to be brought to the dock for weighing. 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. **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.**

12. White marlin, Spearfish and Sailfish are catch and release only. Tagging is optional and not required for points. Only Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Spearfish and Sailfish are eligible for catch & release points. Scoring for billfish caught & released in good condition is as follows:

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

13. To qualify for catch and release points, a billfish must be fought to the boat according to series guidelines. A billfish is considered caught and points will be awarded when **all** the following has occurred: 1) the leader is grasped by the mate or the leader is wound to the rod tip (a leader may be no longer than 30 feet); 2) the billfish is positively identified to species through digital photography/videography(if species cannot be determined yet 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 are encouraged to remove the hook or cut the line as close as possible to the hook.

14. All released billfish must be clearly photographed/videographed with a digital device provided by each boat. Each boat is required to keep their billfish photography/video on their device until Friday, June 16, 2023. All boats are subject to random photography /videography checks throughout the tournament. Leading boats will be required to submit their camera and/or chips to the Tournament Rules committee following fishing on May 27th, 2023. Fish verification will be at the sole discretion of the tournament Rules committee. Preferable photo/video would include a visible dorsal fin at time of release. The image must include a time and date stamp that corresponds to the time of release recorded by the tournament designated committee boats. Photos must be provided in jpeg format on a removable storage device, and will be used to confirm species identification, release information, and will be used to resolve potential conflicts or formal protests.

15. All billfish hook-ups, catch & releases, and landings must be reported as they occur to a committee boat or another boat that can relay the message to a committee boat prior to or by 3:00 p.m. each day. (Note: the Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament will have the traditional two or three boats designated as Committee Boats each fishing day. In addition, each boat in the tournament is asked to record any and all hook-ups, get-away, releases or landings that it may hear. Due to the wide range of fishing territory allowed, this will help ensure that all calls are recorded)

16. Boat points are awarded at the time of release. Ties between points are broken by the time of release. The date of the release is based on the boat's fishing day (day 1 or 2) as opposed to the tournament fishing day (day 1-2-3). If a tie still remains, the winnings will be split evenly between boats.

17. **Weigh Scales open Thursday at 8:00 a.m.** and will remain open till Saturday at 9:00 pm. In the event of Sunday being a fishing day, the Saturday schedule will prevail.

18. Affidavits and photos/videos must be submitted to DNR staff or a designated tournament representative by 9PM on the day the fish was caught. A designated DNR check station may 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 e-mail to Amy Dukes (DukesA@dnr.sc.gov); affidavits may be emailed to David Black (dblack@georgetownlandingmarina.com). 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.

19. Blue Marlin having mutilation hindering its ability to fight will be disqualified. All fish must be in edible condition and properly processed. Any fish wantonly wasted will be disqualified. All landed Blue Marlin are to be iced or refrigerated until such time as they are released by tournament officials to the boat, after which no more than three hours may pass before the edible tissue is processed and the carcass is disposed of. (PLEASE NOTE: IT IS VERY IMPORTANT that you come to the Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament prepared with sufficient coolers and tools for the dressing of your Blue Marlin should you bring one in to the scales. See to it that you quickly set about the task of this effort after all pictures are taken.)

20. In the tuna Category only Yellowfin, Blackfin, Bluefin, and Bigeye Tuna, will be eligible for prizes.

21. Any dispute must be submitted in writing to the Tournament Director by 9:00 a.m. on the day following the catch of the disputed fish and by 9:00 p.m. on the last day of the tournament. This dispute must be accompanied by a nonrefundable fee of \$1,000. The Tournament Director will convene a Tournament Rules Committee to consider the dispute. The ruling of this Committee is final.

22. Your participation in this tournament signifies agreement to abide by all rules, including all SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series Fishing Guidelines, and you release the 55th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament, Georgetown Landing Marina, and officers, directors, employees and sponsors of the same from any injury, loss or damage which may result to you or any crew members from participation in this event.

THE GEORGETOWN BLUE MARLIN TOURNAMENT IS THE OLDEST BILLFISHING TOURNAMENT IN THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA. THIS EVENT HAS BEEN A LOWCOUNTRY TRADITION FOR FIFTY FOUR YEARS, AND HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY EXCELLENT SERVICE TO YOU, OUR GUESTS, AND GENTLEMAN-LIKE AND LADY-LIKE BEHAVIOR IN RETURN. WE WELCOME YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS YEAR'S RUNNING OF THIS PRESTIGIOUS EVENT.