



# MIAMI BILLFISH TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS (TOC) OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES 2026

[www.jfishweek.com/tournament-of-champions](http://www.jfishweek.com/tournament-of-champions) | @fishhardevents #tournamentofchampions

Refer to Prize Structure for further information. Rules are subject to changes leading up to the event.

Final rules and prize structure will be provided at registration/packet pick up and via email.

**1.Registration:** Entry registration for the tournament should be completed on CatchStat, the official registration partner of TOC. Forms and fees should be paid online on CatchStat, but can also be emailed to [info@fishhardevents.com](mailto:info@fishhardevents.com) or mailed to Fish Hard Events at 7150 SW 139<sup>th</sup> St, Miami, FL 33158 via a paper entry form provided by tournament officials. Checks are to be made payable to Fish Hard Events. Registrations paid at Registration and Packet Pick Up Kick Off must be paid by cash, Mastercard, Visa or American Express. Checks will not be accepted after December 31. Entry fees are not refundable for any reason. For questions regarding registration, call (305) 255-3500.

**2.Entry Forms/Online Registration:** Entry forms/online registration are to be completed by all participants with appropriate fees and registration information and can be completed with the assistance of a member of the tournament officials committee. IGFA Rules apply with the following exceptions listed below. Officials in the TOC reserve the right to refuse application or entry into the tournament at their discretion with or without cause. By registering for this tournament, via tournament representative or on your own, the captain and/or owner agrees that all anglers, participants, and occupants of their boat will abide by all tournament rules.

**3.Date & Location:** Tournament registration and Captain's Meeting will be held Thursday, February 5, 2026 at the Tournament Kick Off at Miami Beach Marina. The Captain's Meeting will be held on the fuel dock at Miami Beach Marina on Dock E. Fishing days are Friday February 6 and Saturday, February 7. All events will be held at Miami Beach Marina. **Hours of fishing are 7:30AM-4:00PM. Check-In will be open from 4:00PM-6:00PM.** Each evening will include dock events and Saturday night will include a closing awards butler service celebration on the docks.

**4.Eligible Species:** Sailfish, White Marlin, and Blue Marlin

**5.Maximum Anglers:** All anglers must be listed on CatchStat or a list must be provided to tournament officials committee prior to the start of tournament competition on Friday, February 6, 2026, to be entered into CatchStat. There is no limit on anglers. Additional crewmembers or mates may accompany the team if desired. Any teams with angler changes or substitutions must notify a member of the tournament officials committee prior to the start of fishing on each competition day in order for the angler to be eligible to participate and for their releases to be counted.

**6.Maximum Lines:** All boats are permitted to fish up to seven lines in the water in the tournament.

**7.Tackle:** All fish must be caught on rod and reel. Max test line is 20lbs. No electric reels (except kite rods and downriggers). All teams must use a non-offset circle hook in the tournament. The length of the leader may not exceed 15 feet. The combined length of the double line and the leader may not exceed 20 feet in length. Up to 2 artificial dredges are permitted in the tournament. No live or dead bait on dredges or teasers.

**8.Bait & Bait Fishing:** Fishing with live bait is permitted in the tournament; however, live chumming is not permitted. No dead baits (whole or chunk) may be used for chumming. Bait fishing is permitted during the day however, teams cannot be sail fishing at the same time they are bait fishing. Any bait removed from a hook must be kept in the boat. Casting repeatedly and jerking the bait off is considered chumming and may lead to disqualification.

**9.Hook & Catch:** All anglers must hook, fight, and catch their own fish. Once a fish is hooked, that angler must fight the fish until it is properly released, boated, or lost. Anglers may not pass rods to fellow anglers once a fish has been hooked. A fish is considered to be hooked once a strike occurs and the drag is engaged or the bail is closed. The use of a rod holder to hook a fish is allowable provided the individual that engages the drag is the same person that fights the fish until release, catch, or loss.

**10.Tournament Channel:** The tournament officials committee will operate on channel 74. Channel 68 will be used as an alternate. The tournament channel is reserved for specific announcements and the report of angler releases. All discussions among competitors should be conducted on alternate channels.

**11.Boundaries:** ALL Participating boats entered are limited to the waters off the coast of Florida no more than 35 miles offshore. North Boundary is **26°16.00N, 80°02.00W** and the South Boundary is **25°13.00N, 80°11.50W**. A boat may not exit the boundaries when fighting a fish. Turn on GPS Tracking on your GPS. This may be used to verify the boat stayed inside the boundaries, in the event of a protest. If your tracking is not on or available, you may be disqualified for any day there is no tracking.

