



ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE ANGLERS

2026 OFFICIAL RULES

Participation in the 2026 Bass Pro Shops Collegiate Bass Fishing Series constitutes each contestant's understanding of and full and unconditional agreement to and acceptance of these Official Rules. Contestants must obey all State, Federal and local fishing and safety laws.

The Tournament Director reserves the right to penalize or disqualify any contestant that is determined to be in violation of any term contained in these Official Rules. The Tournament Director's decision not to enforce a specific provision of the Official Rules does not constitute a waiver of that provision or of the Official Rules generally.

Interpretation of these rules will be left exclusively to the Tournament Director. Decisions of the Tournament Director are final in all matters and are not subject to appeal. At the sole discretion of the Tournament Director, entry may be refused to any individual or university fishing club/team. Protests must be made in writing within fifteen (15) minutes of the official check-in time of the final flight, however the ACA reserves the right to penalize or disqualify teams after an event, and adjust the standings, should eligibility or other rules be broken.

Captions

The captions at the beginning of each paragraph are intended to facilitate convenience in referring to the various rules. The captions are not part of the substance of the paragraph and should not be used in construction of any paragraph or of this overall set of rules.

Participation / Eligibility

Participation is open to college students who are enrolled full-time in an accredited college or university and are members in good standing of that college or university's institutionally recognized fishing club that has been cleared to compete and represent their college or university. Full time is defined by your school in regards to the diploma you are working towards in both graduate and undergraduate programs. The ACA reserves the right to deny eligibility based on academic standards. Participants must have an overall (cumulative) GPA of 2.0 or higher to be eligible to compete in ACA events, but the ACA will provide waivers to the above in select cases, solely at the ACA's discretion.

The ACA will be conducting eligibility checks for registered participants. Anglers will be selected at random. Selected anglers will be required to provide official documentation that verifies they are eligible to participate in the event, per the eligibility criteria contained within these rules. Failure to provide the required information by the requested deadline will result in disqualification from the event.

Student anglers must be prepared to provide a transcript, or any other requested academic information, at all times to include in-person at events.

All anglers competing in ACA events should be prepared to provide an official transcript in a timely manner, if requested by the ACA. Failure to comply or provide an official transcript can result in disqualification or deny an angler entry or continuing to compete in a given event.

For students that drop a class or finish a semester with less than the total number of credits needed to be considered a full-time student per their institution's definition, the ACA reserves the right to review the requested transcript to make an official ruling on an angler's eligibility. In cases where an angler withdraws from an excessive number of classes, at the ACA's sole discretion, an angler will be ruled ineligible to compete.

If a student angler is nearing graduation and their degree program requires less than a full-time schedule to graduate, the student needs to notify the ACA to receive approval to compete.

Classes must be in session at the time of the tournament for new freshmen to be considered full-time undergraduate students.

Anglers representing a school that is not a traditional four-year institution, this includes Junior Colleges, Community Colleges, and trade schools...among others, cannot compete at that school (or any other school of that level) for more than two years without a waiver that is approved by ACA.

Anglers looking to represent a two-year school, or any of the level of institutions listed above, for a third year...can appeal through a waiver by submitting their case to the ACA via email: college@carecotv.com. A complete, up to date transcript, and class schedule for that current semester will need to be provided to the ACA in that waiver claim email.

Examples would include hardships for medical, changes in curriculum, etc. However, no angler will be allowed to represent a two-year school for more than 3 years and all other academic requirements must be met to include GPA and class load, except in select cases to be approved by ACA.

All anglers, regardless of schools attended, are still upheld to only be able to participate in a maximum of five years of collegiate bass fishing tournaments (any organization at any level). Therefore, for anglers who compete in a total of 2 years of events for a school that is not a traditional four-year institution, their maximum eligibility would be two years at a Junior College, Community College, trade school, etc....then three years representing a traditional four-year institution. It's the school and team's responsibility to monitor eligibility. Penalties up to, and including, disqualification of the angler, as well as suspension of the school's ability to compete in future ACA events are possible punishments. Any and all decisions are final once made by ACA on eligibility.

