

2026



TOURNAMENT PACKET

"BIG FISH FRIDAY" INFORMATION

Big Fish Friday (BFF) will be held on Friday, August 14, 2026.

- You must register and pay the entry fee by August 12, 2026 to participate.
 - Fishing time begins at 6:00am. You can depart any port or marina at anytime, however lines cannot be entered in the water until 6:00am.
 - Weigh in will take place at the Clarion Hotel Pavilion, Dunkirk, NY beginning at 4:30pm.
 - You must be in the Official "Cooler Line" by 3:30 pm Sharp! Your team is responsible for bringing your cooler/fish to the "Cooler Line".
 - Only one (1) fish shall be presented in the cooler, no other walleyes or species allowed in cooler.
 - No loose ice or water baths allowed in cooler, bagged or block ice is acceptable.
 - A maximum of nine (9) rods can be used at anytime.
 - All waters of Lake Erie and upper Niagara River are legal fishing waters, including Canadian waters.
 - All state and Federal Laws apply.
 - All fish weighed for Big Fish Friday will be gill clipped.
 - The top three (3) walleyes will be paid. All BFF prizes will be paid at the captain's meeting.
 - No fish shall be altered in any way to increase the weight of the fish. A live well may be used as long as it is follows the main event rules. Rule #9 of the main rules also applies to Big Fish Friday.
 - If a team is disqualified from Big Fish Friday, they will also be disqualified from the Main Event.
- ❖ **Please reference enclosed Rules/Regulations for Weather Cancellations**

CAPTAIN'S MEETING INFORMATION

Registration and meeting will be held at *Clarion Hotel Pavilion*.
Tournament/Team registration starts at 6:00pm on Friday, August 14, 2026.

The Captain's meeting is mandatory and begins at 6:30pm Sharp!

It is mandatory that one member of each team has registered and is in attendance for the captain's meeting. Failure to register for the tournament/captain's meeting will result in a two (2) hour delay in departure for fishing of the main event. Your team's start time will be 9:00am.

COOLER HANDLING & WEIGH-IN PROCESSES

To expedite cooler check in and the weigh in, please follow these procedures.

- Please return your puck to tournament staff even if you are not weighing in.
- When you receive your puck in the morning, you will receive a tag to place on your cooler. Please attach the tag to the handle of your cooler prior to checking in.
- Please place your biggest fish (the one designated with the zip tie) on the top.
- Bring your cooler to the check-in line. See event rules for cut off times. Your cooler will be taped shut by tournament staff.
- Tournament staff will add stickers on the tape. These stickers will designate the number of fish in your cooler, if you have designated a big fish to weigh and if you have an estimated total weight of over 30 pounds.
- Weigh in for the main event will start at 5pm (Big Fish Friday – 4:30pm). At this time, at least 2 people from your team should go to your cooler. Please stay with your cooler and move along in the line.
- When it is your turn, present your cooler to the scale staff. The front of the cooler should face the audience. The scale staff will handle your fish. After being weighed, the fish will be returned to your cooler.
- Take your basket to the “on deck” station and wait to be called to the scale.
- After your fish are weighed, take the basket back to your cooler. Empty the basket and return it to the bump station.
- If your team is in the payout, your cooler will be held for pictures and additional inspection if needed.
- Upon completion of weight-in, winners will be announced, pending polygraph results.
- Teams will need to complete W9 form if appropriate before collecting check.
- No checks will be distributed until after the polygraphs have been completed.

PAYOUT STRUCTURE

(based on a field of 20 boats)

Saturday, August 15th, 2026

(BLOW Day – Sunday, August 16th)

MAIN EVENT

1 st	\$ 4,000
2 nd	\$ 2,000
3 rd	\$ 1,000
4 th	\$ 750
5 th	\$ 500

LARGEST WALLEYE

1 st	\$ 750
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BIG FISH FRIDAY

(based upon a field of 19 boats)

1 st	\$ 950
2 nd	\$ 570
3 rd	\$ 380

All winnings are paid in US Funds by check payable to the team captain. Any teams that are paid more than \$599.99 will be required to complete IRS Form W-9 and will receive a 1099-MISC no later than January 31, 2027. See the tournament staff after the weigh-in show to complete to collect your prize. **All team members must sign the release waiver & declaration prior to receiving the payout.** If the tournament committee is made aware of any team or team member that violated any of the rules, an investigation will take place. In the event that the investigation finds that the rules were violated, the team must return any of the funds they received within 72 hours of being notified.