**12.Prize Structure:** The overall tournament prize structure is based on boat entry. General Entry will be paid out to 3 places (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>) Please refer to Prize Structure page for categories and estimated payouts.

**13.Check-Out:** TOC will not have a land based check-out location. At the start of fishing each day, all teams must video the time and their GPS coordinates to confirm that they are within the stated boundaries for the tournament. Be sure to initialize all video recording devices you may use throughout the day. If you have to change video recording devices, all new devices need to be initialized. Video must show time, date and GPS location. Boats may not deploy any lines in the water until they are within the stated boundaries.

**14.Lines-In:** 7:30 am on both Friday, February 6 and Saturday, February 7. No boats may be trailered to or from their fishing locations during the tournament hours.

**15.Lines-Out:** 4:00pm on both Friday, February 6 and Saturday, February 7.

**16.Check-In:** Boats with release cards and video memory cards to turn in must do so by 6:00pm on Friday and Saturday at Miami Beach Marina. Any changes to the Check-in locations will be announced at the captain's meeting.

If you are turning in release cards and video memory cards at an official check-in location, release cards and video memory cards must be turned in, in your provided bag, by a team representative to the CatchStat representative at each official check-in location prior to close of check-ins at 6PM. Each CatchStat representative will verify each card. Should there be a line during the verification process, the CatchStat representative will keep a sign in list to ensure you are checked in prior to 6PM. Each CatchStat representative will test the video memory card to ensure the videos are readable to be viewed by the tournament committee officials as confirmation and proof of your releases. The CatchStat representative will also verify the date/time stamp to ensure the videos was taken on the correct day. If the video memory card is not functioning, the tournament officials committee reserves the right to allow the team to provide a secondary form of video proof. Secondary evidence for verification can be done by any means deemed necessary and allowed by the tournament officials committee. Refer to rule #31 for further information on video requirements.

It is each boat's responsibility to get your release videos and release cards in on time. All video memory cards and release cards must be brought in on the boat in which they were caught. Names will be recorded by the CatchStat representative at your check-in location. You may not pass video memory cards and release cards to another vessel to bring in for you. In the event of a boat mechanical breakdown, you must still be in on time.

If the tournament committee officials have trouble viewing your video or have questions about your video, the tournament officials reserve the right to give the team the opportunity to provide another device or mechanism to view the team's videos of their releases given that the original video memory cards were provided to the CatchStat representative on time. Additionally, each captain needs to be available anytime throughout the evening of Friday, February 6th and Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> to connect with the tournament officials and bring any additional evidence

requested, should the need exist given again, that the original video memory cards were provided to the CatchStat representative on time. This could include, but not limited to, a cell phone, GoPro, the camera used, or any secondary video evidence available that can assist in verifying a release.

Dropbox may be used to provide your official tournament videos on Friday, February 6th. A complete list of instructions will be added to the tournament rules prior to the start of the tournament with times and deadlines required.

**17.Weather:** In the event that weather conditions arise deemed unsafe for the average registered boat, by the tournament committee officials, the tournament schedule may be altered to accommodate the best weather & fishing conditions available to participating teams. Any schedule adjustment due to inclement weather will be made at the sole discretion of the tournament committee officials. Best effort will be made to achieve a two-day fishing format on the scheduled weekend of the tournament. In the circumstance, as determined by the tournament committee officials, where 2 days of fishing may be unachievable, the tournament may be reduced to a one-day format. Captains, anglers, and all other members of registered boats must determine in their own judgment whether to fish under the given conditions based on factors including but not limited to the seaworthiness of their boat and their own seamanship.

**18.Competition Day:** The schedule calls for hours of fishing from 7:30AM to 4:00PM on Day 1 & Day 2. Best effort will be made to ensure the full fishing schedule is met for each day of competition. At least 4 hours of tournament fishing must occur on any given day in order for the points from that day to be factored into the overall score & standings for each team. Should inclement weather or any other force majeure condition occur that limits the tournament to only 1 day of fishing, the daily calcutta money allocated for the cancelled day will be reallocated to the teams that won the daily calcutta of the full day of competition. All other general prize and calcutta money will be paid according to standard procedure based on the standings from the single day of fishing. Tournament committee officials reserve the right to use their best discretion to reallocate the prize structure, should any changes be needed throughout the tournament.

**19. Flying Devices:** The use of drones, planes, ultra lights, helicopters or any of this type of flying device used for observing the fishing grounds is prohibited. You may NOT have any of these aerial devices flying around looking for anything during tournament days. Including looking for fish, water conditions, other boats, etc.. This is grounds for immediate disqualification from the tournament. If you suspect someone is doing this; take a picture so we have something to track it with. Type of flying machine, color, tail numbers; anything to help track the owner will be important to prove any discretions and disqualifications.

