



Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail Official Rules – 2023



1. RULE CHANGES: Great effort, study and research have gone into the formulation of these rules. These rules shall remain unchanged throughout all events for the season. In the event of a rule violation, the Tournament Director may impose such sanctions, as he deems appropriate, including and without limitation, disqualification, and forfeiture of prizes, entry fees and prohibition from participation in subsequent tournaments. Decisions of the Tournament Director and Tournament Officials are final in all matters, and are not subject to appeal, and are not reviewable by any court of law. The Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail (TBOTT) reserves the right to make needed changes to these rules in order to ensure the safety, welfare of the TBOTT anglers, and/or the public and preserve the integrity of the TBOTT. Any rule changes will immediately supersede all previously published copies of rules. It is your responsibility to read and understand the rules and how you, any points, and qualification for the Championship are affected by not complying with these rules. Every angler, by submission of a signed entry form, acknowledges and agrees that he/she has read, understands, and will comply with these rules.

2. PARTICIPANTS, TEAMS, INSURANCE AND ELIGIBILITY: This is an Open Team format. Team members do not have to be members of a Texas BASS Nation bass club to fish this trail. If a Team member is not a member of a Texas BASS Nation sanctioned bass club they must pay a onetime annual membership fee of \$60. All tournament participants must be 16 years old or older and a member in good standing of the Bass Anglers Sportsmen Society (**B.A.S.S.**) to register or participate. Proof of age to the satisfaction of tournament officials is the responsibility of competitors. All contestants must have a valid Texas fishing license. **DURING THE OFFICIAL PRACTICE AND TOURNAMENT HOURS NO CONTESTANT MAY OPERATE A BOAT WITHOUT PROOF OF BOAT LIABILITY INSURANCE OF \$300,000 OR MORE.** Proof of insurance is required to be sent in with the tournament registration and may also be checked on the boat as requested. If the insurance binder is not available when/if requested the boater will not be eligible to participate in the tournament and may be removed from the competition.

- Full-Time paid guides may not register or participate in a TBTT tournament if they have guided on the tournament lake within the previous 30 days. (Fishing Guide Definition – A person who, for compensation as main source of income, accompanies, assists, or transports a person or persons engaged in fishing for bass in the waters of this State).
- Full-Time Bassmaster Elite Series, FLW Tour or MLF pros are ineligible to participate.
- Any candidate for competition who, in the judgment of the Tournament Director, is disabled in such a manner as to endanger the safety and well-being of his/her partner or themselves, shall not be eligible.

All TBOTT tournaments are open team events, with all points/awards going to the team. A team consists of two (2) anglers, one of which must be designated as the “Boater.”

OPTIONS: Teams may assign one (1) alternate partner for one (1) qualifying tournament during the year if registering for multiple qualifying events. Also, one of the TEAM members may compete solo to represent the TEAM after the Official Team has competed in at least one event. These options apply to the Team State Championship also.



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A team shall complete the registration form prior to fishing the qualifying event declaring Boater and Partner for the Tournament Year. The designated Boater shall receive all points for the TEAM. Should the break-up of a team occur, all points earned will stay with the designated Boater. In the event of the death of a partner, or military deployment, an alternate team member may be requested, and is subject to the approval of the Tournament Director.

By your participation in this event you agree to submit to a polygraph test. The administration and interpretation of the polygraph test shall be the sole responsibility of the Tournament Director. The Tournament Director shall select the place, the individual and the scope of questions. The contestants shall make themselves available at their own expense for this examination.

3. REGISTRATION: See Texas Bassmaster Team Trail Registration Procedure on the website for special instructions. <https://www.texasbassonline.com/texas-bassmaster-team-trail> .

Any Team may participate in this trail however, contestants must be a B.A.S.S. member in good standing. A \$60 membership fee per contestant can be paid by online entry form or paper entry form. The \$60 membership fee makes you a member of Texas BASS Nation and the National BASS Nation. These memberships are required if you represent Texas BASS Nation in the National Team Championship.

A Team must pay an entry fee prior to participating in the Official Practice period (Two days prior to the tournament date) so that your Team will be covered by BASS Event liability insurance.

