

24TH ANNUAL

Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic

at Sandestin®

OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES

June 17 – 22, 2026 • Baytowne Marina, Sandestin • Miramar Beach, Florida

Live scoring: ecbc.catchstat.com Event info: [FishECBC.com](https://fishecbc.com)

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The following rules govern the Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic at Sandestin® (the “Tournament”). Capitalized terms have the meanings given in Section 2. Read these rules in full; by entering, every Participant agrees to be bound by them.

Section 1: General Provisions

1.1 Acceptance of Rules. These rules — including the version published in print and online at FishECBC.com and ecbc.catchstat.com — are subject to change without notice prior to the start of fishing. Additional instructions and clarifications are issued at the Captain’s Meeting. It is the sole responsibility of every participating angler, captain, crew member, and guest (collectively, “Participants”) to know and abide by the Tournament Rules as published and as amended.

1.2 Binding Acceptance. By registering for, paying the entry fee for, or participating in any capacity in the Tournament, each Participant — individually and on behalf of their heirs, executors, administrators, assigns, and personal representatives — agrees to be bound by the entirety of these rules, including without limitation the Release of All Claims (Section 19), the Indemnification provision (Section 19), the Assumption of Risk, and the Photo & Video Release (Section 22). Registration and/or payment of entry fees constitutes full acceptance of all terms and conditions contained herein, regardless of whether the Participant has signed a separate document. Participants further accept that all decisions of the Rules Committee are final, non-appealable, and non-justiciable.

1.3 Nature of the Tournament. The Tournament is a sportfishing competition conducted on the honor system. Participants enter at their own risk and acknowledge the possibility that there may be no winners in a category if no qualifying fish are caught.

1.4 Standard Penalty Clause. Any violation of these rules resulting in disqualification means the entire team is disqualified from the event and forfeits any and all entry money, prizes, and prize money, and — at the discretion of the Rules Committee — may be refused entry to future ECBC tournaments. All disqualification penalties referenced throughout these rules invoke this clause.

1.5 Sportsmanship. All Participants are expected to maintain a reasonable, safe, and sportsmanlike demeanor throughout the Tournament. Unsportsmanlike, unsafe, or threatening conduct toward the Rules Committee, tournament officials, other Participants, or any other person — as determined by the Rules Committee in its sole discretion — will result in immediate disqualification subject to Rule 1.4.

1.6 Rules Committee Authority. The Rules Committee has full and final authority to interpret these rules, resolve any situation not expressly addressed herein, and make all judging and eligibility determinations. The Tournament reserves the right to refuse any application or entry, with or without cause.

Section 2: Definitions

The following terms are used throughout these rules and carry the specific meanings defined below:

2.1 Participants. All anglers, captains, crew, and guests entered in the Tournament and aboard the vessel during fishing days.

2.2 Billfish. Blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and spearfish. Except for a qualifying boated blue marlin, all billfish are eligible for catch-and-release only.

2.3 Gamefish. Dolphin (dorado), yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, and wahoo. Gamefish are eligible for weigh-in categories only.

2.4 Leader Connection. The point where the leader meets the main line or swivel. A billfish is “caught” when the leader connection is wound to the rod tip or a crew member touches the leader.

2.5 Tournament Designator. The identification marker supplied in the team envelope at registration. The same designator is used for all fishing days and must appear in every release video.

2.6 Tail Tag. A numbered identification tag supplied at registration that must be completed and attached to each boated gamefish before it is offloaded.

2.7 Weighmaster. The official designated to operate the scales, judge fish condition, and record official weights at Baytowne Marina.

2.8 Rules Committee. The body designated by the Tournament to interpret these rules and decide all protests, eligibility questions, and disputes.

2.9 Tournament Officials. Persons authorized by the Tournament to conduct roll call, record check-out and check-in, judge videos, and otherwise administer the event, including the official boat stationed at the Destin Pass Bridge.

2.10 VHF-72. VHF Channel 72, the official channel for all tournament communications (check-out, check-in, and weigh-station coordination). Baytowne Marina VHF channel 10.

2.11 LJFL. Lower-Jaw Fork Length — the length of a fish measured from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail, over the body of the fish.

