



Illinois Bass Federation Tournament Trail Rules Effective 1/1/2025

These rules & safety regulations have been "time tested" and represent great effort, study and research in their formulation. The following rules of this tournament will remain unchanged, unless officially amended by the Illinois Bass Federation, herein after (IBF). Interpretation and enforcement of these rules shall be left exclusively to the Tournament Director. In the event of a rule violation, the Tournament Director may impose such sanctions, as deemed appropriate including, without limitation, disqualification, forfeiture of prizes and prohibition from participation in subsequent tournaments. The decisions of the Tournament Director and IBF Tournament Officials shall be final in all matters.

1. PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBILITY: Participation in this tournament is voluntary. This tournament is open to participants who are 16 years of age or older. Minors must be accompanied to the tournament site by a parent or legal guardian. **The IBF Tournament Trail Events are open only to active members in good standing of IBF/TBF.** Proof of age is the responsibility of the potential competitor. All participants must have in their possession a valid fishing license covering the waters to be fished. **DURING THE OFFICIAL PRACTICE AND COMPETITION DAYS OF ANY IBF EVENT NO CONTESTANT MAY OPERATE A BOAT UNLESS THAT CONTESTANT HAS DOCUMENTED PROOF OF AN INSURANCE POLICY IN FORCE, THAT COVER THE EVENT DATES WITH A MINIMUM OF \$300,000 BOATING LIABILITY COVERAGE ON THAT PARTICULAR BOAT. PROOF OF INSURANCE MUST BE WITH THE BOAT BEING USED AND MUST COVER THE COMPETITOR USING THAT BOAT. RANDOM CHECKS WILL BE CONDUCTED. EACH POLICY MUST SHOW \$300,000.00 LIABILITY AND A VALID EXPIRATION DATE.** NOTE: Statements of "No fixed expiration date" are NOT acceptable. Any candidate for competition who, in the judgment of the Tournament Committee, is not able to safely compete for the entirety of the event without unfairly hindering their daily partner or endanger the safety and well-being of their partner or their self shall not be eligible. PROPERLY COMPLETED AND SIGNED OFFICIAL ENTRY DOCUMENTS AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY FORM MUST BE RECEIVED BY IBF BEFORE THE EVENT(S). Tournament Officials reserves the right to discontinue or extend the acceptance of applications prior to or after this deadline.

2. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE: There will be no off-limits period for any regular season tournament unless specified by the Tournament Director. Each competitor must know and observe off-limits dates posted on the website and Facebook. **DURING THE TOURNAMENT, A COMPETITOR MAY NOT SEEK THE ASSISTANCE OR ADVICE OF ANYONE FOR THE PURPOSES OF LOCATING OR CATCHING BASS, NOR ENTER THE TOURNAMENT WATERS WITH ANYONE WHO IS DEEMED AN "EXPERT" ON THE TOURNAMENT WATERS BY TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS, UNLESS THEY ARE A CONTESTANT IN THE TOURNAMENT.** During the official practice and during the tournament, a competitor may not "SKIN DIVE" or "SCUBA DIVE" on the tournament waters. During the tournament a competitor may not use a CB radio, a VHF marine band radio, a cellular phone, or any other type of communication device for the purpose of locating or catching fish. **Contestants are permitted to transmit by radio or telephone in an emergency and to communicate with Lock Operators.** If so equipped, contestants may listen to marine band weather information. **EACH CONTESTANT AGREES TO REPORT TO THE TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS ANY VIOLATION OR INFRACTION OF THESE TOURNAMENT RULES. THE FAILURE TO REPORT VIOLATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS TO VIOLATE THESE RULES OR FALSE VERIFICATION OF WEIGH-IN SLIPS WILL BE CAUSE FOR DISQUALIFICATION. EACH COMPETITOR AGREE TO SUBMIT TO A TRUTH VERIFICATION TEST OR POLYGRAPH TEST SHOULD THEY BE ASKED TO FOR ANY REASON and abide by its conclusion. Failure to pass the examination will result in disqualification.** The administration and interpretation of the truth verification test shall be the sole responsibility of Tournament Officials, and their agent(s), and shall be used (or not used) at their discretion. Without limiting anything herein, Tournament Officials shall have sole discretion to select the place at which such a truth verification test shall be administered, the individual who administers such a truth verification test, and the scope of the questions which may be asked during such test. The participant shall be available, at their own expense, at the location selected by the Tournament Director and shall cooperate in all respects with the examination.