Regarding transfer students, classes must be in session at the time of the tournament, with the student angler enrolled full-time in classes at their new university, to be considered eligible to compete.

Student anglers who transfer and are seeking eligibility cannot do so in the middle of a semester. For those that opt to transfer mid-semester, they will forego their eligibility for the remainder of that semester and cannot compete in ACA events or tournaments where ACA rules apply.

Student anglers who have competed for three or more years at a four-year institution that intend to transfer to a two-year school (Junior College, Community College, or trade school) must reach out to the ACA to submit for a waiver, per the submission process listed above, to receive approval to compete in ACA events.

Student anglers are allowed to take online classes, but must adhere to the standards and requirements set forth by the ACA to maintain eligibility.

The online courses an angler is taking must include regular teacher-student interaction, have defined start/end dates, and allow for validation of student work.

Solely being enrolled in self-paced courses without instructor interaction are not allowed without approval.

Underclassmen taking online classes, specifically Freshman (anyone having completed less than 30 credit hours), must be enrolled in six (6) credit hours of in-person, traditional school attendance courses in addition to approved online classes, unless given a waiver by the ACA.

Upperclassmen taking online courses, specifically students having completed more than 30 credit hours, must be enrolled in three (3) credit hours of in-person, traditional school attendance courses in addition to approved online classes. Waivers will be approved on a case-by-case basis for all upperclassmen in this situation.

Students must be involved in campus life and team activities for the college/university of which they are enrolled.

To appeal or apply for a waiver, email college@carecotv.com. The ACA will review the appeal on a case-by-case basis.

A granted waiver or approved appeal is only applicable to that particular semester. For any future semesters, the student angler must submit another waiver/appeal to the ACA to be reviewed to determine further eligibility.

Student anglers taking online courses must also continue to maintain and adhere to all ACA official rules and eligibility standards. Any student angler who does not meet other additional eligibility requirements at any point, including minimum GPA and full-time enrollment, will be deemed ineligible and will not be allowed to compete.

Student anglers must be able to provide a complete transcript and class schedule that specifically identifies the nature (online, or in-person) of the classes being taken. Inability to provide this information with the required details will result in disqualification, or an angler being deemed ineligible.

Students who graduated within five (5) months of the tournament date are eligible to compete as long as they are in good standing with schools fishing club/team. All participants will be required to show a current student ID and a state issued photo ID at registration.

Anglers who have participated in five years of collegiate bass fishing tournaments (any organization at any level) are not eligible to compete.

Each team must provide its own equipment including, without limitation, fishing equipment and a boat, all subject to the restrictions contained in these Official Rules.

All contestants must have in their possession a valid fishing license for the specified tournament waters being fished. Licenses must be purchased prior to official practice days. Failure to provide proof of a valid fishing license will result in a disqualification of that event. (See fact sheet for license requirements for that specific event)

The ACA reserves the right to deny an angler entry into an event in order to protect the integrity of the field.

Off-Limits / Pre-Tournament Practice

Reference fact sheet for specific off-limits restrictions and times.

No contestant may be on the tournament waters after the start of the mandatory tournament check-in, except during tournament hours.

No practice is permitted at night during the designated practice period just before each tournament. Anglers may only be on the water from 30 minutes before official sunrise through 30 minutes after official sunset, unless other start and stop times are set for that day. The ACA reserves the right to cancel official practice days at any time, and anglers are then not allowed on tournament waters for any reason.

Anglers may not enter tournament waters to fish, test equipment, or sightsee, for any reason, without permission from tournament director during the off-limits period.

Anglers may not purposely, knowingly or intentionally obtain information or advice from non-contestants about locating or catching fish on tournament waters once the Official Practice period begins. Any angler who inadvertently receives information from a non-contestant about locating or catching fish on tournament waters must contact the tournament director as soon as practical and share the information.

Anglers may practice alone, with an approved media representative, or a guest arranged by the ACA.

Approved media representatives may also ride along with contestants during competition. (Each media representative must submit a media request form and complete a signed waiver)

Flights over tournament waters, including drones, are not permitted beginning with the start of any off-limits period or during official practice. This includes competition days. Drones are permitted by approved media representatives working on an angler or school's behalf. Anglers may not view any drone video prior to or during a tournament unless the video is made public on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube, and the Collegiate Bass Series is tagged.