CALCUTTA OPTIONS

Below are our calcuttas for this year's event. *These calcuttas are optional item, fish none, one, two, three or all four; completely up to your team. Sign-up and payment for these options can take place with registration or at the Captain's meeting on Friday, August 14, 2026. All payments must be in US funds.*

NEW

#1 Daily Double Calcutta	\$500.00
#2 Heaviest Box Calcutta	\$250.00
#3 Heaviest Box Calcutta	\$100.00
#4 Heaviest Box Calcutta	\$50.00
#5 Heaviest Walleye Calcutta	\$100.00

All Calcutta winnings will be paid out in 100% CASH (US Funds).

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OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 1.) Fishing hours will be from **7:00am to 3:30pm, August 15, 2026.**
(Foul weather date will be Sunday, August 16th, same fishing hours)
*Should Big Fish Friday be a total loss, deemed unfishable – 80% of the entry fees for this portion of the event will be refunded. Should the Main Event be a total loss, deemed unfishable – 80% of the entry fees for the Main Event will be refunded. All cuttass will be refunded 100%. This will be done at 12:30pm on Sunday, if required.
- 2.) There will be a shotgun start from the **lighthouse at Chadwick Bay**, Dunkirk, NY. There will be starting/location device or boat (to be announced at the captain's meeting). The shotgun start will be specifically **7:00am** sharp. Monitor VHF Channel 68 for the official countdown and call.
 - If you depart prior than our official shotgun start at 7:00am, you will be immediately disqualified.
- 3.) **ALL** waters of Lake Erie and the upper Niagara River are legal fishable tournament waters, this includes Canadian waters.
- 4.) Each boat will utilize a maximum of up to **nine (9) rod/reels per boat - total**. All other USA and Canadian laws apply.
- 5.) Boats may have from two **(2) to (5) anglers** per boat.
- 6.) Two team # signs will be provided (port and starboard); it is the team captain's responsibility to clearly post them visible to other tournament officials and tournament boats. If these numbers are not visibly displayed, you will not be identifiable therefore disqualified from the competition. Please make sure the signs are posted before your boat is inspected.
- 7.) Each Team will present up to **six (6) walleyes** in their box. The largest being identified with the ZIP-TIE provided. The only species allowed in the box are walleyes. **If your team is eligible for the payout, your cooler will be held for pictures and additional inspection if necessary. Familiarize yourself with the cooler handling and weigh-in procedures in the tournament packet. Failure to follow these procedures will be a condition for disqualification.**
 - **Any more than six walleyes or any other species in the box will immediately disqualify the box and the team for the event. All culling is to be completed prior to entering the cooler check in station.**
 - **The fish will be presented in a cooler with bagged or blocked ice only. No loose ice or water baths allowed.**
- 8.) The walleyes presented must be a minimum of **20" from nose to tail**; any fish short of 20" will be removed from the box and a 0.500 lb (one ½ pound) penalty will be applied per short fish. The box weight will be adjusted accordingly. An official tournament measuring board will be on stage to measure any questionable short fish. To expedite the weigh in show, please do not bring fish smaller than 20" in your cooler.
- 9.) Any fish found being altered in any manner is unacceptable and will result in immediate disqualification. **Fish should be handled in a manner that does not change the national digression or increase the fish's weight.** This includes but is not limited to water bath, injection of any materials (ice, water, bait, lead, etc.), rubber banding of the fish's mouth, plugging of the anus, weight clipping of the gills, and clubbing or instantly killing the fish. Bagged or block ice is permissible. A live well (by Webster's definition - a well for keeping fish alive in a fishing

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boat by allowing seawater to circulate through it) is permissible, but dead fish cannot be kept in a live well with water in it (this would be considered a water bath).