**19A) Sonars:** Sonars are permitted, but may not be deployed before lines in.

**20. Chumming:** CHUMMING IN ANY FORM IS PROHIBITED. Having another boat chum for you is also prohibited. Having another person or persons in another boat set up current from you and chum in any manner is prohibited. This is grounds for disqualification.

**21.Protests:** In order to file any and all protests related to the tournament competition, all protests must be submitted in writing along with \$500 cash or check to the tournament officials within four hours of the conclusion of the day of fishing in which you are protesting. Protests must be made based on firsthand eyewitness information from the team or individual filing the protest and can only be submitted by a registered tournament participant. All participants agree and acknowledge by their participation that if a protest is filed, the protest shall be the sole remedy for any and all disputes arising from the competition. All registered participants expressly waive their right to trial and all decisions of the tournament officials regarding protests, prize structure, and purse disbursements are final.

**22.Polygraph:** By entering the tournament, all participants, to include, but not limited to, captains, anglers, and occupants of their boats voluntarily consent to submit to a polygraph examination as deemed necessary by tournament officials. All decisions of the polygraph examiner will be final and are not eligible to be protested. Participants chosen to be polygraphed may not have consumed drugs or alcohol prior to the polygraph exam. If there are any captains, angler, or occupants of a registered boat refusing to take a polygraph or if they provide untruthful answers as determined by the examiner, the entire team will be subject to disqualification from the tournament

without further notice. Such a disqualification will eliminate payment or provision of any or all prize money, awards, and/or refund of entrance fees. All decisions, from tournament committee officials, of disqualifications based on polygraph issues are final and are not eligible to be protested.

**23.Tournament Discretion:** All tournament committee officials reserve the right to implement his or her discretion at any time during the tournament as it may apply to the rules or any other circumstance that should arise during the course of the event.

**24.Release:** All participants, to include but not limited to, registered captains, anglers and occupants of their registered boats consent that tournament officials may use without payment or restriction, any photographs or video in which he or she appears for any purpose whatsoever, including but not limited to resale, advertising and promotional material.

**25.Hold Harmless:** It is expressly understood that all registered participants and non-registered occupants of their boats enter into the events in Tournament of Champions, Miami Billfish Tournament, Fish Hard Events, Inc., dba Jimmy Johnson Quest for the Ring™ Championship Fishing Week, Quest for the Ring™, or JFISHWEEK, voluntarily and at their own risk. Further, each registered and non-registered participant on behalf of other family members and/or executors agrees to release and hold harmless Jimmy Johnson, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, CI Foundation, Miami Billfish Foundation, Miami HEAT Charitable Fund, Contender Boats, Yamaha, and CI Management Group, Inc, its officers, directors, owners, members, representatives, agents, employees, independent contractors, volunteers, promoters, advertisers, sponsors, partners, joint ventures, affiliates, assigns, polygraph examiner, the city and county where the events are held and all other persons connected directly or indirectly with the operation of any event under Fish Hard Events Inc (collectively, "Released and Indemnified Parties") from any and all claims, losses, damages, demands, causes of action, suits and liabilities of every kind arising out of, related to, or resulting from the tournament, activity or event, including but not limited to all events in the Miami Billfish Tournament of Champions, Jimmy Johnson Quest for the Ring Billfish Tournament, including without limitation, any claim for loss, damage or destruction of property, or injury (including death), regardless of whether such loss arises in whole or in part from the negligence of any Released and Indemnified Party. This release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as possible under applicable law, and if any portion of this release is held invalid or unenforceable, the balance shall

in full force and legal effect. Jurisdiction over the tournament shall be exclusively that of the tournament committee. All parties agree to be bound by the tournament committee officials' decisions without exception.

**26. Agreement:** By registering for this tournament, the captain and/or owner agrees that all anglers, participants, and occupants of their boat will abide by all tournament rules.

**27.Winnings:** All winners are required to provide their social security number or FEIN number prior to receiving any awards. Awards and prize money will be withheld as required by law if a social security number or FEIN number is not presented to the tournament committee officials in the form of a W9.

## **COMPETITION RULES**

### *CATCH & RELEASE DIVISION*

**28.Scoring: Billfish Points** - Registered anglers will receive 1 point for each eligible billfish released in the tournament. All team and individual prize categories will be awarded based on the individual or team's overall point standings. In the event of a tie, winners will be determined by the team or individual that releases their last fish first.

