



## OFFICIAL 2026 TOURNAMENT RULES

**1. Rules Acceptance:** Rules, including published rules in print or on [www.scbluemarlininvitational.com](http://www.scbluemarlininvitational.com), are subject to change. It is the sole responsibility of the participating anglers, captains, crews, and guests ("Participants") to know and abide by the Tournament Rules as published. By entering the **South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational (SCBMI)** and paying entry fees, Participants agree to abide by the Tournament Rules and accept decisions made by the Tournament Directors as final. The SCBMI has the right to refuse entry of an individual or team. The SCBMI has the right to disqualify, without refund, an individual or team from the competition if the Tournament Committee or Tournament Directors discover any misconduct towards other teams or weigh station personnel, violations of tournament rules, or cheating.

**2. Nature of Tournament** - The **SCBMI** is a fishing team competition. Participants enter at their own risk and understand the possibility exists that there may be no winners if no qualifying fish are caught. In the event no qualifying fish are caught in a given Tournament category, the Tournament category entry will be returned to the boats minus the 12% Administrative Fee.

**3. In Good Faith:** In any unforeseen man-made events, or Acts of God, major regulatory changes, fishery closures etc. that could affect the schedule or categories of the tournament, the Tournament Directors will act in good faith and take all efforts to make fair and equal decisions that could affect the tournament's Participants and sponsors.

**4. Registration & Cancellations:** All entry fees must be paid in full, and funds cleared prior to May 1, 2026 to be entered in the **SCBMI**. All cancellations requested in writing prior to 11:59 PM on April 29, 2026 will receive a 100% refund. No refunds will be issued for cancellations after 11:59 PM on April 29, 2026.

**5. Fishing Days:** The first fishing day of the tournament is May 1, 2026 and the final fishing day of the tournament is June 8, 2026.

- Each boat is allowed to fish 3 days out of the 39-day tournament.
- All **SCBMI** Boats, Participants and Teams are permitted to fish other tournaments as well during the available **SCBMI** fishing dates.
- If an **SCBMI** fishing day is declared during another billfish tournament, it is the responsibility of the Boat, Participants, and Teams to adhere to all rules and regulations of such tournaments.

**6. Declaring Fishing Days:** Fishing days must be declared no later than 7:30am EST of that day by using the South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational Mobile App or texting the phone number, 843-905-7808.

**7. Canceling Fishing Days:** Boats have until 7:30am EST of that declared fishing day to make a cancellation by using the South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational Mobile App, texting 843-905-7808, or sending an email to [scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com](mailto:scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com). The time and date of the email will be used to confirm that the SCBMI was notified by 7:30am EST.

**8. Fishing Times:** Fishing hours are from 8:00am EST until 3:00pm EST. Any boat still fighting a fish after the 3:00pm EST deadline will be permitted to fight that fish until boated, released or lost.

- Since the HMY Lowcountry Cup's fishing times are 8:30am- 3:30pm, boats declaring an SCBMI fish day on May 28, May 29, or May 30, 2026, are allowed to fish 8:30am- 3:30pm, regardless of whether that boat has also entered the HMY Lowcountry Cup. However, any boat that chooses to fish the 8:30am- 3:30pm hours must notify the SCBMI Tournament Directors **prior to the 7:30am declaration deadline** of that day.

**9. Boundaries** – On declared fishing days, boats must leave from a port in South Carolina and return to a port in South Carolina. There is a fishing distance limit of 125 nautical miles from the Charleston Harbor Sea Buoy (N32 42.860/ W79 47.550). Boats must fish within this limit regardless of the Inlet of departure.

**10. Anglers and Teams:** An unlimited number of anglers are allowed per boat. Boats are limited to only one entry.

**11. Angling Rules** - The **SCBMI** organizers expect the highest level of integrity and sportsmanship from their Participants and for them to compete within the IGFA Saltwater Equipment and Angling rules. Any member of the team may set the hook and fight the fish (or) may set the hook and pass the rod to another angler as soon as possible after setting the hook, but **the rod may**

**only be passed one time on the onset of striking the fish. The angler must then fight the fish unassisted.**

NOTE: For a boated Blue Marlin to qualify for a South Carolina State Record, the rod cannot be passed at any point. Only one angler can touch the rod and angle the fish.

**12. Substitutions:** In the event a team needs to make a substitution for a boat other than the one originally listed on registration, that team must submit a formal request to be considered for approval by the **SCBMI**. All substitution requests must be submitted in writing to [scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com](mailto:scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com).

**13. Permits, Licenses & Judging** – All vessels and participants shall comply with South Carolina and Federal fisheries laws and regulations. Participants shall also adhere to all **SCBMI** Tournament rules as contained herein. For information regarding Federal HMS Permits, call 877.376.4877 or refer to [www.hmspermits.noaa.gov](http://www.hmspermits.noaa.gov)

**14. Sonar Usage:** Vessels equipped with Sonar and side scanning technology cannot deploy their devices until lines in on their given fish day.

**15. Boating Blue Marlin:** To be eligible for prize money, a boated blue marlin must measure a minimum length of 105 inches from the tip of lower jaw to the fork of the tail (LJFL). Blue Marlin are considered boated when the fish is in the cockpit (in the event that the fish is too large to get in the boat, the fish is considered boated when secured along the vessel). The **SCBMI** reserves the right to inspect a weighed Blue Marlin to ensure no hidden foreign objects or matter were added for weight. Fish that are not caught according to tournament rules are disqualified.

Teams are permitted to boat one Blue Marlin per day per boat. Teams are encouraged, but not required to submit videos of the fish being wired or boated.