- Mail or Hand Delivery: In accordance with Rule #4, Teams that do not elect to participate in the Official Practice period may mail/courier delivery, or hand deliver a completed entry form, with all registration payments, along with insurance verification documents, to the Tournament Director or Team Region Director by no later than 6:00 pm, the day prior to the tournament date – herein after referred to as the “final registration due date” (late fee may apply). Mailed or Hand delivered registrations not delivered by the due date to the appropriate Tournament Director or Team Region Director are not the responsibility of Texas B.A.S.S. Nation and must be postmarked at least TEN (10) days in advance. Late entries may be subjected to a twenty-five (\$25) dollar late processing fee.
- Mail or Hand Delivery: In accordance with Rule #4, Teams that elect to participate in a tournament shall have their registrations and payment postmarked no later than 10 days prior to the event date. All mailed/courier delivered Entry Forms should be mailed to the address listed on the Texas BASSMASTER Team Trail website and as listed on the entry form. Entries postmarked after said date may be subject to a twenty-five (\$25) dollar late processing fee. Registrations delivered elsewhere or not by the due date and time, are not the responsibility of Texas B.A.S.S. Nation.
- Online registration will end at midnight on the Wednesday prior to the tournament date. After the designated deadline date and time, tournament entries will need to be hand delivered to the Tournament Director at the designated checkpoint on the day preceding the event between



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the hours of 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm (time may be changed by Event Tournament Director). A \$25.00 late fee may apply.

- Official on-site “final late registration” will be available between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm, the day preceding the tournament, at the designated checkpoint location for the tournament.

It is mandatory that all contestants attend the tournament briefing at 5:00 pm on the day preceding the tournament to discuss off limits, take-off and check-in times, confirm boat numbers and receive any special instructions. A team that has registered and pre-paid for a tournament, but is unable to attend the tournament, may cancel the registration by notifying the Tournament Director or Team Division Director before the start of the official tournament briefing period at the designated checkpoint. The entry fee of the TEAM may be applied to the next tournament on the schedule or refunded if cancelation reason is determined to be justified by the Tournament Director.

4. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE/OFF LIMITS: (Safe Light Hours Only)

- Off-limits Period: All TBOTT Qualifying Events have no off-limits period. Official Practice Days will be the two days prior to the first tournament day. The TBOTT Championship tournament shall have a ten (10) day off limits period, beginning ten (10) days prior to the Championship Official Practice Period.
- Official Practice Period: The official practice period for all qualifying tournaments shall be the two days preceding the scheduled qualifying tournament day, with the exception of the Championship Tournament.
- The two days (safe-light hours) prior to the Championship tournament days will be considered official practice.
- No contestant may be on the designated tournament waters for any reason during the official off-limits period (this includes “walking” the shoreline, marinas, boat docks, etc. for the purpose of locating or catching fish). Tournament waters are also off-limits for the purpose of locating or catching fish from 4:00 pm (or designated off the water time) on the evening prior to the tournament date, until takeoff the morning of the tournament.

5. BOAT, BASIC BOAT EQUIPMENT, MOTOR and SAFETY:

- The maximum outboard engine horsepower for any boats used during practice and tournament hours is 250 HP.
- Safe boating conduct must be observed at all times by tournament competitors. During official practice and tournament hours, each competitor is required to wear a Coast Guard approved chest type life preserver. This life preserver must be worn anytime the combustion engine is operating. The preserver must be strapped, snapped or zippered securely, and maintained in that condition until the competitor reaches his fishing location and the combustion engine is shut off.
- Tournament officials have the right to delay the start of an official tournament day because of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors.



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- Competitors are allowed to leave the boat and seek shelter in bad weather, during which time no fishing may occur. The Tournament Director may also permit trailering for any event.
- For the safety of all, boats must be equipped with some type of ignition kill switch. This device must be attached to the driver any time the combustion engine is operating.
- All boats must be 18 ft. or more in length. No stick steering boats are permitted to be used. No Contestant may have a platform, raised deck, or ladder which is higher than the gunnels of the boat. Standing on the fishing seats or outboard motor will not be allowed in TBOTT events. No air or jet drive boats will be permitted during official practice or competition days. Fuel may be carried only in factory-installed (built-in) fuel tanks. Optional remote engine tanks must be factory or factory authorized dealer installed and be strapped or otherwise secured. Any additional fuel used during the tournament day must be purchased from a retail facility open to the public and pumped through a hose with a nozzle.
- Every boat must have all required US Coast Guard safety equipment. In addition, it must have a functional bilge pump and live well space, properly aerated, to adequately maintain a limit of bass.