Section 3: Permits, Licenses & Judging

3.1 Basis of Judging. Judging in the ECBC is based solely on these Tournament Rules. Compliance with government regulations is the responsibility of each Participant and is not a basis for a protest or for disqualification of a fish, except where these rules expressly require it.

3.2 Licenses & Permits. Participants are strongly encouraged to comply with all Federal and Florida state laws regarding fishing licenses, size limits, bag limits, and any other applicable regulations. Each vessel is assumed to hold all permits, licenses, and registrations required by law; it is not the responsibility of Tournament officials to verify them.

For Florida saltwater fishing licenses, see myfwc.com/license/recreational/saltwater-fishing/ or call 888.347.4356. For Federal Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permits, see hmspermits.noaa.gov.

Section 4: Communications

All official communications are conducted on VHF-72. Live, unofficial standings and cash-distribution details are available through the live-scoring link at ecbc.catchstat.com. Any updates to procedures or rules will be distributed by group text or email.

Radio & Marina

- Tournament communications (check-out, check-in, weigh-station approach): **VHF Channel 72**.
- Marina services (ice, fuel, dockage) on return: **VHF Channel 10** or call 850.267.7773.

Tournament Contacts

- Rules, registration & angler substitutions: JasonDraughn@sandestin.com
- Payments: KellyMerkel@sandestin.com
- Marina slip reservations: EdBenaglio@sandestin.com
- Dockmaster / marina questions: Dockmaster@sandestin.com or 850.267.7773.
- General inquiries: FishECBC@sandestin.com

Section 5: Weather Policy & Completed Tournament

5.1 Cancellation Authority. The Tournament organizers may cancel any fishing day if, in their best judgment, unsafe conditions exist. Resumption of fishing is announced by 6:00 AM the following morning via group text/email and the tournament website.

5.2 Participant's Own Judgment. A resumption-of-fishing announcement does not ensure the safety of any Participant. Whether to fish must be based solely on the team's own judgment, taking into consideration prevailing conditions, the seaworthiness of the vessel, and the crew's seamanship.

5.3 Completed Tournament. One day of offshore fishing — or any part thereof — by at least one-third of the registered boats constitutes a complete Tournament. No additional fishing days will be added because of the cancellation of any day.

Section 6: Fishing Schedule, Duration & Boundaries

6.1 Schedule of Events. Registration, the Captain's Meeting, fishing days, weigh-in days and hours, and the awards presentation are set out in the official Schedule of Events, published at FishECBC.com and ecbc.catchstat.com. The Schedule of Events controls all dates and times; in the event of any conflict between the Schedule and these rules, the Schedule of Events governs. Times referenced in these rules (start, weigh-station hours, and the return demarcation deadline) are those posted in the official Schedule and confirmed at the Captain's Meeting.

6.2 Fishing Hours. Tournament fishing begins at the shotgun start (see Section 9) and ends at the return finish line (see Section 10). A fish hooked before the end of fishing may be fought until it is

boated (gamefish), released, or lost. Participants may bait fish before the start, but no lines or teasers targeting eligible Tournament species may be in the water before the official start.

6.3 Extended or Shortened Hours. The organizers reserve the right to change starting and ending times to coincide with weather, tides, and improved fishing conditions. Hours will not be changed during the Tournament unless all teams are included and no qualifying fish have yet been caught or released.

6.4 Boundaries. The Tournament imposes no geographic fishing boundaries. All eligible species must be caught in the Gulf of America in accordance with these rules.

Section 7: Equipment & Angling Rules

7.1 IGFA Spirit. Participants are expected to compete in the spirit of the IGFA Saltwater Equipment and Angling Rules and to uphold the highest level of integrity and sportsmanship.

7.2 Rod Hand-off. Any team member may set the hook and fight the fish, or set the hook and pass the rod to another team member within the first minute of the hook-up. The rod may be passed only once; thereafter the angler must fight the fish unassisted.

7.3 Prohibited Practices. Dart gaffs and harpoons are prohibited. No vessel may have more than one blue marlin in its possession at any time. Culling or discarding a previously boated billfish — including discarding a boated blue marlin because it is under length or in favor of a larger fish — is strictly prohibited and results in disqualification of the entire team under Rule 1.4.

7.4 No Transfer Between Vessels. There shall be no pooling of the catch and no transfer of any fish, video, or scorecard from one vessel to another. Every fish and **every release video must be brought in aboard the vessel** from which it was caught. The Rules Committee may waive this rule only where a person's safety or health is at risk.