Non-public websites, blogs and/or social media pages, set up for the specific purpose of sharing information with individuals or a small group of individuals are NOT public. The tournament director and ACA staff have final say on all rulings.

Restrictions

Beginning with official practice and extending through competition, non-competitors (family, coaches, friends, etc.) are not allowed to be in the boat with contestants except in the event of an emergency (rescue, mechanical breakdown, etc.) This is addressed in more detail below.

During the official practice days and competition days, contestants may not solicit and/or receive fishing information from anyone except other contestants.

During Official Practice Days and Competition days, only competitors may be in the boat with competitors. Non-competitors (family, coaches, friends, etc.) are allowed on-the-water during practice or tournament hours. Non-competitors (family, coaches, friends, etc.) on the water cannot provide anglers with any advantage. -For example: non anglers cannot deliver baits, fuel, gear

-No communication regarding fishing conditions or resulting in knowledge about lake/fishing. This includes, but is not limited to, providing updates on how any other team is currently doing at the event.

For an angler to receive assistance regarding non-emergency issues, such as mechanical help, the boat must be beached or tied up to a dock for bystander to get in the boat to assess issues, unless otherwise approved by tournament officials.

During official practice, or during the event, GPS waypoints may not be provided to contestants by anyone except other contestants. Contestants may not follow a non-competitor's boat or participate in the practice of "hole sitting" or the placing of markers by anyone.

The purchasing or bartering for information or the hiring of services is not permitted after the start of the official practice period.

The use of cellular phones will be allowed during tournament hours for the following reasons:

- a. To send pictures, location, or any other information requested by the Association of Collegiate Anglers Staff and posting of photos to publicly available social media channels. Anglers are not allowed to monitor or look at any other social media accounts during the event other than their own. Anglers may stream live from their boats during tournament hours with approval from ACA to publicly available platforms.
- b. To check live leaderboard (if available) on the Association of Collegiate Anglers website;
- c. Emergency situations.

Safety

Every participant must have completed a mandatory boater's safety course and possess a valid identification or certification for that boater safety training. Anglers must be prepared to present

that proof of completion to an ACA staff member. Failure to do so will result in disqualification for that event. (Reference the Championship fact sheet for specific details pertaining to boating requirements for Alabama)

Anglers must submit and execute a completed liability waiver upon registering for their first event of the 2026 season.

Safe boating must be observed at all times. Contestants must observe "no wake" areas including **posted** bridges and other areas identified by the Tournament Director. Failure to adhere to safe boating can result in penalties up to, and including, disqualification.

Each contestant is required to wear a fastened, U.S. Coast Guard approved, personal flotation device at all times when the combustion engine is in operation, during official practice days and during the tournament days. This includes launching and loading of boats. Failure to adhere to safe boating can result in penalties up to, and including, disqualification.

All anglers must be seated at all times when the big motor is in operation.

Distracted boating is not permitted. This includes not operating cell phones, graphs, or other items when the big motor is running.

Officials STRONGLY admonish all anglers to operate your vessel responsibly and safely for any given condition, allow plenty of travel time and SLOW DOWN, DO NOT OPERATE YOUR VESSEL IN CONDITIONS YOU FEEL ARE UNSAFE FOR YOUR VESSEL, ONLY YOU CAN DETERMINE THIS AND BY COMPETING IN THIS EVENT YOU AGGREE YOU ARE 100% RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFE OPERATION OF YOUR VESSEL.

All boats must be equipped with an emergency ignition shut off device that must be securely attached to the driver's body whenever the combustion engine is in operation, this includes launching and loading of boats.

At the discretion of the Tournament Director, practice days or tournament days may be shortened, postponed or canceled due to unsafe weather or water conditions.

Any anglers caught in violation of the rules above, will result in a penalty to be administered by the Tournament Director up to and including disqualification.

Anglers are expected to use sound judgment in the case of inclement weather.