3. ENTRY AND REGISTRATION: Entries must be postmarked no later than 10 Days prior to the event to avoid a \$25 late fee. Entries will be accepted up to the beginning of the Pre-tournament meeting (on evening before the tournament) with a \$25 late Fee Accessed. **An official entry form and RELEASE OF LIABILITY FORM with SS# filled in** must be completed in order to compete. **Any Contestant receiving a check of any amount at each trail event must fill out and sign an IRS W9 form including SS# info on it for tax purposes.** Entry confirmations will be done by e-mail or text message only. It is the responsibility of the Contestants to make sure the Tournament Director has a functioning and legible e-mail address in which to send the confirmation. If a confirmation is not received, contact the Tournament Director for confirmation. Any Contestant wishing to withdraw their entry from an event must do so by contacting the Tournament Director no later than 6:00PM Tuesday prior to the event of that day to receive full entry fee restitution. There may be a \$10.00 fee accessed for withdrawing from an event after that deadline, at the discretion of the Tournament Director. All Contestants must be registered and present at the pre-tournament meeting or have a Representative present in their absence to meet with their Partner. In the event an Angler must use a Representative at the meeting, the Tournament Director must be notified of the Representative before the beginning of the meeting for the Angler to be considered as entered.

Entry fees (and entry breakout) for 2025 will be:

Angler	\$175	Co-Angler	\$100
Tournament Pay-out	\$107	Tournament Pay-out	\$55
Big Bass Pot	\$5	Big Bass Pot	\$4
To the CLASSIC Payout	\$53	To the CLASSIC Payout	\$32
To the Angler of Year Award	\$5	To the Angler of Year Award	\$4
Reserved for Expense (max)	\$5	Reserved for Expense (max)	\$5

*******New for 2025 Season**

Events will pay down **20% of each division (Angler and Co-Angler)**, but at least three places. In addition, each division will have one Big Bass pot and plaques awarded to the winners. Checks will be awarded to each Angler and Co-Angler placing in the top 20% of their division.

4. SAFETY: Safe boat conduct must be observed at all times by tournament competitors. During the official practice and during the tournament, each competitor is required to wear a Coast Guard approved, Type III, chest-type life preserver. This preserver must be worn anytime the combustion engine is operating. This preserver must be strapped, snapped or zippered securely and maintained in that condition until the competitor reaches their fishing location and the combustion engine is shut off. Violation of this rule shall be reason for disqualification. Tournament Officials have the right to delay or cancel the start of an official tournament day because of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors. In the event of a thunderstorm, lightning, severe weather or any unsafe condition, participants should remove themselves from the competition and seek safety or shelter until it is safe to continue fishing. Participants may not leave their boats during tournament hours except in case of emergency/safety. Tournament waters may also be restricted at any time because of bad weather. IBF further reserves the right to impose boat speed limits on any or all tournaments.



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Whether or not to impose a speed limit, the area covered by the speed limit and/or the actual speed limit imposed shall be left exclusively to the discretion of the IBF Tournament Director. IBF will announce emergency contact numbers and instructions at the pre-tournament briefing.

5. SPORTSMANSHIP: *Competitors in an IBF tournament is expected to follow the very highest standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation.* Any violation of these basic sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification. Use of alcohol or drugs (Including Marijuana in any form) (other than those drugs purchased over the counter or prescribed by a licensed physician) by any competitor during the official practice, during the tournament or during the weigh-in will not be tolerated and shall be cause for automatic disqualification from this and all future TBF tournaments. The "IBF" is the "grassroots ambassadors" of fishing, Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially with regard to boating and angling in the vicinity of non-competitors who may be on tournament waters. Any act of any competitor which reflects unfavorably upon efforts to promote fisheries conservation, clean waters, and courtesy shall be reason for disqualification. All competitors are bound by prevailing state statutes and regulations of the various states within which they fish. Chemical substance addiction or abuse, conviction of a felony or other crimes involving moral turpitude, or other conduct reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with tournament rules shall be grounds for rejecting any application for participation and for disqualification. Any disqualification or suspension from, or other disciplinary action regarding, any tournament or fishing organization, may be grounds for rejecting any application for participation and for disqualification.

