

2026

TOURNAMENT TRAIL INFO / RULES PACKAGE

CHRIS JONES

SC BASS NATION PRESIDENT

TONY GRAY

SC BASS NATION YOUTH DIRECTOR

(REVISED 9/2/2026)

TRAIL INFO TOURNAMENT RULES:

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DECLINE ANY REGISTRATION TO COMPETE AT THEIR SOLE DISCRETION & FOR ANY REASON.

THE RULES CONTAINED AND MENTIONED IN THIS RULE BOOK ARE THE GOVERNING RULES FOR SC BASS NATION COLLEGE SERIES FROM AUGUST 1 THROUGH JULY 31 ANNUALLY.

ALL 2026 SC Bass Nation College Series, BASSMASTER College Series & ACA Rules apply.

Tournament Director and/or Tournament Organization shall have the sole authority to investigate any alleged or suspected violation of these rules at any time during the tournament season, including after the completion of any tournament event and the posting of results. Upon completion of such investigation, the Tournament Director and/or Tournament Organization may assess penalties, including disqualification, forfeiture of points, suspension, or any other disciplinary action permitted under these rules, if a violation is determined to have occurred.

ELIGIBILITY/REQUIREMENTS

Participation is open to college students who are enrolled full-time in an accredited college or university and are in good standing of that college/university fishing club/team with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. MAXIMUM of 5 years participation. Student Anglers who have graduated within 5 months of the tournament date are eligible to compete.

BOATERS EDUCATION CERTIFICATE REQUIRED

Signed SC Bass Nation College Series Angler Liability Waiver REQUIRED

ACTIVE National B.A.S.S. & Bass Nation Membership REQUIRED.

ALL College Clubs/ Teams REQUIRED to have a valid Team Roster on file with BASSMASTER.

ALL College Anglers participating in more than one (1) tournament of the 2026 tournament season REQUIRED to have a SC Bass Nation College Student Angler Membership.

ALL anglers Required to pay the Angler Annual Trail Membership

VALID SCDNR Fishing License REQUIRED

FEES:

\$25 per Angler Annual Trail Membership

\$25 per Angler SC Bass Nation College Membership

\$60 Tournament Entry fee (includes BF) PER Boat

\$150 2 Day Championship Tournament Entry Fee

(Tournament payouts 80%, 1 for 6, 5 Spots MAX)

\$25 Side Pot (OPTIONAL) Payout 3 Spots / 100% Payout)

***ALL fee's payable to SC Bass Nation via SC Bass Nation Youth Director. CASH/CHECK ONLY

SAFETY

IS TOP PRIORITY – NO EXCEPTIONS- ZERO TOLERANCE

Anglers RESPONSIBLE for operating boat at a safe speed during tournament hours. US Coast Guard APPROVED PFDs REQUIRED. IF inflatable Vest PFDs are in use, ANGLERS should make sure that the vest is armed and/or charged.

NOTE: INFLATABLE WAIST BELT PFD'S ARE NOT ALLOWED.

Anglers are REQUIRED to be seated in the boat cockpit seat area ONLY with a FULLY secured (Zipped & Buckled) PFD on while the combustion engine is running which includes Idle, Forward and Reverse operations. NO EXCEPTIONS ZERO TOLERANCE!

(1st Offense = 15-minute penalty box which starts after the last boat blasts off, 2nd Offense = DQ from event, 3rd offense = DQ for remainder of schedule tournament season)

ALL Bridges, Railways, or similar structures, in service or abandoned, marked or unmarked with signs, are NO WAKE ZONES (6 mph maximum speed). Failure to abide by the No Wake Zone Rules will result in DISQUALIFICATION from event.

CONSERVATION IS A REQUIREMENT!

EVERYONE is RESPONSIBLE for following the B.A.S.S. Conservation Policy to the fullest. Our goal is to always leave fishery and surroundings just as we have found it as we strive to keep conservation at the forefront of our mission. The BASS Conservation agenda focuses on 6 main pillars: scientific fish management, habitat, aquatic invasive species management, aquatic vegetation management, angler access and Tournament Fish Care. Included in this Info Package are several pages relating to proper fish care that EVERYONE needs to adopt and practice while fishing as what we release today, we catch again tomorrow.