In the event there is a tied official weight, the Boat that boated their Blue Marlin first, according to time & declared fishing day, wins.

All Blue Marlin must be weighed on a certified scale. The **SCBMI's** two official weigh stations are Toler's Cove Marina (843) 881-0325 and Georgetown Landing Marina (843) 546-1776. Please notify the **SCBMI** and the weigh station when in route to weigh a fish. Qualifying Blue Marlin are permitted to be weighed at locations outside of the two official weigh stations as long as a member of the **SCBMI's** Tournament Committee is present and all other

**SCBMI** rules as outlined are followed. Weigh Masters' decisions are final. The Weigh Master has the right to refuse any fish in his sole discretion.

Please make every effort to respect the Marina weigh stations' property, rules, policies, employees, and patrons while visiting and weighing in your **SCBMI** fish. The tournament is dependent on participating Marinas and use of their weigh docks.

If returning to the scales after a Marina has closed, it is the boat's responsibility to keep the fish iced & presentable for weighing the following morning.

**16. Blue Marlin Releases-** A Blue Marlin Release is awarded when the mate touches the leader or the leader touches the rod tip, before the fish is released/ let go. A Blue Marlin release will not qualify if the gaff breaks the outside vertical plane of the covering boards or boat. Fish must remain in the water per Federal Law. Release Affidavits will be provided by the **SCBMI** in each boat's tournament packet. Affidavits must be completed following each fishing day in which a blue marlin was released. Teams must take a photo of their affidavit and submit it through the South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational Mobile App or email it to [scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com](mailto:scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com) by 3:00pm EST the next day. Tournament Directors will later request paper copies of Affidavits from boats in contention for prizes.

**17. Mutilation:** IGFA rules apply regarding mutilated fish. Mutilation to the fish, prior to boating or releasing the catch, caused by sharks, other fish, mammals, or propellers that remove or penetrate the flesh will disqualify the Blue Marlin. However, injuries caused by leader or line, scratches, old healed scars or regeneration deformities are not considered to be disqualifying injuries.

**18. Prizes -** All Cash Prizes will be paid to winners by their choice of either check or wire transfer (USD).

- Prize money is equal to entry fees minus the 12% Administrative Fee.
- All prizes are subject to terms and conditions.
- The **SCBMI** will donate a portion of the proceeds from the tournament to [The South Carolina Memorial Reef](#)
  
- **The Blue Marlin Jackpot TWT** will be paid to first & second place only.
  - First Place Heaviest Blue Marlin: 70% Split
  - Second Place Heaviest Blue Marlin: 30% Split
  - In the event that there is only one qualifying fish landed, 100% of the Blue Marlin Jackpot will be awarded to the registered team

that weighed that fish.

- The **Blue Marlin Daily Release Jackpot TWT** will be evenly distributed across days 1, 2 and 3. Only Blue Marlin releases count towards a Boat's total release number.
  - Day 1 Release: 100% paid to Day 1 Winner.
  - Day 2 Release: 100% paid to Day 2 Winner.
  - Day 3 Release: 100% paid to Day 3 Winner.
- The **Blue Marlin Overall Release TWT** jackpot pays 1<sup>st</sup> place only, winner take all (100%).
  - In the event of a tie, the boat with the most Blue Marlin releases over the 3 days of fishing based on time will be declared the winner.

**19. Polygraph Examination:** Polygraph Tests shall be administered to captains, mates and others as deemed necessary by the Tournament Directors. Participants must make themselves available for polygraph testing in Charleston County within 24 hours following notice from the Tournament Directors. 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 Directors, in their sole discretion, may result in disqualification. By entering the Tournament, participants consent to the admissibility of polygraph results in any dispute or proceeding arising out of the tournament.

**20. Release of All Claims:** In consideration for being accepted for participation in the South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational (the "Tournament"), the Participants hereby release, forever discharge, and agree to hold harmless the Tournament, The South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational LLC ; Toler's Cove Marina ; Georgetown Landing Marina, and their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, volunteers, partners, members, and/or attorneys (collectively the "Releasees") for any and all losses, claims, or demands of any kind or character whatsoever arising from the negligence or gross negligence of the Releasees or from any other cause connected with or occurring during the Tournament. The Participants expressly acknowledge that he/she has received, reviewed, and agrees to abide by the Tournament Rules and this Release. Furthermore, 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 hereby 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.

**21. Disputes:** All disputes, protests, claims, differences or controversies relating to any aspect of the Tournament, including, without limitation, Tournament Rules, must be submitted to the **SCBMI** no later than 5:00 PM EST June 9, 2026 or are deemed waived. All such disputes must be presented in writing to [scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com](mailto:scbluemarlininvitational@gmail.com) along with a non-refundable fee of \$1,000. All such disputes shall be decided by the Tournament Committee and shall be final and binding upon all parties.

**22. Photo; Video Release:** The Participants specifically agree and consent to the use of any photograph, video or audio recordings, or South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational related blogs, or interviews in which they appear or are heard, by the Tournament, South Carolina Blue Marlin Invitational LLC; for any purpose whatsoever including, but not limited to, resale, advertising, and promotional material without compensation or restriction of any kind.

**23. Binding Arbitration:** In the event the Tournament Committee cannot render or refuse to render a final and binding decision with respect to any dispute, protest, claim, difference, or controversy under review, the matter shall be resolved by binding arbitration under the commercial arbitration rules of the American Arbitration Association. The decision rendered in arbitration shall be in writing and shall be final and binding upon all parties. The parties shall have no further recourse, except as provided for by the commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Once the decision is rendered, it produces the effect of “res judicata” and the parties shall fully comply with the decision without delay. The participants specifically waive any right to a trial by judge or jury.