6. TACKLE AND EQUIPMENT: Only artificial lures may be used. No "live bait" or "prepared bait" will be permitted, with the exception of pork rinds, strips, etc. Only ONE (1) fishing rod (8-foot maximum length from butt of the handle to rod tip) and reel may be used at any one time. All other types prohibited. Other rigs as specified may be in the boat ready to use, however, only ONE is permitted in use at any given time. All bass must be caught alive in a conventional and sporting manner. Anyone guilty of snatching or snagging visible fish will have their day's catch disqualified. When fishing for bass you can see, all bass must be hooked inside the mouth and *must be verified* by your partner before being unhooked to be counted as a legal fish. No gaffs OR "GRIPPERS" may be used to land bass nor be permitted in boat at any time.

7. HORSEPOWER REGULATIONS: Maximum horsepower for all outboard motors used in official practice and in tournament competition will be 250hp. WHERE REQUIRED, EACH BOAT MUST BE EQUIPPED WITH A U.S. COAST GUARD RATING PLATE, WHICH MUST BE ATTACHED TO THE BOAT BY THE MANUFACTURER. In no case may the horsepower of your outboard exceed the rating specified on the rating plate or the horsepower limit set by TBF. Each competitor agrees to submit, by their signature on the official entry form and waiver, the boat and motor used in the tournament to an inspection by factory-trained personal, if there is any reason to suspect the horsepower is in excess of the rating. Normal maintenance to increase the performance of your engine is allowed. Changing or altering standard factory parts of your motor to INCREASE THE HORSEPOWER OVER THE FACTORY HORSEPOWER RATING IS FORBIDDEN, and will result in disqualification. Falsifying information on entry forms or altering the horsepower rating numbers on the motor or ratings plate also would be cause for immediate disqualification from TBF Sanctioned Events.

8. BOAT AND MOTOR: **All boats must be propeller-driven.** For the safety of all contestants, ALL BOATS MUST BE EQUIPPED WITH SOME TYPE OF OPERABLE IGNITION KILL SWITCH SAFETY DEVICE. This engine stop device must be attached to the driver's body any time the combustion engine is operating. Anytime the combustion engine is operating and in gear, there must be a driver in the driver's seat in full control of the boat. Fishing boats may be used that are 17 feet in length or longer and must have a rear deck. Any raised platforms or decks cannot be higher than the gunnel of the boat. Trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited. Any type of AUXILIARY gas tanks that are not installed by the boat manufacturer are prohibited. Additional gas tanks that are factory options and installed by an authorized dealer are legal. Boats that do not have factory installed gas tanks are restricted to a maximum of 18 gallons of gasoline in tanks that meet U.S. Coast Guard regulations. Gas tanks must be properly secured or strapped in a boat. Any additional fuel used during the tournament day must be purchased from a retail facility open to all contenders and/or the public. No "barges" or similar cumbersome craft will be permitted. NO BOAT EQUIPPED WITH "STICK STEERING" SHALL BE PERMITTED TO BE USED DURING THE OFFICIAL PRACTICE OR DURING THE TOURNAMENT BY ANY COMPETITOR. The definition of "stick steering" shall be made by the Tournament Director. A competitor answering affirmatively the question "Will you bring a boat and motor?" will be expected to make that boat and motor available for tournament use by their self and their daily partner, if so requested by tournament officials. Those answering the same question negatively will be presumed not to have a boat available and will be paired with one who does when possible. It shall be the responsibility of the fishing partners to mutually agree on a meeting location, and the basis for sharing expenses. If partners are unable to agree, the Tournament Director shall make such determination, which shall be binding upon the partners.

