

# Massachusetts Bass Federation Team Trail Tournament Rules

January, 2024

**Introduction:** These Tournament rules are subject to change at any time. For an updated copy go online to [www.massbass.com](http://www.massbass.com) or call the Mass Bass Federation Vice President/Tournament Director to get an updated copy. **It is the sole responsibility of all participants to read and be familiar with all tournament rules.**

**1. RULES:** The following rules shall apply to all Federation Team events. Interpretation of these rules shall be left exclusively to the Federation Tournament Committee. Tournament Officials (consisting of the Tournament Committee members only) shall be designated at all tournament sites. The Tournament Director has the final say on all matters at tournament site.

**2. PARTICIPATION AND ELIGIBILITY:** Participation in the Mass Bass Federation Team Tournament Trail is OPEN TO ALL TEAMS that meet all boating and insurance requirements.

Proof of mandatory \$300,000 boating liability insurance is required to participate in all Federation events. Proof of insurance must be presented at time of registration. All tournaments are team events and shall consist of two persons per boat. Participants under the age of eighteen (18) must be paired with an angler of legal age who will assume responsibility in all matters. All Participants must turn in a signed Participant Waiver prior to the first Tournament they enter each year.

**3. Registration:** All boats must be registered with the tournament official by 6:30 A.M. the official registration cut-off time. Tournament officials, prior to the start of the tournament, will do a full boat inspection. A number shall be assigned to every boat. There shall be only one official point for check out in the morning, and check in point in the afternoon, and this point shall be designated at the tournament briefing. Any boat that comes after 6:30 A.M will be allowed to fish but will be the starter boat. If a boat arrives after the tournament has started that boat will be allowed to fish as long as there is a worker at the site to check the boat and take entry money. An angler may fish alone but will only gain points for himself and will be limited to the number of fish he may weigh in.

**4. Pre-Tournament Practice: Check each year to see if there are off limits periods. If there are:** No contestant or Federation member shall fish or boat on the tournament waters during the official cut-off period.

**These are every year:** Contestants wishing to bring a boat across tournament waters from another site (cottage, campsite, etc.) must first obtain permission from the tournament director. Any infraction of this rule will be grounds for disqualification that day and from all federation tournaments for one year or more.

**For 30 days prior to and during the tournament a competitor cannot:**

- A.** Be on the water with or solicit information from a known guide or local expert.
- B.** Have the assistance or advice of a professional guide, state or federal wildlife agency employee, or any other person deemed a "local expert" on these tournament waters by the Tournament Director, unless he is a contestant in the tournament.
- C.** Nor enter the tournament waters with anyone who has been on the tournament waters during an off-limit period or solicit information from anyone that has been on the tournament waters during the off limits.

**D.** Each competitor agrees to report to the Tournament Director any violation or infraction of these Tournament Rules. The failure to report violations or suggestions to violate these rules or false verification of weigh-in forms will be cause for disqualification. The penalty for any infraction of this rule is a one-year or more suspension from all Federation events.

You must obey all state fishing regulations.

**5. Safety:** Safe boating conduct must be observed at all times by all competitors. Each competitor is required to wear a coast guard approved floatation device. This P.F.D. must be strapped, snapped or zipped securely any time the combustion motor is in gear.

**6. Sportsmanship: YOU MUST OBEY ALL STATE FISHING REGULATIONS**

All tournament competitors are expected to follow the highest standard of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation. Any infraction of the fundamental principles of good sportsmanship or state fishing or boating regulations may be deemed cause for disqualification. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially with regard to boating and angling in the vicinity of non-competitors who are on the tournament waters. All bass must be caught alive and in a sporting manner. Anyone caught intentionally snagging fish will be immediately disqualified and can face further disciplinary action from the Federation. Any act by a competitor, which reflects unfavorably upon the Federation's effort to promote fisheries conservation, clean waters and courtesy shall be cause for disqualification. Drunkenness of any competitor during the tournament will not be tolerated and shall be cause for automatic disqualification from this and future Massachusetts Bass Federation tournaments. No alcoholic beverages or any other depressants or stimulants, shall be tolerated in the boats or at the weigh-in areas.

**7. Tackle & Equipment: NO PENETRATING CULL TAGS MAY BE USED AT ANY TIME.**

Only artificial lures will be permitted. Live bait or prepared bait will not be permitted, with the exception of pork strips, rinds, etc. Only one rod (8 foot maximum length from butt or handle to rod tip) and reel may be used (lure in water, attached to line, connected to rod and reel) at one time (with up to two baits per line) per angler. Other rigs as specified above may be in the boat ready to use. No electronically controlled lures may be used. Trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited, defined as using gas or electric motor to propel the boat in the direction of travel as lures are dragged along behind the boat. Adjustment of boat position while drifting and dragging lures IS allowed. THERE SHALL BE NO FISHING, (LINES OR LURES IN THE WATER) ANYTIME THE COMBUSTION MOTOR IS OPERATING (unless running big motor to charge weak battery).