7.5 Substitutions. Substitution of boats, teams, or anglers after the shotgun start is prohibited. Angler substitutions before the start must be cleared in advance through the Tournament (JasonDraughn@sandestin.com).

Section 8: Eligible Species, Disqualifications & Point System

8.1 Official Scoring. Eligible species are scored as follows. A fish under the minimum size, or any fish weighed in excess of its daily limit, does not qualify for points.

Species	Method / Scoring	Minimum Size	Daily Limit per Boat
Blue Marlin	Release: 500 pts • Weigh: 1 pt / lb	110" LJFL (weigh)	1 weighed
White Marlin	Release only: 200 pts	—	No limit (release)
Sailfish	Release only: 175 pts	—	No limit (release)
Spearfish	Release only: 175 pts	—	No limit (release)

Species	Method / Scoring	Minimum Size	Daily Limit per Boat
Dolphin (Dorado)	Weigh only: 1 pt / lb	20 lbs	3
Bigeye Tuna	Weigh only: 1 pt / lb	20 lbs	3
Yellowfin Tuna	Weigh only: 1 pt / lb	20 lbs	3
Wahoo	Weigh only: 1 pt / lb	20 lbs	3 (max 2 per angler)

Note: Each boat may weigh a maximum of one blue marlin per day, and the weighing of blue marlin takes precedence over gamefish at the scales.

8.2 Disqualifications. A fish caught other than in accordance with these rules is disqualified. If the intent is to release a billfish and it is removed from the water (as shown on video), the billfish is disqualified — the only exception being a blue marlin brought to the scales to be weighed. A mutilated fish (mutilation being anything that impairs the fighting ability of the fish, such as damage caused by sharks, mammals, or propellers) will not be weighed; any such mutilation must be disclosed before arrival at the scales.

8.3 Deck-Checking. A boated billfish is one that has been partially or totally pulled onto the vessel. A billfish removed from the water for deck-checking, or for any reason other than weighing a qualifying blue marlin, is disqualified and may not be scored as a release.

Section 9: Departure: Starting point, Timing & Check-Out

9.1 Shotgun Start. Tournament fishing begins with a shotgun start. Boats may leave from any marina but must be behind “the line” at the **Destin Pass Sea Buoy (N30°22.236 W86°30.932)** by the official start time. Any boat not clearly behind the line before the start is disqualified from that day’s fishing; a second start-line violation results in disqualification from the entire event under Rule 1.4.

9.2 Roll Call. Beginning fifteen (15) minutes before the start, ECBC Officials conduct an alphabetical roll call on VHF-72. Please respond when your boat name is called. At the start time, Tournament Officials announce the official start of the Tournament.

9.3 Late Departure. Any boat wishing to depart after the official start must, before the start time, text Tournament Officials a photo of the boat together with a GPS display showing its location, date, and time.

Section 10: Return: Finish Line, Timing & Check-In

10.1 Early Return. A team returning before the final-day cutoff, or on any prior weigh day, must contact the Weighmaster on VHF-72 to declare that it is coming in to weigh fish or turn in scorecards.

10.2 Final-Day Finish Line. On the final fishing day, every vessel must visually clear the **Destin Pass Bridge** by the posted cutoff time. Tournament Officials are stationed at the bridge in a boat flying an ECBC flag, which conducts a countdown on VHF-72, and then announce that any boat which has not passed may not weigh fish or turn in scorecards.

10.3 Check-In. As you pass under the Destin pass bridge, the ECBC boat records the time it visually observed you pass. You must also check in with the ECBC boat on VHF-72 and report what catch you have to weigh and whether you have video to review. Detailed weigh-in procedures are reviewed at the Captain's Meeting.

Section 11: Billfish Catch-and-Release Definition & Scorecards

11.1 Caught. A billfish is considered caught when the leader connection is wound to the tip of the rod, or a team member touches the leader, while the fish is still hooked.

11.2 Released. A billfish is considered released when, after being caught, it is no longer connected to the line. Tagging is not required for points. Hoisting or boating a billfish (other than a qualifying blue marlin brought to the scales) disqualifies the catch.