9. BASIC BOAT & SAFETY EQUIPMENT: Every boat must have all the required Coast Guard safety equipment. Great Lakes water tournaments require flares. In addition, it must have a functional bilge pump and **a divided live well space**, properly aerated, to sufficiently maintain, in a healthy condition a limit catch by BOTH competitors using the boat. IBF recommends the use of live well additives to promote the healthy release of all fish to their natural habitat. Further IBF recommends the use of ICE to cool live well water and improve oxygen levels during "summer" months. The Tournament Director shall have the sole responsibility for determining whether aeration and capacity is "proper and adequate".

10. BOAT IDENTIFICATION: Each boat MUST be given, prior to each day's start, a live well and SAFETY INSPECTION check by a tournament official and a boat marker which MUST remain in the boat until check-in at the end of each day.

11. BOAT OPERATION • Boaters will fish from the front deck of the boat only. Co-anglers will fish from the back deck or seating area of the boat only. Boaters will have complete control of boat operation and waters to be fished. For safety concerns in rough water or swift current, in the event of an outboard or trolling motor breakdown or during an emergency, co-anglers may operate the trolling motor or the outboard but may not fish anytime from the front deck. Boaters may not request that the co-angler not fish. Any boater that, in the judgment of the tournament director, operates the boat in such a manner that unfairly handicaps his/her co-angler and any co-angler who unfairly handicaps his/her boater may be disqualified for that day. Contestants may not use mobile communication devices, including but not limited to, cell phones, tablets, marine radios, walkie-talkies, CBs, etc., to communicate with anyone about locating or catching fish on tournament waters during tournament hours. Mobile communication devices may be used during tournament hours to communicate with lockmasters about locking, or to communicate with the tournament director. Boaters may use smart phones and/or tablets during tournament hours for GPS, mapping, weather, power generation, barge traffic updates, tidal charts, personal fishing notes and related data. At no time during tournament hours may contestants read or discuss social media posts from other contestants. **Co-anglers are not allowed to record GPS waypoints or use any type of handheld GPS during any competition day.** Contestants are expected to compete every day for which they are qualified; failure to do so may result in ineligibility to compete in future IBF tournaments. If a special circumstance arises that inhibits a contestant's ability to compete, the tournament director may allow the contestant to withdraw from competition and maintain the weight caught to that point.



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12. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS: Tournament waters shall be established by the Tournament Director for each tournament. Each competitor must obtain this information from IBF. Fishing on tournament waters is permitted anywhere except water within tournament boundaries posted "off-limits or no fishing" by state or federal agencies which will be OFF-LIMITS. Also, the live-bass release area established by the Tournament Director, may be OFF-LIMITS and will be announced at the tournament briefing. No contestant may "Buy" or "Barter" a fishing location. Only that water open to ALL public fishing will be considered tournament waters. Any water closed to public fishing will be closed to tournament contestants. All angling must be done from the boat.

13. CONTESTANTS MUST REMAIN TOGETHER IN THE BOAT: Contestants must not depart the boat to land fish or to make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Boats must remain in tournament waters during tournament days. Contestants must leave and return to official checkpoint by boat. Both competitors must remain in boat at all times except in case of dire emergency. In such an emergency, both competitors may be removed from their boat to: A BOAT OPERATED BY OTHER COMPETITORS OR A RESCUE BOAT. Partners must remain together at all times, in sight of each other and each other's catch under the conditions cited above, in order for their catch of that day to be counted. The momentary condition of being out of sight of each other for a restroom break is permitted. If a competitor must violate any of the above conditions (to use a phone to report an emergency or breakdown) both competitors must cease fishing at this point, and their catch must be verified in order to be counted in the tournament. In the case of a breakdown when competitors need to return separately, fish must be tagged before being transferred to another competitor's boat and need to be verified by the original pair and the contestants in the 'rescue boat'. The angler must return with their catch or release them. Contact the Tournament Director or another Tournament Official to notify them of the situation and how it is being resolved. If after the emergency situation is resolved by Tournament Officials and enough time is left to resume fishing, a RESTART will be allowed and the competitors will continue and their catch will be counted. This applies only to dire emergency situations. Trailing of boats during tournament hours, except by the direction of the Tournament Director, will result in disqualification.