The health and survival of the fish we catch must be taken seriously by every coach, student angler, and boat captain.

- **Fizz fish whenever possible and when necessary** to help alleviate signs of barotrauma and improve the fish's ability to survive.
- **Monitor LiveWell water temperature** and add ice when necessary to keep the water at an appropriate temperature, particularly during periods of warm weather.
- **Keep LiveWell's properly aerated and circulating** throughout the day.
- **Check the condition of your fish frequently—at least every 30 minutes.** Do not wait until the end of the tournament to determine whether a fish is struggling.
- Take immediate action if a fish shows signs of stress, including poor equilibrium, inability to remain upright, excessive lethargy, or other indications that it is not healthy.

BOAT/HP REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM 16' with steering wheel. Maximum 250HP Outboard Motor & can NOT exceed rating as listed on US Coast Guard Maximum Capacity tag inside boat. ALL boats MUST be seaworthy, have working Navigation Lights, Emergency Ignition Shut-Off Device & Live Well. Boats that do NOT meet these REQUIREMENTS will NOT be launched until issues are corrected! NO EXCEPTIONS!!!!!! JON BOATS that meet the above criteria are ALLOWED.

(TILLER HANDLE ENGINES, STICK STEERING, and JET DRIVE IS NOT ALLOWED)

- **250 HP** is the upper B.A.S.S. limit — no one can go over that.
- **Even below 250 HP**, a motor that has been modified in a way that makes it unsafe for the boat it's on (e.g., overpowering a small boat) is also prohibited.

Prohibited Engine Modifications and Horsepower Compliance (Safety Rule):

For the safety of all participants and in strict adherence to B.A.S.S. regulations, any boat motor that has been modified, tuned, or altered in any manner to exceed either (1) the manufacturer's original horsepower rating or (2) the maximum horsepower rating for the vessel on which it is mounted is strictly prohibited.

This includes, without limitation, any modification that results in engine output exceeding the 250 HP maximum allowed under B.A.S.S. rules, as well as any modification—regardless of the engine's stated horsepower—that causes the vessel to operate beyond the manufacturer's rated safety specifications. For example, installing or modifying a 225 HP motor to produce excessive performance on a boat rated for significantly less constitutes a violation of this rule, even though the engine remains under the 250 HP cap.

Prohibited modifications include, but are not limited to: ECM (Engine Control Module) flashing or reprogramming, aftermarket tuning, high-performance upgrades, or any unauthorized alteration designed to increase the engine's power output or speed capabilities beyond factory specifications.

All vessels must comply with U.S. Coast Guard regulations and must not exceed the horsepower limit listed on the vessel's capacity plate. Any team found in violation of these safety standards will be immediately disqualified and may be subject to further disciplinary action, including suspension or permanent ban from competition.

On-Site Inspection Authority: Tournament officials reserve the right to inspect any vessel at any time, including but not limited to: verifying capacity plates, confirming horsepower ratings, and checking for signs of engine modifications. Refusal to comply with an inspection request will be treated as a violation and result in disqualification.

These standards exist not only to ensure fair competition, but to protect the safety and well-being of all participants on the water.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM \$300,000 LIMITED LIABILITY INSURANCE REQUIRED