11.3 Billfish Scorecard. Every billfish released or boated must be recorded on the Billfish Scorecard in the order in which the fish were caught. The scorecard must be signed by the Boat Captain to confirm agreement with the information recorded. Detailed instructions are printed on the scorecard included in the team envelope handed out at registration. A team that catches no billfish need not turn in a scorecard.

Section 12: Video Requirements for Billfish Catch-and-Release

In addition to the Billfish Scorecard, every team competing in the Release Division must submit continuous, unedited digital video of each billfish release. To qualify a release for points, the video must clearly show all of the following:

- The Tournament Designator handed out at registration (the same designator is used for all fishing days), confirming the fish was caught during the ECBC.
- The species of the billfish — record as many fins as possible (dorsal, anal, and pectoral) to allow accurate identification.
- The catch — the leader connection or swivel at the rod tip, or a team member touching the leader, while the fish is hooked.
- The release — the billfish no longer connected to the line.
- An unbroken, continuous video transition to a GPS device displaying both the date and the time of release. Hold the camera steady for several seconds so the GPS date and time focus clearly.

DO NOT INTERRUPT THE RECORDING

Once you begin recording the end of the fight and the release, the recording must run uninterrupted until you have captured the GPS date and time. This proves the footage is a single, continuous event. The GPS date and time are also used to break ties (see Section 16 and Rule 13-D).

Section 13: Judging of Billfish Catch-and-Release Videos

Billfish Scorecards and release videos must remain together with a team member and be presented to the video-verification judges at the marina before the close of the scales on the final weigh night, along

with the camera that took the video and any cables needed to view it. Videos must be digital — preferably on an SD or micro-SD card — and must be viewable on a large-screen monitor. I-pad or laptop video is accepted only as a secondary or alternate view, not as the primary source. Videos are copied to a tournament drive and become the property of the Tournament.

Electronic Submission (CatchStat). As an alternative to in-person review, release videos and scorecards may be submitted electronically via the CatchStat mobile app (iOS/Android) or on the web at ecbc.catchstat.com. To use electronic submission, a team member's email must be on the team roster and correctly linked in CatchStat so the "My Teams" page is visible after sign-in; if you cannot access My Teams, contact Tournament Officials to have your email linked. Submissions must be made on the same day the fish were caught. No additional videos or photos will be accepted after the video-verification station closes on the final weigh night.

13-A Before You Arrive at Judging

- Confirm that anglers, species, dates, and times are recorded on the scorecard, and that the Boat Captain has signed it.
- Bring any cables or adapters needed to view the video on a large-screen monitor.
- Cue your video to the start of the first release; know where each release is located on the recording.
- Send no more than two (2) team members; only one may be present in the scoring room.

13-B Release Point Decisions

- If the species can be identified, the release receives that species' point value.
- If the fish is clearly a billfish but the species cannot be identified, it receives 175 points.

13-C Grounds for Disqualifying a Release

- The billfish is removed from the water for any reason other than to bring a blue marlin to the scales.
- The Tournament Designator is missing from the video.
- Evidence of the billfish being caught and subsequently released is missing from the video.
- The video shows a violation of any Tournament rule.

13-D Release Date & Time (for Tie-Breaking)

Times are recorded to the full minute with no rounding of seconds. If the video clearly shows an uninterrupted catch and release but is interrupted before the GPS date and time are recorded, or the GPS cannot be read, the following determine the official release date and time:

- If the video continues uninterrupted after the release and includes a readable GPS shot, the GPS date and time are used.
- If the GPS shows the time but not the date, the GPS time is used with the last fishing day as the date.
- If the GPS shows the date but not the time, the GPS date is used and the time the boat passed under the Destin Pass Bridge is used as the time.
- If no GPS is recorded, or the video is not continuous, the last fishing day is the date and the bridge-passing time is the release time.

Section 14: Tail Tags

Before any gamefish is offloaded, a Tail Tag must be completed for each fish to be weighed. Teams fill in everything on the tag except the time, weight, length, and signature, which are completed at the scales. Six (6) Tail Tags are included in the team envelope handed out at registration.

Section 15: Weigh-In Procedures

15.1 Location & Hours. All fish must be weighed at Baytowne Marina. Scales operate on the posted weigh days and hours (see Section 6). All boats checked in and inside the designated markers by the posted closing time will have their fish weighed; the scales open 4-8 on Friday close 4-8 Saturday must be under the Destin bridge by 6pm eligible fish in line is weighed.

