



2025 57th 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 21st 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 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 22nd, Friday May 23rd & Saturday May 24th. In the event these three days of fishing are canceled, then Sunday May 25th 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/Sailfish 200 Points

13. For a vessel to qualify any billfish for points, a billfish must be fought to the boat in accordance with the GCBS Fishing Guidelines. 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 all billfish on the affidavit. White marlin, spearfish, and sailfish will qualify as caught and released when the following three conditions have been met: 1) the fish has been identified as a billfish, 2) the leader (which may be no longer than 30 ft) is grasped by the crew or wound to the rod tip, and 3) the fish is no longer attached to the rod. Official time of release is when the fish is no longer attached to the rod. The official time of release must be the time relayed to the designated tournament committee boat and recorded on the affidavit. Points will be awarded if the fish was caught in accordance with the GCBS Fishing Guidelines and all three of the above listed conditions are met. No photo/video documentation is required for white marlin, spearfish, or sailfish.

*14. Blue marlin will qualify as caught and released when video documentation of the following is provided:

1) species identification, 2) the leader (which may be no longer than 30 ft) being grasped by the crew or wound to the rod tip, and 3) the fish no longer attached to the rod. Official time of release is when the fish is no longer attached to the rod. The official time of release must be the time relayed to the designated tournament committee boat and recorded on the affidavit. All video documentation must include an accurate date and time stamp. Photos with corresponding date and time stamp can supplement the video for species identification purposes only. Points will be awarded at the time of release if all three of the documentation requirements are met. If the fish was caught in accordance with the GCBS Fishing Guidelines but these documentation requirements are not met, the fish will be awarded 200 points. **Boats should attempt to remove the hook or cut the leader as close as possible to the hook.**

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 (GovCup@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. White marlin, sailfish, and spearfish are catch and release only. Tagging is optional and not required for points. The minimum size for Series points or awards consideration 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 (LJFL). 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. 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 GCBS Series tournaments will be increased automatically to exceed the new minimum size by two (2) inches if required.

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. Polygraph Tests shall be administered to captains, mates and others as deemed necessary by the Tournament Director/Committee at Georgetown Landing Marina. Participants must make themselves available for polygraph testing following notice from the Tournament Director by the conclusion of the tournament, prior to the awards ceremony, Saturday May 24th, 2025. Individuals that are required to take the polygraph test must not consume alcohol or any controlled substance within eight hours prior to the test. A participant's refusal to take a polygraph test or failure to answer test questions in a manner satisfactory to the Tournament Committee, in their sole discretion, may result in disqualification. By entering the Tournament, participants consent to the admissibility of the polygraph results in any dispute or proceeding arising out of the tournament.

23. 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 57th 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 FIVE 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.