COMPETITORS MUST REMAIN IN BOAT AT ALL TIMES

During Tournament hours, competitors must not depart the boat to land fish, retrieve lures, or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. You are NOT allowed to use a winch, pulley, come along, cable, rope or similar device/tools to gain access to tournament waters. Competitors may not shift their weight outside of the boat and onto a dock or other object outside of the boat for the purpose of landing fish or accessing a fishing spot. Anglers are allowed, for boat protection, to push or shove off objects while landing a fish and still be counted as legal. Boats must remain in tournament waters during tournament hours. Competitors must leave and return to official checkpoints by boat. Competitors must always remain in the boat, except in case of dire emergency or with permission from the Tournament Director for rest room breaks. In such an emergency, or with permission of the Tournament Director, competitors may be removed from their boat either to a boat operated by other competitors or a rescue boat designated by the Tournament Director. Partners must always remain together, in sight of each other and each other's catch, under the conditions cited above for their catch of that day to be scored in the tournament. In breakdown situations, afternoon check-in times **DO NOT change**. With tournament official's permission, anglers may transfer their fish to another competitor's boat and ride to check-in, and they may leave their boat captain with the disabled boat. In such cases, anglers are REQUIRED to always stay with their catches, and the assisting boat's partners should verify the catch. Any team whose boat is disabled that rides with another competitor or rescue boat to weigh-in is NOT allowed to fish. In the event of a needed restroom break or refueling situation at a marina gas pump, contestants are allowed to leave the boat. If a competitor violates any of the above conditions (to contact a tournament official by phone or other means, or to report an emergency or breakdown), both competitors must cease fishing at this point and their catch must be verified by a tournament official to be counted in the tournament. If, after the emergency is resolved by tournament officials, enough time is left for the competitors to resume fishing, a restart will be allowed, the competitors will continue, and their catch will be counted. This applies ONLY to dire emergency situations as determined by the Tournament Director or his/her designated representative. Towing boats on trailers during tournament hours is prohibited, except by the direction of tournament officials.

BOAT BREAKDOWNS/ACCIDENTS

ALL breakdowns/accidents and/or repairs are REQUIRED to be reported to Tournament Director and/or SC Bass Nation Youth Director, FIRST. Only registered tournament participants can assist with breakdowns during tournament hours. Once contact has been made with Tournament Director and/or SC Bass Nation Youth Director, anglers can plan to get their catch of the day back to weigh in with another teammate and/or competitor team.

CHECK IN TIME DOES NOT CHANGE DUE TO BREAKDOWNS/ACCIDENTS

INCLEMENT WEATHER SAFETY POLICY

Tournament Officials have the right to delay, shorten, postpone, or cancel the start of an official tournament due to inclement weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors, equipment & volunteers associated with the scheduled event.

In the event of potential inclement weather, every effort will be made to evaluate conditions and announce a decision regarding the status of the tournament by **6:00 PM on the Thursday** preceding the scheduled event. However, if additional time is required to ensure the safety of all participants, the Tournament Director reserves the right to make a final decision as late as **12:00 PM (noon) on Friday**.

All final decisions will be made public no later than **Friday at 12:00 PM**, and when possible, updates will be provided at or before **6:00 PM on Thursday**. Any changes to the tournament schedule due to weather will be communicated to all participants and made publicly available either **Thursday evening** or **the morning of the scheduled event**.

CODE OF CONDUCT

College Anglers, Coaches, Faculty Members, Family & Friends of Student Anglers shall use their best efforts to demonstrate professionalism & integrity while attending tournament events

ALCOHOL USE

CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL BY ANYONE IS PROHIBITED. THIS INCLUDES IN THE PARKING LOT AFTER THE TOURNAMENT.

PROTEST

Registered Tournament participants can **ONLY** submit an Official Rules Infraction Protest. **ALL** Protest **MUST** be submitted in writing within 15 minutes of the scale closing to Tournament Director, Advisory Staff and/or SC Bass Nation Youth Director. Protest Forms are available in the Tournament Trailer. Detailed info to support the protest **CAN** include video and/or photo.

Level 1 Protest is a \$25 fee. Level 2 Protest is a \$250 fee. Level 3 Protest is a \$650 fee.

"CASH" Payment due at time of the protest.

ALL Protest will be fully reviewed by the Tournament Director, Advisory Staff including SC BASS NATION Youth Director.

ALL Protest decisions/resolutions are FINAL!

PROTEST LEVEL

Safety Violations are not considered protests. There is no fee to report safety violations, but must be supported by substantial corroborating evidence (photo/video).

Level 1 Protest is a rules violation accompanied by corroborating evidence, such as a picture or video.

Level 1 Protest Fee-~~\$25~~ (CASH) Non-refundable

Level 2 Protest is a rules violation that must be investigated in depth by the director.