**8. Horsepower Regulations:** Maximum horsepower for all outboard motors used in this competition will not exceed the horsepower limitation set by the U.S. Coast Guard in their ruling of Nov. 1, 1972. Each boat must have an U.S. Coast Guard horsepower rating plate attached to the boat by the manufacturer. Any boat manufactured prior to Nov. 1, 1972 must adhere to the rating set by the U.S. Coast Guard for similar boats. Maximum horsepower for all outboard motors used in competition will be 250 HP for any boat 21 foot, 6 inches or less and 300 HP for any boat over 21 feet, 6 inches or more.

Each competitor agrees to submit, by their signature on the tournament registration form, the boat and outboard motor used in this tournament to an inspection by factory trained personnel, if there is any reason to suspect the horsepower is in excess of this rating. Normal maintenance to increase the performance of your motor is allowed. Changing or altering standard factory parts of your motor to increase the horsepower rating is forbidden.

**9. For the safety of all Contestants:** All gas-powered motors will be equipped with some type of operable ignition kill switch safety device, which may be checked the morning of the tournament.

**This ignition kill device MUST be attached to the driver any time the combustion engine is in gear.** Anytime the combustion engine is operating and in gear, there must be a driver in the driver's seat in full control of the boat. Fishing boats may be used that are at least 16 (sixteen) feet in length or longer, are propeller driven and may not have a raised deck or platform which is higher than the gunnel of the boat. Canoes, barges, or similar cumbersome craft will not be permitted. No boat equipped with stick steering will be permitted to be used during tournament hours by any competitor. The tournament committee shall make the definition of stick steering. Tiller steering is permitted. All boats must have a current registration.

**10. Basic Boat Equipment:** Every boat shall be expected to have all state required safety equipment. All boats must have a functional live-well space properly aerated to adequately maintain alive a limit catch of bass by both contestants using the boat. Tournament officials shall have the sole responsibility of determining whether aeration and capacity is "proper and adequate". Boats that do not have factory installed gas tanks are restricted to a maximum of 18 gallons of gasoline in tanks that meet U.S. Coast Guard Regulations. Gas tanks must be properly secured or strapped in the boat.

**11. Permitted Fishing Locations:** Fishing on the tournament water is permitted anywhere except within 25 yards of another competitor's boat, which was first anchored. An anchored boat is defined as having the anchor in the water and the electric motor out of the water. No such anchored boat shall permit selected competitors to fish within the 25 yards claimed by said boat. No boat will be permitted to drop anchor on another competitor's boat until that boat(s) has moved 50 yards away. Only that water open to ALL public fishing will be considered tournament waters. Any water closed to public fishing shall be closed to tournament contestants. All angling must be done from the boat. The cutting of trees, brush and/or logs after the start of the tournament and/or removal of official local, state or federal barricades or barriers at any time to make an area more accessible by boat is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification. 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. Contestants must leave and return to official checkpoint by boat. Both competitors must remain in boat at all times except in case of emergency. If contestants must leave the boat to relieve themselves during tournament hours, all fishing must cease and they shall return immediately to the boat when done. No boat shall approach within reaching distances of another boat during the tournament except for an emergency.

**12. Scoring:** Tournament awards and final winners shall be determined by total weight. Only Largemouth, Smallmouth, Kentucky and Spotted bass will be weighed. The Tournament Director, prior to the tournament, shall determine the limit aggregate for team events. The prevailing statutes bind all competitors and regulations of said states. **At no time shall a competitor have in his possession more than the allowed Tournament limit. Culling is permitted, but must be done immediately. There will be no culling of fish at the ramp.** Once a competitor has checked in all fish are the property of the Tournament Director. The minimum length for bass shall be twelve (12) inches. Only bass as described above which measure (12) inches or more in length with mouth and tail closed shall be weighed in. Each fish, presented for weighed in, less than twelve (12) inches will have one (1) pound deducted from the total weight and those fish will be disqualified. Any bass that appears to have been mangled, mashed, or mauled or otherwise altered will be weighed and credited only at the discretion of the tournament officials. Bass must not be placed on a stringer at any time during the tournament. Any Team fishing cannot share points if the team splits for any reason. No points will be shared by 2 Teams.

**12A. Lunker:** Tournaments will have a separate Split Lunker pool (100% payback of this pool). Each team entered in the lunker pool may weigh in one largemouth and one smallmouth in an

attempt to win the pool. Legal dead bass CANNOT BE WEIGHED FOR LUNKER. The heaviest fish of each specie, from all fish weighed, will win one half of the pool amount. If only one specie is weighed in (all largemouth, no smallmouth or all smallmouth, no largemouth), the largest fish of that specie will win THE ENTIRE POOL.

**13. Measuring Devices:** Due to the variance in measuring devices, a request to check your measuring device against the Official Measuring Device (Golden Rule) with no penalty to the contestant, will be allowed. There will be no courtesy check for fish allowed.

**14. Catch and Release:** For each legal dead bass presented to the weigh-in officials, the competitor shall have four (4) ounces (or 0.25 lbs.) of weight deducted from his daily total. The tournament officials shall have sole authority for assessing penalty points. Competitors bringing more fish to the scales than the limit allowed in the tournament will have their catch culled down to the tournament limit, starting with the largest fish and one pound per extra fish will be deducted from their total weight.