**30.Billfish Release Criteria:** All billfish must be properly released in order for the points to be scored to the registered angler and his or her team. The requirements for a release are as follows: (1) The double line and leader must leave the tip of the rod once a strike occurs. (2) At the conclusion of the fight the fish must be brought close enough to the boat for a mate or crewmember to touch the leader, not the double line. (3) In a continuous sequence,

video footage must clearly identify the fish as well as the leader touch by a crew member. (4) Evidence on video of the leader being cut at the time of release. (5) The proper color card and confirmation # must be displayed on video by the angler who released the fish to mark the completion of a catch.

**31.Video Requirement:** Every billfish released in the tournament must be verified by video footage clearly identifying the release. The first video clip to be shot by all teams should be to initialize the video device daily with the time, date and GPS location at the start of fishing. If you fill your first video and need to switch to a 2nd video during fishing, please contact the radio room for a new establishing shot to begin your video.

Each team is responsible for providing their own video device and the appropriate video memory cards to record video footage that documents the releases on their boat. Video media will not be provided to teams by the tournament committee officials. All video must be date and time stamped in order to comply with the tournament rules. Video memory cards are considered the following, but not limited to, SD cards and GoPro memory cards. In the event of a discrepancy or issue, the tournament committee officials reserve the right to request and accept secondary sources of video, to include, but are not limited to, cell phone videos, the actual camera used to shoot video, GoPros, and any other formats the tournament committee deem appropriate as a secondary video format for use as verification for proof of releases for a team. The secondary back up release videos will be used only in the event that there is an issue with the video memory cards appropriately turned in during the times allowed for check-in at the official check-in locations provided and to the designated CatchStat representative at the location selected. In the event of a cell phone, camera, GoPro, or alternative devices being requested by a tournament committee official, the official will call the owner or captain to bring their device to be reviewed at tournament headquarters. The team representative will need to surrender his or her device until the release verification process is complete.

**32. Continuous Video Sequence:** In reference to release requirements #3 and #4 in Rule 30, the Billfish Release Criteria, to ensure the authenticity of the releases, each team is required to maintain a continuous video sequence from the time video evidence of the fish is established up to the time the leader touch is verified on video. If a break in the footage should occur, the team must reestablish video evidence of the fish again with a continuous video sequence up to the leader touch. In regards to the angler, the angler should remove buffs or face protection, briefly, so the committee can establish the angler's face. It is not necessary to keep the camera rolling after the release while waiting for a confirmation # and color card verification from the tournament committee officials to create the Confirmation Break Image.

**33.Confirmation Break Image:** In reference to release requirement #5 in Rule 30, the Billfish Release Criteria, once a release has occurred, the captain must contact the radio room for a confirmation # and instructions on which color card to create a video at the end of the release that includes the angler holding the correct color card and stating the confirmation # on video. This video should happen before footage of a subsequent release begins. The angler's face should be visible with the color card in the video.

If a team is hooked up to multiple fish, a crewmember should state that on camera with video evidence to support it. If both fish are brought boat side at the same time, the break image can be made once both fish are properly released and confirmation numbers are received.

**34.Release & Catch Verification:** All billfish releases must be reported to the tournament officials committee immediately following the release unless circumstances arise of releasing multiple fish at the same time. Individuals calling in a release must include the boat number and angler name in their report. A release will be OFFICIAL once the radio controller responds to the respective angler with a confirmation number. That confirmation number should be recorded on the registered angler's release card with the time of release during the tournament day. Any boat unable to contact the committee, should contact another boat for a relay. Cell phone #s for a number of tournament committee officials will be provided to teams in the boat packet and at the Captain's meeting to be used to call in releases. Boats that intend to fish in areas with poor cell phone coverage are still responsible for maintaining communication with the tournament committee on all releases. Should a boat relay their releases, it is the responsibility of each boat to ensure the tournament officials committee confirm their release and that they receive the correct color card and confirmation #.

**35. The Last 15 Minutes:** The last 15 minutes of fishing each day, all hook ups must be reported to the tournament officials committee and a confirmation must be received from the tournament officials committee that you are hooked up. If you use another boat to relay, make sure that boat receives confirmation from the tournament officials committee of your hook up and confirms the relay back to your boat. It is advisable to record the name or number of the boat that assisted in the relay for additional assurance. It is each boats responsibility to make sure the tournament committee confirms you are hooked up. Call in your release as soon as possible and ensure your video can clearly show the hook up began prior to lines out. If you lose the fish, notify the tournament officials committee as soon as possible. Fish that are not confirmed by the tournament committee before lines out will be not be counted.

Should there be any questions, please contact:

*Fishing Tournament Director:*

Bric Peebles , 305-282 -1006, [supersti@aol.com](mailto:supersti@aol.com)

*Event Producer:*

Fish Hard Events, 305-255-3500, [info@fishhardevents.com](mailto:info@fishhardevents.com)