15.2 Order & Precedence. Fish are weighed in the order boats arrive at the scale, except that the weighing of blue marlin takes precedence over gamefish. Tournament officials may adjust the weigh-in sequence and may prioritize teams with multiple blue marlin.

15.3 Process. Fish are weighed to the tenth of a pound. The angler must remain with the fish throughout the weigh-in and, before leaving the scales, must verify the weight information and sign the Tail Tag. Fish must be presented in fresh condition — frozen fish are not accepted. The Weighmaster has the right to refuse to weigh any fish that does not meet Tournament requirements, and the Weighmaster's decision on fish condition is final.

15.4 Disposition of Fish. At the weigh-in, the angler may choose to keep the fish or donate it to the Tournaments charity of choice. A fish cleaning service may be available; any cleaning is performed by tournament personnel after weighing is complete.

Section 16: Tie-Breaking

16.1 Release Categories. Point ties in the release categories are broken by the official date and time the tying number of points was reached, as determined under Rule 13-D. The first team to reach the tying total is the winner.

16.2 Weighed Fish. Weight ties are broken by "weigh-in time," defined as: on a regular weigh day, the time the fish was weighed; on the final fishing day, the time the boat passed under the Destin Pass Bridge. A fish weighed on an earlier day breaks a tie against a fish weighed on a later day.

Section 17: Entry Fees, Awards & Payouts

All entry fees are listed below. A 7% Florida sales tax is added to the Base Entry, Release Division, and Crew Division entry fees; optional jackpot entries are not subject to sales tax. The Base Entry is required of every team; a team must be entered in the Base Entry to compete in any other division or entry in optional jackpot. The Release Division is additionally required to compete in the Release jackpots.

Entry / Division	Fee	Tax	Payout of Fees	Notes
Base Entry	\$6,000	+7%	80%	Required of every team to compete in any division or jackpot.
Release Division	\$2,500	+7%	85%	Optional. Required to compete in the Release jackpots.
Crew Division	\$500	+7%	100%	Optional. Scored on combined release + weighed-fish points.
Optional Jackpots	varies	none	90%	Optional category ladders (see table below). No sales tax.

17.1 Base Entry

Fee & Eligibility. The Base Entry fee is \$6,000 per team, plus 7% sales tax, and is required for participation in the Tournament. Entry in the Base Entry is a prerequisite for every other division and optional jackpot.

Withdrawal & Refund. A team that formally withdraws from the Tournament after May 31 may be issued a refund of 80% of the Base Entry fee. Withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Tournament.

Payout. The Tournament pays out 80% of the Base Entry pool to the categories below. Within each category, the place splits are determined by the number of qualifying fish weighed in that category (see Rule 17.5).

Category	Share of Base Pool	Place Splits
Heaviest Blue Marlin	60%	Per Rule 17.5
Heaviest Tuna	13.33%	Per Rule 17.5
Heaviest Dolphin	13.33%	Per Rule 17.5
Heaviest Wahoo	13.33%	Per Rule 17.5

Roll-Down of Unawarded Funds. If a category produces no qualifying fish, its funds are reallocated as follows:

- **No Blue Marlin weighed:** the Heaviest Blue Marlin pool is split evenly among the Tuna, Dolphin, and Wahoo categories.

- **No fish in one gamefish category (Tuna, Dolphin, or Wahoo):** that category's funds are split evenly among the remaining gamefish categories.
- **No gamefish weighed at all:** the gamefish pools are allocated to the Heaviest Blue Marlin category.
- **No Blue Marlin and no gamefish weighed:** the entire Base Entry payout is allocated to the top three (3) release teams.

17.2 Non-Payout Tournament Awards

The following awards recognize top performance but do not carry a cash payout. They are scored using the same species point values published in the scoring table in Section 8.

Recognition Award	Basis
Top Overall Release Team	Most release points (team)
Top Release Angler	Most release points (individual angler)
Top Angler	Most combined release + weighed points (individual)
Top Billfish Junior Angler	Most billfish/release points by a junior angler
Top Gamefish Junior Angler	Heaviest qualifying gamefish by a junior angler
Top Lady Angler	Most combined release + weighed points by a lady angler

17.3 Release Division (Optional)

Fee & Eligibility. The Release Division entry fee is \$2,500 per team, plus 7% sales tax. The Base Entry is required to enter. Entry in the Release Division is required to compete in the Release jackpots.