Level 2 Protest Fee-~~\$250~~ (CASH) Non-refundable

Level 3 Protest is a rules violation that a 3rd party lie detector test is required to determine if a violation has occurred.

Level 3 Protest Fee-~~\$650~~ (CASH) Non-refundable

CELL PHONE POLICY:

Contestants may **NOT** use ANY mobile communication devices on ANY kind, including but not limited to cell phones, radios, tablets, etc., to communicate with ANYONE for the purpose of locating or catching fish on tournament waters during official practice & tournament hours.

Mobile Communication devices may be used to communicate with tournament officials, team coach & lockmasters during official tournament hours.

Contestants **CAN** use mobile communication devices during official tournament hours for GPS mapping, weather updates, tidal chart and to report safety issues.

Failure to abide by the rules will result in **DISQUALIFICATION**.

PARTICIPATION

Team or Solo. (Substitute partners is NOT allowed) NOTE: Changing of partners after season begins results in Points starting over

OFF LIMITS

Tournament waters shall be off limits to ALL Registered College Anglers from official SUNSET Sunday preceding the tournament until official SUNRISE the Friday before tournament. ANGLERS MAY NOT SOLICIT INFORMATION FROM ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN ON THE TOURNAMENT WATERS DURING THE OFF-LIMITS PERIOD. Any competitor found guilty of violating the off-limits period will have their catch disqualified.

OFFICIAL PRACTICE DAY

Friday BEFORE scheduled Tournament Day, Official SUNRISE to Official SUNSET. NO NIGHT FISHING! Anglers are allowed to practice solo.

OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT HOURS

LEGAL SUNRISE - 3PM

Tournament Officials have the right to delay, shorten or cancel the start of an official tournament due of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors.

TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION

ONLINE REGISTRATION REQUIRED PER TOURNAMENT. Tournament Registration begins 14 DAYS prior to the date of the event.

*****TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION CLOSING @ 12 MIDNIGHT ON SUNDAY BEFORE ALL TOURNAMENT. *****

Anglers are allowed to register at the ramp the morning of event.

BLAST OFF ASSIGNMENTS

Set by using the Random Number Generator (RNG) app based on completed online registration.

TOURNAMENT MORNING CHECK IN

Begins @ 5AM on Tournament morning,

DOCK PARKING

DO NOT TIE UP TO ANY DOCK!!! Docks are used for loading & unloading of Anglers ONLY. In the mornings, once everyone is onboard, boats must move away from the dock to allow ample use of the dock by other teams for the same purposes.

THIS RULE APPLIES TO THE AFTERNOON USE OF DOCK AS WELL!

SAFETY MEETING

MANDATORY Rules / Safety Meeting followed by Prayer & National Anthem @ ALL SC BASS NATION YOUTH/COLLEGE Tournaments before Blast Off.

BLAST OFF PROCEDURE

ALL boats MUST be staged in flight area based on blast off positions. ALL Flights will consist of 30 boats. Tournament Coordinator will conduct blast off procedures at which time ALL boats MUST drive by at NO WAKE speed either by the dock or Blast Off Boat to verify ALL Safety Requirements & Live Well is working properly. Boats that do NOT meet these REQUIREMENTS will NOT be launched until ALL issues are corrected!

BLAST OFF MINIMUM 50 YARDS FROM DOCK, BLAST OFF BOAT OR NO WAKE BOUYS THAT MAY BE IN PLACE

TOURNAMENT CREEL

College Series Division - 5 Fish Limit per Boat

College Series Division should not possess more than 5 fish at any given time during tournament hours.

Extra fish MUST be culled immediately

ALL fish must be largemouth, spotted, redeye or small mouth bass that are a MINIMUM of 12 inches in length, UNLESS the lake length is longer per SCDNR, i.e., 14" on Murray, Greenwood, Marion or Lake Moultrie. Fish will be measured with mouth closed and tail fanned, not pinched on a golden rule.

College Anglers are encouraged to check their fish for legal length BEFORE placing in Live Well.