Sportsmanship

All anglers are required to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy and conservation and to conduct themselves in a manner that will be a credit to themselves, to the ACA, ACA sponsors, the sport of fishing and the general efforts to promote the sport. Conduct not complying with these standards includes, but is not limited to, the following, and the final decision is up to the tournament director on punishment and enforcement:

- Violation of, or failure to comply with, any of the rules for the ACA events.
 - Consumption and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or any kind of mind-altering substance during check-in or tournament hours extending through the weigh-in procedure.

- Abuse of, or addiction to, mind-altering substances.
- Conviction of a felony within the past 36 months.
- Suspension/disqualification, probation or ban from any tournament or fishing organization.
- Boat operation in an unsafe or unsportsmanlike manner.
- Violation of a posted no-wake area.
- Publicly criticizing or questioning the integrity of tournament officials, including, but not limited to, rules, policies and procedures of any organization.
- Any other words, conduct or actions reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with tournament rules, or which fail to comply with the standards set forth in these rules.

In other words, conduct or actions reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with tournament rules, or which fail to comply with the standards set forth in this paragraph, are not allowed.

In case of any conduct not complying with these standards, the Tournament Director shall have the right to refuse any application, or to deny a confirmed application, by returning the registration of a previously accepted application to disqualify a contestant.

Boat and Horsepower Regulations

All boats must be a minimum of 16 feet in length. No cumbersome crafts will be allowed.

All boats must be equipped with wheel steering; no other steering device will be permitted.

Each boat must have all required U.S. Coast Guard required safety equipment.

Boats must contain a properly aerated live-well capable of maintaining alive a limit of bass.

Maximum horsepower for all outboards used in the Tournament may not exceed the horsepower set forth on the "Maximum Capacities" placard described below.

Maximum Horsepower: The maximum horsepower for all outboard motorboats used in official tournament practice and competition is 250 HP.

- Each boat must have a clearly legible "Maximum Capacities" placard that includes a maximum horsepower rating affixed to the boat by the manufacturer. The horsepower of the outboard engine must not exceed the maximum horsepower capacity specified on the boat placard. By registering for the Tournament, each contestant agrees to submit his or her boat and/or motor to an inspection by the Tournament Director.

Falsifying information on entry forms or altering the horsepower numbers on the motor or "Maximum Capacities" placard will be cause for disqualification from the Tournament and may result in ineligibility to compete in future events.

No platforms may be used during tournament competition to gain height advantage.

Fuel may be carried only in factory installed (built-in) fuel tanks. Any additional fuel used during the tournament day must be purchased from a retail facility open to the public. Fuel must be pumped directly into the boat using a hose and nozzle.

Permitted Fishing Methods

All bass must be caught alive in a conventional sporting manner.

When sight fishing, all bass must be hooked inside the mouth.

Only artificial lures may be used except for pork rinds. Only one fishing rod per angler may be used at any one time. Additional rods may be in the boat and ready for use; however, each cast and retrieve must be completed before another cast is attempted or rod is used.

Trolling, defined as moving the bait with the assistance of the combustion engine, as a method of fishing is not allowed.

No strolling or long-lining will be permitted.

All angling must be conducted from the boat. At no time may a contestant leave the boat to land a fish, or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Bank fishing is not permissible.

Permitted Fishing Locations

At no time may teams leave a boat to push it into and out of an area. Anglers must be able to use their motor (combustion or electric) to enter and depart a fishing area.

Contestants may fish anywhere on tournament waters available to the public and accessible by boat, except areas designated as "Off-Limits", "No Fishing", "No Boats", "Boats Keep Out", etc. by local, state or federal officials. Contestants are prohibited from casting into these areas or having their boat in these areas at any time. Contestants may not fish within 50 yards of a competitor's boat that was first anchored (an anchored boat is a boat held in a stable position by a line attached to a weight or a Power-Pole anchor with the trolling motor in the up position).

At no time may a contestant leave the boat to land a fish or make the boat more accessible to fishing waters.

Contestants must leave and return to the official checkpoint by boat. The boat must remain in the tournament waters during the tournament day.

No tournament boat may be loaded on the trailer before weigh-in except with the permission of the Tournament Director.