- 10.) The team “puck” will be issued upon completion of the morning boat check. EVERY boat will be checked prior to departure at the **Clarion Hotel Pavilion**. Bring your boat check slip to the marina pavilion to pick up your puck. If you depart without your puck, you will not be able to weigh your fish.
- 11.) The team “puck” is returned to the cooler check in station at the tent at **Clarion Hotel Pavilion** when you drop off your fish cooler with tournament officials. It would be appreciated if you would please return your puck regardless if you are presenting a cooler for weigh in or not to help with the accountability that the entire fleet has returned safely.
- 12.) Boat checks will begin at 5:30am, **NO boat/team** can depart the docks or launch prior to having boat checks completed and team puck in hand. Monitor VHF Channel 68.
- 13.) Tournament boats cannot make contact with each other at any point or time once your boat check is complete. No boat is allowed to float or pass equipment, fish, bait, ice, coolers, food or drink between them at any point throughout the day after your boat has been checked. This includes at the dock, leaving Chadwick Bay, on the lake during traveling or fishing, or returning back to Chadwick Bay. Any noted or witnessed contact between boats will result in an immediate disqualification for any/all boats involved.
- 14.) There is **NO stop** fishing time, HOWEVER, your cooler must be turned in to the check in station at **Clarion Hotel Pavilion** by **3:30 PM Sharp! (NO EXCEPTIONS)**. Once the coolers are dropped off and in the possession of the tournament officials, they will be sealed and labeled. Tournament coolers cannot be re-opened by the team from this point on. If any access to the cooler is attempted by the team, the cooler/team will be disqualified.
- 15.) Fish will be weighed in at **Clarion Hotel Pavilion**. Weigh-In will begin at 5:00pm. Teams will be called to get their cooler and present their fish to be weighed.
- 16.) In the event of a tie for the largest walleye (for Big Fish Friday & Main Event), the respective prize will be split equally. During the main event, if there is a tie in box weight, the big fish weight will be used first to break the tie. If the tie still cannot be broken, the respective prize money will be equally split.
- 17.) All slip fees, launch fees, lodging fees and all other associated fees are the responsibility of each team.
- 18.) Liability & Rules Waiver must be signed by all participating anglers. Waivers must be handed in no later than at registration before the captain’s meeting.

Any teams that are paid more than \$599.99 will be required to complete IRS Form W-9 and will receive a 1099-MISC no later than January 31, 2027. See the tournament staff after the weigh-in show to complete the form and collect your prize.

- 19.) The tournament is an **OPEN** communication event.
- 20.) All boats must depart and return under their own power. Jumping boats or transferring coolers is a violation of rule #13 and therefore not allowed.
- 21.) As the event will have a professional weigh in, it is mandatory that each team will be properly dressed. Ideally team t-shirts or jerseys are the best choice; as they look professional and show well for pictures and videos. No Ripped, bloody t-shirts, tank-tops or cut off sweat pants are allowed. No alcohol or smoking is allowed on stage.

No profanity, unsportsmanlike conduct, actions or deliberate vulgarity will be allowed on stage, this will result in immediate disqualification.

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- 22.) Tournament team registration begins at 6:00pm on **Friday, August 14th** at **Clarion Hotel Pavilion**. Each team must be checked in no later than 6:30pm. Additional tournament information will be presented at that time.
- 23.) **Captain's Meeting (Mandatory)** - At least one member of each team must be checked-in/registered and be present for the captain's meeting on **Friday, August 14th, 2026**. Captain's meeting starts at **6:30 pm sharp**; registration begins at 6:00pm. Registration and captain's meeting will be at **Clarion Hotel Pavilion**.

Teams not registered by 6:30pm and present for Captain's meeting will be penalized 2 hours for departure for the day of fishing (9:00 am departure time will be enforced).

- 24.) **Big Fish Friday** - Big Fish Friday (BFF) is not part of the payout structure or a requirement of the main event. Our tournament scales will be utilized for weighing of the fish for this portion of the event. Rules are provided separately for Big Fish Friday portion of the fishing. It is each participating team's responsibility to know, understand and abide by the rules that apply for Big Fish Friday if they so choose to fish this portion. Please reference the Big Fish Friday information sheet provided. If a team is disqualified from Big Fish Friday, they will automatically be disqualified from the Main Event.
- 25.) Unsportsmanlike conduct of any kind will not be tolerated. Abuse, verbal or otherwise directed towards the tournament committee members, its volunteers or supporting staff will result in immediate disqualification, NO Exceptions.
- 26.) The intent of the rules is to promote good sportsmanship and good competition. Any infraction of the rules in the opinion of the tournament committee will result in disqualification. The tournament committee's decision will be final for all matters pertaining to the interpretation of the rules.
- 27.) **Protest/Challenge Submittals** - In the event a team wishes to enter a protest to formally challenge a competitor conduct, a formal document will be available for submittal. This form, in addition to a charge of \$200 will be presented to Tournament Officials. Submittals must be made no later than 15 minutes after the weighing in of the last team on the day of the event. Should the challenge be awarded in favor to the protest submitting team, the \$200 fee will be refunded to the challenging team. Should the challenge be invalid, the \$200 fee will be forfeited.
- 28.) The Innovative Outdoors Walleye Challenge maintains zero tolerance of cheating or misconduct within **ANY** tournament venue anywhere throughout the USA or Canada. The Innovative Outdoors Walleye Challenge will prohibit participation of any captain or team member(s) documented as cheating or misconduct within **ANY** tournament event. Tournament officials will have the final decision.
- 29.) Polygraph testing and/or legal deposition will be utilized for winning teams (this could include any or all members of the team) within various portions of the tournament payout structure. This includes Big Fish Friday and the Main Event. Refusal or being unable to participate when called to test will result in automatic disqualification. All test results will be considered final with no exceptions. Any form of deception recorded by the test will be considered a failure and result in disqualification.
- 30.) Teams/boats cannot go ashore once they have departed boat check. All boats must leave the harbor by water and return by water.