All fish must be caught on artificial lures, and anglers may only use one rod at a time. ALL fishing REQUIRED to be performed inside the boat. Student Anglers are not permitted to exit the boat to advance in position to cast or land a fish, bedding fish MUST be hooked in mouth.

Alabama Rigs & Double Fluke Rigs are PROHIBITED!

DEAD FISH RULE

Dead fish CANNOT be culled. Dead fish MUST be kept and weighed in as part of the tournament fish limit. A 4-ounce penalty (4 oz. = .25) for each dead fish will be assessed. This penalty WILL also apply to big fish; in the event the big fish is deceased.

PIERCING CULL TAGS

NOT allowed per BASSMASTER College Series Rules. Penalty for use of piercing type cull tags is loss of that fish from daily creel.

TOURNAMENT AFTERNOON CHECK IN

AFTERNOON TOURNAMENT CHECK IN WILL BE AT THE DOCK.

College Anglers are REQUIRED to have adequate water level in their bags to completely cover the fish while transporting fish to the check in area. Transporting fish WITHOUT water bag is UNACCEPTABLE and will be addressed with Anglers & Team Coaches.

College Anglers are encouraged to check their fish for legal length BEFORE submitting fish to be weighed. Student Anglers CAN request a courtesy measurement check on a fish WITHOUT penalty.

ALL UNDERSIZE FISH SUBMITTED FOR WEIGH IN WILL BE DISQUALIFIED AND THE TEAM WILL BE GIVEN A 1 POUND PENALTY PER FISH.

Once College Anglers have checked in, they are REQUIRED to get in line to have fish officially measured, placed into a mesh bag, and get mesh bag into the holding tanks. NO College Angler will be allowed to leave the holding tank area once they have checked in until they have been called to the stage for official Weigh In.

THIS CHECK IN PROCEDURE IS BEING IMPLEMENTED TO PROTECT THE WELL BEING OF THE FISH TO MAKE SURE EVERY EFFORT TO GET THEM SAFELY BACK INTO THE WATER TO BE CAUGHT ANOTHER DAY.

NO TRAILERING OF BOATS ALLOWED BEFORE WEIGH IN UNLESS TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR/ COORDINATOR MAKES ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE THE START OF ANY SC HIGH SCHOOL BASS CHALLENGE TOURNAMENT!

ALL College Anglers REQUIRED to Check In as outlined below.

FLIGHT #1 Boat 1-30 REQUIRED CHECK TIME 3PM (301PM LATE PENALTY BEGINS / 315PM DQ)

FLIGHT #2 Boat 31-60 REQUIRED CHECK IN TIME 315PM (316PM LATE PENALTY BEGINS / 330PM DQ)

FLIGHT #3 Boat 61-90 REQUIRED CHECK IN TIME 330PM (331PM LATE PENALTY BEGINS / 345PM DQ)

FLIGHT #4 Boat 91-120 REQUIRED CHECK IN TIME 345PM (346PM LATE PANALTY BEGINS / 4PM DQ)

WEIGH IN

Weigh In will begin once the last Team/Boat has been checked in.

HOLDING TANK

WHEN AVAILABLE, ALL fish once checked in, weighed in & photos are taken, ALL fish become property of the tournament trail and will be placed into a holding tank for later release after the tournament.

IF tank trailer is NOT available, College anglers will release fish back into water.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

If an emergency occurs, College Angler should call 911 first, and then notify SC BASS NATION YOUTH DIRECTOR Tony Gray @ 803-534-1720.

POINTS SYSTEM

SC Bass Nation College Series Division will use a 250-point system for each tournament. First place will be awarded 250 points, second place 249, and so on. Teams participating but not weighing any fish will be awarded last place points minus 10.

SC BASS NATION COLLEGE SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

Based on season ending points.

BASSMASTER COLLEGE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT QUALIFYING

Bassmaster Contract rules apply

BASS PRO SHOP ACA SCHOOL OF THE YEAR POINTS

Will be awarded as outlined in the program

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

TOURNAMENT RESULTS ARE CONSIDERED UNOFFICIAL UNTIL ALL PENALTIES (DEAD FISH & CHECK IN TIME) IS REVIEWED AND DOCUMENTED.