**15. Late Penalty:** Competitors who are not in the official checkpoint area, visible, close in and off plane, at the appointed time, shall be penalized. At one minute past the appointed return time you will be one minute late. (example: official return time 3:00 PM, at 3:01 PM you will be one minute late, at 3:02 PM you will be 2 minutes late, etc.) The penalty shall be at a rate of 1 pound per minute, to be deducted from the total weight of their catch that day. This penalty also pertains to any weight to be counted toward a Lunker award. After being fifteen minutes late you are disqualified. THERE SHALL BE NO EXCUSE FOR TARDINESS. All fishing must cease upon check-in. Exact starting and check-in times will be announced at the pre-tournament briefing.

**15A. Contestants, boats and breakdowns:** Contestants must not depart the boat to land fish or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Contestants must leave and return to the check in area by boat and all boats must remain in the tournament waters during the tournament day. No boat may be loaded on a trailer before the weigh in except with the permission of the Tournament Director. In the event of equipment failure or emergency the Tournament Director must be notified as soon as it is safe to do so. If a boat is disabled there are only two permitted methods of returning to the check in: (1) By both anglers remaining in the boat and being towed by water (tow boat may be a non-contestant) or (2) with the permission of the Tournament Director, by one or both anglers entering the boat of another team in the tournament, at which point all fishing must cease by all parties. Under these two conditions the rescued team's catch may be counted without penalty (except for late penalties, dead fish penalties or other penalties pertaining to other tournament rules) provided all fish are adequately marked so as to provide clear distinction to the Tournament Director. Contestants who elect to return to the check in by any other means than cited above will be disqualified and will not be allowed to weigh in. Teams must remain in sight of each other at all times. The momentary condition of being out of each other's sight for a restroom break is permitted, however ALL FISHING MUST CEASE any time partners are separated.

**16. Ties:** Ties in weight will be decided by number of fish. If teams remain tied, Points and places will be combined and divided equally.

**17.** None of the above rules shall prohibit a properly designated tournament official from approaching or boarding any competitor's boat any time during the tournament hours.

**18. Protests/Complaints:** All contestants are required to report all complaints or violations against any competitor to the Tournament Director in writing prior to the presentation of awards at the tournament site. The Tournament Committee, before the presentation of awards, shall rule upon all violations and/or complaints. Tournament Trail Director shall have the power to break a tie vote. No person presenting a protest, or person being protested against can take part in Tournament Committee voting.

**19. Special instructions may be in effect during any tournament when tournament**

**Director deems it necessary.**

**20. Each competitor agrees to submit to a polygraph test should he be accused of any rule violation at any time after the tournament.** The administration and interpretation of the polygraph test shall be solely the responsibility of the Federation Tournament Director and his Committee, and shall be used (or not used) at the discretion of the Tournament Committee. Without limiting the foregoing, the Tournament Committee shall have sole discretion to select the place, at which such polygraph test shall be administered, the individual who administers such polygraph test, and the scope of the questions, which may be asked during such test. The Participant shall be available, at his expense, at the location selected by the Tournament Committee and shall cooperate in all respects with such examination. Failure to take this test shall mean automatic disqualification.

**21. Violation of any of these rules listed shall be cause for disqualification.** All state boating regulations and applicable safety codes will be adhered to or face disqualification.

**22. T.O.C.:** If a Tournament of Champions is scheduled, all those qualifying for and wishing to participate in the T.O.C must be or must become Massachusetts Bass Federation/TBF members. To qualify, teams must adhere to the T.O.C entry qualifications listed on Tournament Trail Flyer (see website). Both persons on a "team" must be Mass Bass/TBF member to get points and for the tournament to count towards T.O.C qualification. Trail points finish order will be used to determine Team of the Year as well as takeoff position in the T.O.C. Any single person qualifying for the T.O.C. with up to five different partners will be allowed to choose the partner that he or she wants from one of these four partners. If a person fishes with a person for three tournaments, the qualifying angler must fish with that partner. (Unless otherwise allowed by the Tournament Committee) If two anglers qualify together, they may not split up and take two spots in the T.O.C with other partners. They must fish together or only one may fish. If two partners cannot come to a mutual agreement, then neither will be allowed to fish. ALL T.O.C. PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE FISHED AT LEAST ONE OF THE FIRST FIVE TRAIL TOURNAMENTS.

**23. Trail Champions:** A trail champion will be crowned at the end of the fifth Trail tournament. The champion will be determined by total number of points accumulated in the total number of tournaments fished. Those wishing to compete for Tournament plaques must be a Mass Bass/TBF member prior to the first scheduled tournament of the year, otherwise you will be fishing for prize money only.

**24. RADIOS/CAMERAS:** During tournament hours, a competitor may not use a CB radio, a VHF marine band radio, a cellular phone, or any other type of communications device for the purpose of locating or catching fish. Contestants are permitted to transmit by radio or telephone only in the event of an emergency or for business or personal reason not related to fishing. If so equipped, contestants may listen to the marine band weather information. Underwater cameras or any other underwater viewing devices are not allowed for use during official tournament hours.

**25. State Championship:** The State Championship may have some differing rules.