In the event of equipment failure or emergency, there will be only two permitted methods of returning to the official checkpoint:

- By the team members remaining in their boat and being towed in by water, by any other boat.
- By one or both team members boarding another competitor's boat to be brought to shore.

Under these conditions, the team catch may be counted without a penalty (except for late penalties, fish care penalties or other penalties pertaining to other tournament rules). Contestants who elect to return to the official checkpoint by any other means than cited above will forfeit their day's catch to that point in time in the tournament day. Any contestant returning to the checkpoint will be eligible to restart and resume competition under the supervision of the Tournament Director or his designated Tournament Official. It is the sole responsibility of contestants to locate the Tournament Director to request a restart.

Official Checkpoints

There will be only one official checkpoint for boat check-in in the morning and one official check-in point in the afternoon. Failure to go through boat checkpoint in the morning or failure to check-in at the official checkpoint in the afternoon will result in losing credit for that day's catch. All competitors and their boats must be in full compliance with tournament rules before they can depart from the official checkpoint in the morning. All contestants **MUST** check-in in the afternoon even if they don't have any fish to weigh. All fishing must cease upon check-in in the afternoon.

Late Penalty

Contestants who are not at the official check-in area at the appointed time will be penalized one (1) pound per minute deducted from the total weight including any weight to be counted toward a big bass award. Any contestant more than fifteen (15) minutes late will lose credit for that day's weight.

Live Fish

Every effort must be made to keep bass alive through the use of a properly aerated live-well.

The use of live-well additives is encouraged to promote the healthy return of bass to their natural habitat.

A half-pound (.50 pounds) will be deducted from the total weight for each dead bass presented for weigh-in. Contestants are not allowed to cull dead fish for any reason.

Scoring

Only Largemouth, Spotted, and Smallmouth bass are accepted species.

Any fish which fail to measure the prescribed minimum length, will not be weighed and will be penalized at the rate of one (1) pound for each short fish presented.

Bass Pro Shops School of the Year presented by Abu Garcia points will be based off each team's catch in relation to the final standings. Only the top two (2) teams from a college/university will be eligible to earn points in accordance with the School of the Year program rules, with the

exception of the Championship. Refer to current School of the Year rules for exact points available at all events. Teams must weigh a fish to earn points.

Ties

Ties will be determined by a coin flip.

Television Coverage

During all televised events, contestants may not fish while using tobacco products when the camera is videoing them. Smoking or the use of tobacco products is also not allowed in weigh-in lines or on stage.

All contestants must allow camera boats to follow them at all times, upon request from the Bass Pro Shops Collegiate Bass Fishing Series. Refusal will include penalties up to and including disqualification.

Truth Verification Test

Each contestant agrees to submit, by signature on the release form, to a polygraph or voice stress analysis examination and to abide by its conclusion. Failure to pass an examination will result in disqualification. Truth verification tests will be used at the Tournament Director's sole discretion, and the determination of the meaning of the results will be made solely by the Tournament Director.

Insurance

Watercraft liability insurance will be the responsibility of each angler. It must have the minimum coverage that the state requires and is mandatory of all contestants participating in the tournament.

The ACA reserves the right to consider rule violations reported or discovered after a tournament has ended and assess penalties for future events, including denying entry to compete.

Other

The Association of Collegiate Anglers (ACA) offers numerous discount and contingency programs via our partners. Any mis-use of these discount or contingency programs, including but not limited to providing discount codes or products purchased using these discount programs to another person, even if that other person is also a collegiate angler, or posting discount codes on-line for others to use is a violation of ACA and discount and contingency program rules. In addition, to qualify for a contingency program, anglers must fully meet requirements of that contingency program rules and standards. Failure to obey and abide by any rules may result in a contestant and/or the contestant's school bass fishing club being penalized. These penalties are invoked solely at the discretion of the ACA and Tournament Director and can be applied to the

individual contestant or school bass fishing program. Penalties may range from not being allowed to receive / utilize any collegiate discount or contingency program in the future, up to disqualification in events and banishment of the school from competing in ACA events.

The ACA reserves the right to deny entry to any university or college team that does not accurately reflect the ACA mission to ensure education and campus life is at the forefront of a student's growth.