FINAL TOURNAMENT RESULTS WILL BE POSTED ON MONDAY AFTERNOON AFTER EACH TOURNAMENT.

TIE BREAKER

Total Tournament Season weight breaks Championship Points tie.

Total Tournament weight breaks BIG FISH tie

BIG FISH breaks tournament weight tie

IN case of TOTAL tournament weight & BIG Fish weight tie, then LOWEST blast off position breaks the tie.

RULES VIOLATION

Violations of a tournament rule by Anglers may result in weight loss, the loss of weight up to a particular time in the tournament day (eligible for a restart), loss of weight for the entire day, disqualification for the entire tournament or, in an extreme circumstance, ineligibility to participate in future events. If a team is disqualified from a tournament their weight will be recorded as 0. If the director feels that violation was a willful attempt to gain an unfair advantage or to intentionally cheat, the Tournament Director has the right to refuse entry from that team or team members in the future and will inform all members of the situation.

NOTICE

Any interpretation, questions, or concerns regarding these rules should be brought to the attention of Tournament Director. All decisions by the Director & Staff are FINAL!

By signing the Official LIABILITY Form, I acknowledge ,I have willingly read, understand and will abide by the rules associated with competing in the SC BASS NATION COLLEGE SERIES TOURNAMENT TRAIL and I hereby release SC BASS NATION COLLEGE SERIES TOURNAMENT TRAIL, its officers, sponsors, hosts, employees and anyone working in association with them from any damages, injuries, or death that may occur as a result of competing in these events, whether by negligence of the said parties or otherwise to the fullest extent of the law.

NOTE

No one is allowed to distribute any type of event flyers, set up to sell food or any type of merchandise including Raffle Tickets WITHOUT written APPROVAL from the Tournament Director.

CONTACT INFO:

**TONY GRAY – SC BASS NATION YOUTH DIRECTOR
(803) 534-1720**

SCYOUTHDIRECTOR@GMAIL.COM



Fish Care must be a HIGH priority

B.A.S.S. is a leader in conservation but we need help to maintain that reputation. Every catch is now recorded for television, printed in magazines or live-streamed on the Internet. What you do and say influences other anglers - and how they perceive you and B.A.S.S. It is critical that you **"Do it right."**

1. Landing & Handling...

- **The #1 complaint from fans watching our tournaments is boat-flipping fish onto the carpet.** We discourage this 1) to protect the bass' slime coat, and 2) because it looks to our viewers like we don't care about the wellbeing of the fish.
- **Make every effort to grasp the fish by lower jaw or lift them by the line** - catching them before they hit the deck. **DO NOT** lay fish on hot, dry carpet when culling.

2. Livewell Operation is Critical to Survival...

- **Water temps below 65°F** pump in freshwater at regular intervals to refresh the livewell.
- **Water temps from 65-75°F** pump fresh water *continuously* and turn on your recirculating aerator.
- **Water temps over 75°F** fill livewells early, cool with small amounts of ice and turn on the recirculating aerator full time. Don't pump in hot surface water all day. Do not add *excessive* amounts of ice - Cool the water no more than 10°F below lake temps. This is usually no more than 5-8 lbs per side. Too much cooling causes shock when the fish are released after weigh-in. Add additional ice as needed to maintain temps.
- **Keep both livewells full** and divide your catch. Use pool noodles or sponges to reduce sloshing.
- **Install livewell lid ventilation devices** to help cool the water, allow fresh air in and CO₂ out.

3. Fizzing Can't Wait...

- **Learn to fizz.** Fish caught in deep water suffer with overinflated air bladders. Leaving this untreated for just a few hours reduces survival. Check fish regularly and fizz them in the boat! Do not wait for the tournament staff to render first-aid on the release boat. How-to videos for smallmouth and largemouth at <https://video.bassmaster.com/detail/videos/conservation>. Contact Gene Gilliland for a needle source.
- **Weighted fin clips do NOT cure over-inflation** – restricted blood flow and damage to internal organs can still occur even though the fish are upright and appear normal. You must fizz struggling fish.