The rules are presented to be clear, understood by teams captain/team members and provide an even playing field for each team. If you have any questions, please see a tournament official at the captain's meeting for clarification.

The tournament officials have the final decision in any/all reported or identified situations/incidents that require attention. Any no-show or disqualification from the tournament will not result in a refund or credit. The tournament will be considered closed at 12midnight on Sunday, August 16th.

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- 31.) **Weather CALL** – The safety and integrity of the event is our priority. Every effort will be made to make a competitive event. All decisions will be made solely by the tournament officials.

In the event we have unfavorable weather conditions for the event, the following process will be followed for both Big Fish Friday and Main Event Saturday.

Big Fish Friday

a.) Tournament officials will monitor <http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/data/Forecasts/FZUS51.KBUF.html>. Monitor VHF channel 68.

b.) If there is a *Small-Craft Warning* posted for Dunkirk, NY prior to opening fishing hours (6:00am) for anytime during the days event, the Big Fish portion of the event will be evaluated by tournament staff. The fishing hours may be abbreviated if at least 6 hours of fishable time is available. Fishing will not begin earlier and will not be extended for any reason. *(For example, at 6:00am a small craft advisory is posted to start at 2pm, fishing hours will be adjusted from 6:00am until 2:00pm. In addition, if a small craft advisory ends at 9:00am, fishing hours will be adjusted from 9:00am until 3:30pm).* All teams will be notified of any changes, via text and email to the registered captain and will be posted on social media and the event website. If the entire day is deemed unfishable, refer to Rule #1 for entry fee refund policy. In addition, if the lake is deemed unfishable, no team will be allowed to be on the lake fishing prior to the beginning of the next day of the event.

c.) If weather is rough or unfavorable conditions are present, but no *Small-Craft Warning* has been posted, Big Fish Friday will be considered OPEN and fishable. It is the team captain's responsibility to make the judgment/decision if he feels his team/vessel can safely fish the conditions.

d.) In the event, a *Small-Craft Warning* is posted once fishing hours have started (past 6:00am), fishing will be considered OPEN and fishable. It is the team captain's responsibility to make the judgment/decision if he feels his team/vessel can safely fish the conditions.

Main Event

a.) Tournament officials will monitor <http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/data/Forecasts/FZUS51.KBUF.html>. Monitor VHF channel 68.

b.) If there is a *Small-Craft Warning* posted for Dunkirk, NY prior to opening fishing hours (7:00am) for anytime during the days event, the event will be evaluated by tournament staff. The fishing hours may be abbreviated if at least 6 hours of fishable time is available. Fishing will not begin earlier and will not be extended for any reason. *(For example, at 7:00am a small craft advisory starts at 2pm, fishing hours will be adjusted from 7:00am until 2:00pm. In addition, if a small craft advisory ends at 9:00am, fishing hours will be adjusted from 9:00am until 3:30pm).* All teams will be notified of any changes, via text and email to the registered captain and will be posted on social media and the event website. If the entire day is deemed unfishable, the day will be considered officially cancelled and the fleet will prepare for Sunday as the make-up blow day. In addition, if the lake is deemed unfishable, no team will be allowed to be on the lake fishing prior to the beginning of the next day of the event.

c.) Should Sunday be utilized as the tournament main event day, all rules, times and weather call (Main Event (b)) and processes will apply as Saturday. If Sunday is also deemed unfishable, refer to Rule #1 for the entry fee refund policy.

d.) In the event the weather is rough or unfavorable conditions, but no *Small-Craft Warnings* are posted; the Main Event will be considered OPEN and fishable. It is the team captain's responsibility to make the judgment/decision if he feels his team/vessel can safely fish the conditions.

e.) In the event, a *Small-Craft Warning* is posted once fishing hours have started (past 7:00am), fishing will be considered OPEN and fishable; It is the team captain's responsibility to make the judgment/decision if he feels his team/vessel can safely fish the conditions.

- Monitor and use VHF Channel 16 for safety and emergency information, monitor VHF Channel 68 for Tournament updates and information.