14. OFFICIAL CHECKPOINT: There shall be an official safety checkpoint for checkout in the morning and check-in in the afternoon and this point shall be designated at the tournament briefing. At the time of check-out all competitors and their boats shall be in full conformance with all safety and tournament rules set forth by the Tournament Director. At check-in all boats shall identify themselves, and proceed immediately to the designated weigh-in area. Partners must stay together, through check-in and weigh-in, until weigh-in slips have been signed. YOU MUST CHECK-IN EVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY FISH.

15. SCORING: Tournament standing, awards and final standings shall be determined by a method of scoring set forth, and announced in the pre-tournament briefing. Only Largemouth, Smallmouth, Spotted, Red Eye or Shoal Bass will be weighed. The limit shall be five (5) of the above species and varieties per day, unless the prevailing state limit is less than five (5), or a special limit is established for a particular tournament by the Tournament Director, in which case the state limit, or special limit shall be the tournament limit. At no time shall a competitor have in possession more than the tournament limit. Tournament Officials will conduct checks for violations of this provision, and in the event a competitor has in their possession more than the stated limit, they shall cull, starting with the largest bass first, down to the stated limit. **Any Legal-size dead fish may not be culled.** The official length for bass shall be decided by Tournament Officials and announced at the tournament briefing. In most cases it will be the longest state limit covering the tournament waters. Only bass which measure the official length or more on the longest straight line, shall be weighed-in. **Bass presented for weigh-in which fail to measure the official length shall accrue penalties at the rate of one pound for each non-legal bass.** This penalty shall be deducted from the total score of the competitor. Any bass that appears to have been mangled, mashed, mauled, or otherwise altered will be weighed and credited only at the discretion of Tournament Officials. After a competitor checks in at the official checkpoint, he MUST present all LEGAL fish in his possession to a Tournament Official to be counted, measured and weighed. Once a competitor's catch has been measured, counted or verified by a Tournament Official, that contestant may not return to his boat until his catch has been weighed and recorded. Bass must not be stringered at any time during the tournament. This restriction includes live well stringer systems used for culling, which are also prohibited. Each contestant catch must be presented in an official weigh-in bag, specially designed and controlled to increase survival rate, which will be furnished by the Tournament Officials.

16. CATCH AND RELEASE: For each legal dead bass presented to weigh-in officials, the competitor shall be **penalized .5 LBS of weight**, to be deducted from their daily score including any "Big Bass Award". Tournament Officials shall have sole authority for accessing penalty points.

17. THE USE OF A NO PUNCTURE CULL TAG SYSTEM WILL BE MANDATORY IN ALL IBF TOURNAMENTS.

18. LATE PENALTY: Competitors who are not in the official safety checkpoint area as described in rule 14 at the appointed time shall be penalized at the rate of one pound per minute to be deducted from the total weight of their catch that day, including any "Big Bass Award". Any competitors more than fifteen (15) minutes late shall lose all credit for that day's catch. There shall be no excuse for tardiness and in no case will a competitor be allowed to make up "lost time". After proper recognition at the check-in point, competitors will be allowed ample time to proceed to the weigh-in site; however, all fishing must stop upon check-in. After the pre-tournament briefing begins, fishing the tournament waters is prohibited except during tournament hours. Exact starting and check-in times will be announced at the tournament briefing.

19. TIES: In case of a tie for first place, the following tie breakers will be used in this order: 1.) The largest number of legal LIVE fish weighed-in during the competition; 2.) The heaviest single day's catch during competition; 3.) The heaviest fish weighed-in for Big Bass. In the unlikely event a tie remains after these tiebreakers are employed; a flip of a coin will be used to determine the winner(s) and the money, if any will be equally split. Ties for lesser positions shall be resolved by means selected by the Tournament Director.

20. PAIRING OF CONTESTANTS: A drawing will be conducted by the Tournament Director (or Delegate) to pair Anglers and Co-Anglers. In the event there are more Boaters entered than Co-Anglers, Boaters may be afforded the option of fishing alone or be paired together, depending on their priority.