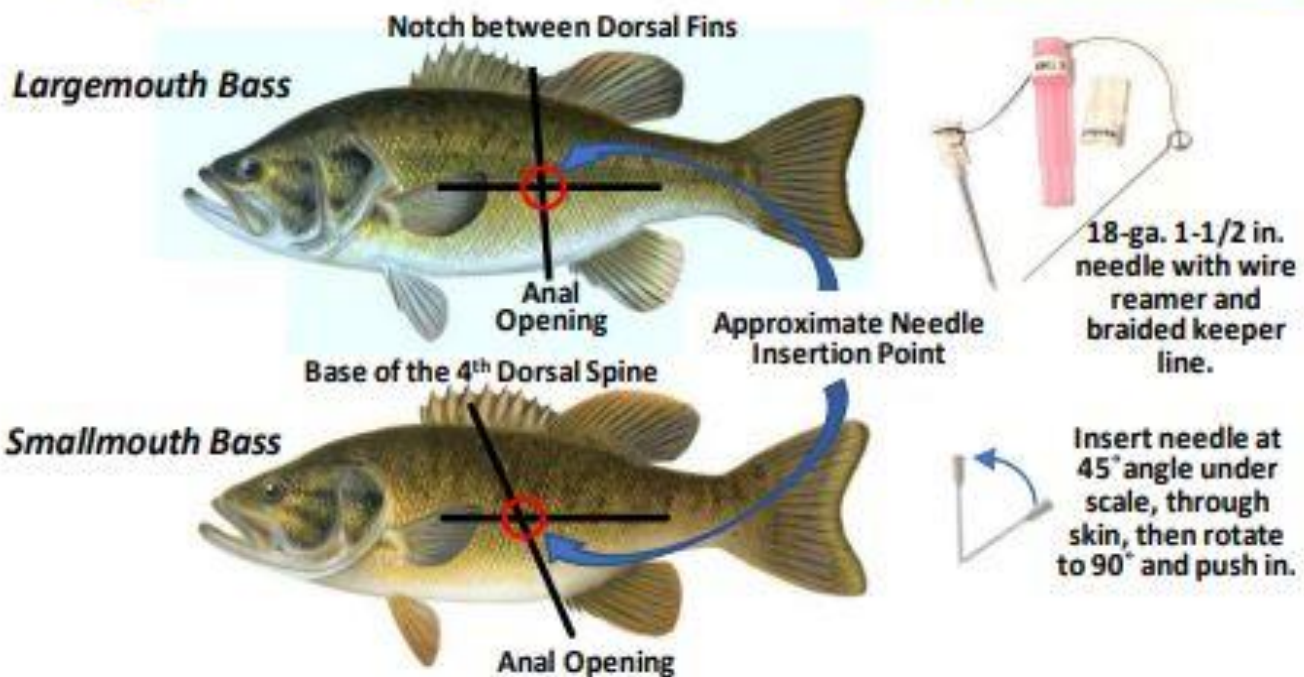
4. Bagging Fish & Weigh-in Lines...

- **Keep your fish in your mesh bag while waiting in line.** Please do not pull fish out to show to fans or photographers backstage. They can get photos in your boat while you are bagging, or on stage. Excessive handling and air exposure causes additional delayed mortality that we hear about long after we are gone.



Barotrauma Relief "Fizzing"

For a video go to
www.Bassmaster.com/conservation
and click on Conservation Videos