Scoring. The Release Division is scored on catch-and-release points using the qualifying species and point values published in Section 8.

Payout. This division pays out 85% of the Release Division entry fees to the winners, with place splits determined by the number of placing teams (see Rule 17.5).

17.4 Crew Division (Optional)

Fee & Eligibility. The Crew Division entry fee is \$500 per team, plus 7% sales tax. The Base Entry is required to enter.

Scoring. The Crew Division is scored on each team's combined total of catch-and-release points and weighed-fish points across the entire Tournament, using the species point values in Section 8. Because every Crew Division team is also a Base Entry participant, all of the team's qualifying releases and qualifying weighed fish count toward its Crew Division standing; no entry beyond the Crew Division fee is required.

Payout. This division pays out 100% of the Crew Division entry fees to the winners, with place splits determined by the number of placing teams (see Rule 17.5).

17.5 Place Splits — Base Entry & Divisions

For the Base Entry categories, place splits are set by the number of qualifying fish weighed in the category:

Qualifying Fish Weighed in the Category	Place Splits
3 or more	50% / 30% / 20%
2	60% / 40%
1	100% (winner take all)

For the Release and Crew Divisions, place splits are set by the number of teams placing in the division:

Placing Teams in the Division	Place Splits
3 or more	50% / 30% / 20%
2	60% / 40%
1	100% (winner take all)

17.6 Place Splits - Optional Jackpots

Optional jackpots are winner-take-most cash categories that pay out 90% of the entry fees collected in each jackpot. The Base Entry is required to enter any base jackpot; the Release Division is additionally required for the Release jackpots. A team may enter at any level offered in a category.

Place Splits — by Winners. Within an entered jackpot, the available payout is divided among the winners as follows:

Winners in the Jackpot	Split of Available Payout
3 winners	60% / 25% / 15%
2 winners	65% / 35%
1 winner	100%

Place Splits — by Participation. The number of paid entries in a jackpot further adjusts the place splits:

Paid Entries in the Jackpot	Place Splits
10 or more	60% / 25% / 15%
6 – 9	65% / 35%
1 – 5	100% (winner take all)

No Winner. If a jackpot produces no qualifying winner, a refund of 90% of the entry fees may be issued to the teams entered in that jackpot.

Single Entrant. If only one team is entered in an optional jackpot, that team receives a full refund of its entry for that specific jackpot.

Available Jackpot Categories & Levels.

Category	\$500	\$750	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000
Blue Marlin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Release*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuna	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Dolphin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Wahoo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—

* The Release jackpot requires entry in the Release Division (Rule 17.3).

17.7 Payment of Awards

Eligibility to Compete. A team must be paid in full in its entered categories to be eligible for awards in those categories.

Method of Payment. All cash awards are paid by a single check to one designated team representative payee. The Tournament accepts no responsibility for the division of any award among team members.

Tax Reporting. Each award-winning team must provide a completed IRS Form W-9 (or other valid tax identification) and a mailing address before payment. The Tournament will issue IRS Form 1099 to award winners as required by law.

Credit-Card Fee. Entry-fee payments made by credit card are charged a non-refundable 3.5% transaction fee. This fee is in addition to the entry fee and any applicable sales tax and is not refundable under any circumstances, including category refunds.

Section 18: Polygraph Examination

All registered Participants agree to submit to a polygraph examination if requested by the Rules Committee. Any person selected should have been directly involved in the release or capture of the fish (angler, captain, or wireman); the final selection is made by Tournament Officials, who may, at their discretion, examine more than one team member but do not guarantee that they will. Failure to comply with, or failure to pass, the examination results in disqualification of the entire team under Rule 1.4. **Angler or crew member must be sober during time of polygraph.**

Section 19: Release of All Claims, Assumption of Risk & Indemnification

This section must be carefully read by each Participant.