Pairing Priority (subject to Rule 1):

1. Guarantee Anglers and Co-Angler - enter on the same entry form by the entry deadline. Anglers will be paired with a Co-Angler and will use their Boat. It is possible that a Guaranteed Angler will be given the option of fishing alone. A Guaranteed Co-Angler will be guaranteed entry and participation in the Event.



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- 2. Angler or Co-Angler entries received by the entry deadline, but not as a pair.
 - a. Anglers (boater): will be accommodated for entry, but may be paired with another boater in extreme circumstances. They will not fish alone.
 - b. Co-Angler: will have priority over late entries, but may not be able to fish (e.g. more co-anglers than can be accommodated by the number of boats).
- 3. Angler or Co-Angler entries received at the tournament site (late entries).
 - a. Anglers (boater) will be accommodated for entry, but may be paired with another boater. They will not fish alone.
 - b. Late Co-Angler entries will not be accepted if the entry would result in more co-anglers than can be accommodated by the number of boats.

21. THE TOP 20% OF THE IBF TOURNAMENT TRAIL CONTESTANTS FROM THE ANGLER AND CO-ANGLER SIDES WILL QUALIFY FOR THE TBF SEMI-FINALS FROM EACH IBF TOURNAMENT TRAIL EVENT, AS LONG AS THEY PARTICIPATE IN AT LEAST 4 REGULAR SEASON IBF TOURNAMENT TRAIL EVENTS IN THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR.

BF TOURNAMENT TRAIL CLASSIC: At the conclusion of the seven regular season events, The **Classic** qualifiers will be announced. The Top 50% of the total Anglers in points standing and the Top 50 % of the Co-Anglers in points standing will qualify. All participants must be full members of the IBF/TBF. 2025 CLASSIC CONTESTANTS WILL PAY AN ENTRY FEE, AND WILL COMPETE FOR THAT PRIZE MONEY PLUS THE PRIZE MONEY IN THE "CLASSIC FUND" THAT WAS COLLECTED AT REGULAR SEASON EVENTS.

******New for 2025 Season - Pairings for Classic: Anglers will earn their boat draw position by AOY point standings status at the completion of the Seven (7) regular season events. Co-Anglers will earn their Pairing draw position by AOY point standings status at the completion of the Seven (7) regular season events.**

Angler/Boater Points standing will dictate the boat order for the first day of competition of the **CLASSIC**, the second day position will be dictated by Angler/Boater finishing position on the first day of competition. The IBF Tournament Trail **CLASSIC** waters will be considered off limits to those qualifying by dates established by the Tournament Director. In the event that an Angler or a Co-Angler forfeits their entry into the IBF Tournament Trail **CLASSIC**, all attempts will be made to fill the field so that all qualifiers are allowed to compete and retain their earned, take-off position. There may be times when it is necessary to change the pairings to assure that the field is balanced.

******New for 2025 Season**

For 2025 THERE WILL BE A CLASSIC ENTRY FEE

Boater Entry Fee	\$175	Co-Angler Entry Fee	\$100
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23. POINTS STANDINGS: Points for each one-day event will be based on a 100 Point scale (100 points for first, 99 points for second, etc.). In the event a contestant participates in an event and records no catch, they will be awarded 40 participation points for their effort. **All Contestants must go to the weigh in table and sign-in to receive points (even if they do not weigh a fish).**

24. ANGLER OF YEAR AWARDS: Anglers of the Year awards, both Angler and Co-Angler will be awarded AOY at the end of the Seven (7) REGULAR SEASON IBF TRAIL TOURNAMENTS based on their points standing. In the event of a tie, the total weight for the Seven (7) regular season tournaments will be the tie breaker. They will also be awarded Plaques acknowledging their accomplishments, as well as the AOY money collected from the entry fees from the Seven (7) IBF Trail Events. The Awards will be delivered at the IBF Classic.

25. PROTESTS: All protests shall be made in writing and signed by the Angler making the complaint. All signed protests (complaints) must be in the hand of the Tournament Director no later than 15 minutes after the close of the scales.

All decisions by the Tournament Committee are final.