Steps to treating Barotrauma - over-inflation of the swim bladder

1. Put fish in livewell allowing 5-10 minutes to acclimate before assessing need, re-assess several times throughout the day and treat fish immediately when symptoms are seen.
2. Symptoms – Fish can't remain upright, constantly struggle to submerge, float on side or back, bulge on side near tip of pectoral fin.
3. Hold fish firmly, slightly out of water (or place on smooth, wet surface) to insert needle.
4. Target area is the intersection of a line drawn straight towards the tail from the tip of the pectoral fin laid flat against the fish, with the vertical line for each species as shown in the diagrams: for largemouth, a near vertical line from the notch in the dorsal fin to the anal pore; and for smallmouth a diagonal line from the base of the 4th dorsal spine to the anal pore.
5. Insert clean 18-gauge x 1-1/2 inch hypodermic needle under a scale and into skin at a 45° angle towards the fish's head. Penetrate skin then rotate needle vertical to 90° and push straight in.
6. Keeping a wire reamer in the barrel of the needle while inserting will prevent clogging. Reamer can be made from welding tip cleaner wire or 10-ga stainless wire from tackle component suppliers. Attach reamer to needle hub with a length of braided fishing line (see photo on other side).
7. Hold the fish under water. Remove reamer after fish is submerged. Watch for bubbles. **DO NOT** squeeze. Allow gas to escape until the fish becomes neutrally buoyant (neither sinking nor floating).
8. Don't keep fish out of water longer than YOU can hold your breath - that's what the fish is doing!
9. Return fish to livewell and monitor frequently. A fish swimming upright is ready for release. But if the fish is still struggling/floating on its back or side, it could need a second fizzing.



KEEPING BASS ALIVE

Top 10 Fish Care Tips

- 1 Land fish quickly; Don't play them to exhaustion.
- 2 Use barbless or circle hooks whenever possible.
- 3 Protect the slime coat. Only touch fish with wet hands. Don't let fish flop on the boat deck. Use a rubber or nylon landing net.
- 4 Hold small bass vertically by the lower jaw. Support large fish horizontally with a hand under the anal fin.
- 5 Minimize air exposure time. Remove hooks quickly with as little tissue damage as possible.
- 6 Determine immediately if you are going to keep or release the fish and plan accordingly.
- 7 Proper livewell operation is a must to maximize survival. Follow guidelines in *Keeping Bass Alive* at Bassmaster.com/conservation.
- 8 Learn to spot swim bladder overinflation; immediately use side fizzing to relieve the condition.
- 9 Don't release fish into stagnant backwaters and high traffic areas.
- 10 Do not release injured fish or those too weak to swim. Better to harvest these.

Learn more at
Bassmaster.com/conservation

Required Equipment

When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All vessels must have at least one Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device (life jacket) that is U.S. Coast Guard–approved, wearable, and of the proper size for each person on board or being towed. Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.
- *South Carolina law requires all children under 12 years of age to wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD while on board a Class A (less than 16 feet long) vessel. The life jacket must be fastened and of the proper size for the child.*
- One U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type IV PFD must be on board vessels 16 feet or longer and readily accessible in addition to the above requirements.
- One Type V personal flotation device may be substituted for any other type if it is specifically approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for the activity at hand. Type V PFDs may not be substituted on children weighing less than 90 pounds.
- Each person riding on a PWC must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V personal flotation device.
- Each person being towed behind a vessel must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved Type I, II, III, or V PFD.
- All PFDs must be in good and serviceable condition and must be readily accessible.
- In certain situations, paddleboards must carry a U.S. Coast Guard–approved PFD for each person on board.



TYPE I: Wearable Offshore Life Jackets

These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take a while. They provide the most buoyancy, are excellent for flotation, and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.



TYPE II: Wearable Near-Shore Vests

These vests are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. A Type II may not turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water.



TYPE III: Wearable Flotation Aids

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. They are not recommended for rough waters since they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.



TYPE IV: Throwable Devices

These cushions and ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. Since a Type IV is not designed to be worn, it is neither for rough waters nor for persons who are unable to hold onto it.



TYPE V: Special-Use Devices

These vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs, and others are designed for specific activities, such as windsurfing, kayaking, or water-skiing. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their labels.*

Navigation Lights

The required navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility.

Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
 - Red and green sidelights visible from at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away.
 - A sternlight visible from at least two miles away.
- **If less than 23.0 feet long**, these vessels should:
 - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
 - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flashlight shining a white light, as shown in illustration 3.

All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible in all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



The masthead light and sternlight may be combined as an all-round white light on vessels less than 39.4 feet long.



2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet



Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.