19.1 Release. In consideration for being accepted for participation in the Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic at Sandestin® (the "Tournament"), the Participants hereby release, forever discharge, and agree to hold harmless the Tournament, Sandestin® Golf and Beach Resort, Sandestin Investments LLC, Baytowne Marina, CatchStat, and their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, contractors and subcontractors, independent contractors, volunteers, partners, members, sponsors, affiliates, successors, and attorneys (collectively, the "Releasees") from any and all losses, claims, or demands of any kind whatsoever arising from the negligence or gross negligence of the Releasees or from any other cause connected with or occurring during the Tournament.

19.2 Assumption of Risk. The Participants expressly acknowledge that activities relating to deep-sea fishing are extremely dangerous and involve the risk of serious injury or death. Having so acknowledged, the Participants voluntarily assume full responsibility for the risk of bodily injury or death due to the negligence or gross negligence of the Releasees or any other cause connected with or occurring during the Tournament. Nothing in these rules relieves any Participant of the obligation to follow applicable navigation rules or any precaution required by the ordinary practice of seamen.

19.3 Indemnification. Each Participant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold the Releasees harmless from and against any and all claims, damages, losses, costs, and expenses (including reasonable attorneys' fees) arising out of or related to (a) the Participant's breach of these rules; (b) the Participant's negligent or intentional acts or omissions during the Tournament; or (c) any third-party claim resulting from the Participant's conduct. This obligation survives the conclusion of the Tournament.

19.4 Binding Effect. This release is binding upon each Participant and their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns.

Section 20: Disputes & Protests

Disputes, protests, claims, differences, or controversies relating to any aspect of the Tournament — including without limitation these Tournament Rules — must be submitted to the Rules Committee no later than thirty (30) minutes following the close of the weigh station, or they are deemed waived. Each protest must be in writing and accompanied by a non-refundable fee of \$500 in cash. Failure to present the fee with the protest results in waiver of the dispute. Official release video may be viewed only by the Rules Committee and the team that submitted it. All decisions of the Rules Committee are final and binding upon all parties.

Section 21: Binding Arbitration

If the Rules Committee cannot or will not render a final and binding decision on any dispute, the matter shall be resolved by binding arbitration under the Commercial Arbitration Rules of the American Arbitration Association. The decision shall be in writing and final and binding upon all parties, with no further recourse except as provided by those rules. Once rendered, the decision has the effect of res judicata, and the parties shall comply without delay. The Participants specifically waive any right to a trial by judge or jury.

Section 22: Photo & Video Release

The Participants specifically agree and consent to the use of any photograph, motion picture, video, or audio recording in which they appear or are heard — by the Tournament, Sandestin® Golf and Beach Resort, Sandestin Investments LLC, or CatchStat — for any purpose whatsoever, including without limitation resale, advertising, broadcast, social media, and promotional material, without compensation or restriction of any kind. All such recordings become the property of the Tournament.

Section 23: General Legal Provisions

23.1 Governing Law & Venue. These rules and any dispute arising out of or related to the Tournament are governed by the general maritime law of the United States and, where that law is silent, by the laws of the State of Florida, without regard to conflict-of-laws principles. The Participants consent to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the state and federal courts located in Walton County, Florida (and the federal courts having jurisdiction therein) for any matter not subject to arbitration, and waive any objection to that venue.

23.2 Limitation of Liability. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Releasees shall not be liable for any consequential, special, incidental, indirect, or punitive damages. Should any liability-limiting provision be held invalid, the Releasees' aggregate liability for all claims and all parties shall not exceed the total entry fees paid by the affected Participant's team.

23.3 Severability. If any provision of these rules or the Release is found invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, that finding shall not affect the remaining provisions, which continue in full force. The invalid provision shall be modified to the minimum extent necessary to make it valid and enforceable while preserving the original intent.

23.4 Joint Preparation & Entire Agreement. These rules shall be construed as if prepared jointly by all affected parties; no ambiguity shall be construed against any party. These rules and the Release constitute the entire agreement regarding the Tournament and supersede all prior or contemporaneous representations, whether written or oral. No Participant may claim that these rules have been altered by oral communication of any kind.

Acknowledgment & Acceptance

The undersigned acknowledges that he/she has read these Official Tournament Rules in their entirety, including the Release of All Claims, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnification in Section 19, and agrees to be bound by all of their terms on behalf of the team, its anglers, captain, crew, and guests. The person signing warrants that he/she has authority to bind the vessel owner and the entire team.

— End of Rules —