6. SPORTSMANSHIP: Contestants are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation in accordance with BASSMASTER rules and policies. Any contestant(s) who displays poor sportsmanship, violates these rules, or any federal, state, or local law, or brings unfavorable publicity to the sport of bass fishing will be disqualified and shall forfeit all entry fees and/or prize money. During official practice and all tournament hours, no competitor shall use alcohol or drugs other than those prescribed by a physician. Doing so will result in immediate disqualification. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially in the vicinity of a non-competitor's boat. All contestants are required to obey federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Examples of conduct not in compliance with Rule #6 standards include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Any previous conviction of a felony, a crime involving moral turpitude, or a crime related to, arising out of, or involving a fishing tournament or event, except with the full, prior written disclosure to the Tournament Director under oath and by affidavit of all facts and circumstances surrounding the conviction, charge, arrest, or investigation at least ten (10) days before the TBTT event being entered, and thereafter subject to the Tournament Director's sole and absolute discretion that such conviction, charge, arrest, or investigation does not result in the Contestant's honesty, integrity, character, or qualifications to enter the event being unreasonably questionable.
- Consumption and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or any mind-altering substance during tournament hours extending through the weigh-in procedure.
- Chemical substance abuse or addiction.
- Actions or words which reflect unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, and fair competition.



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- Disqualification from TBOTT or other fishing organizations that resulted from unexplained rule violations that result in a Contestant's honesty, integrity, character, and qualifications for entry into a TBOTT event being questionable in the Tournament Director's sole and absolute discretion.

Upon review of the circumstances by Team Division Director and the Tournament Director, the Tournament Director shall have the right to refuse any registration, or to deny a confirmed registration by returning the entry fee of the previously accepted application or disqualifying a Contestant. The Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail reserves the right to place an official observer in a Contestant's boat at any time during competition hours.

7. TACKLE AND EQUIPMENT:

- Dip nets are allowed. Dip nets cannot exceed 6 1/2 feet in overall length. If fish are netted, B.A.S.S. recommends the use of a rubber or vinyl-coated net.
- Only artificial lures may be used. No "live bait" or prepared bait will be permitted, with the exception of pork strips, rinds, etc.
- Only one casting, spin casting, or spinning rod and reel (10ft. max. from butt of handle to rod tip) may be used at any one time. All other types of rods are prohibited. Other rigs as specified above may be in the boat ready for use. However, only one is permitted to be in use at any given time.
- All bass must be caught live and in a conventional sporting manner. Anyone guilty of snatching or snagging visible fish will lose their day's catch. When visible fishing, all bass must be hooked inside the mouth and must be verified by your partner before unhooking to be a legal fish.
- No gaffs may be used to boat a bass or be permitted in the boat at any time. The use of grippers in landing bass is prohibited.
- The use of non-penetrating cull rings is required in all events, per B.A.S.S. guidelines.

8. STARTING POSITION: Contestants will receive their starting position as assigned by the Tournament Director. Any contestant who starts prior to their assigned number being called may have their day's catch nullified.

Teams registering late for the event will receive starting position as dictated by Tournament Director.

Contestants at the Texas BASSMASTER Open Team Trail two-day Championship event will receive their Day 1 starting position as assigned by the Tournament Director. Day 2 starting positions will be reversed from Day 1.

9. INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE: Other than using publicly available information (e.g. newspaper reports and internet reports), no fishing information may be purchased, bartered, solicited or received from any person within 30 days prior to any tournament, or during the days of practice or competition for all TBOTT events. Contestants may not receive fishing information from non-competitors or follow a noncompetitor's boat or participate in the placing of markers by non-competitors or participate in the



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practice of “hole sitting” by anyone. No skin diving or scuba diving on tournament waters during official practice or tournament days. No use of CB Radios, VHF marine band radio or cellular phones for the purpose of locating or catching fish. All of the above may be used in the case of an emergency for boat location purposes only. The hiring of a bass fishing guide within 30 days prior to any tournament is strictly prohibited. (Fishing Guide Definition – A person who, for compensation, accompanies, assists, or transports a person or persons engaged in fishing for bass in the water of this State). The use of mobile communication devices, such as cell phones, marine radios, walkie-talkies, CB’s, etc., to communicate fishing information or contact anyone during the tournament hours is strictly prohibited other than contacting the Tournament Director. In the event of an emergency, competitors should call 911 first and then notify the Tournament Director. Each contestant agrees to report any violation of these rules immediately to the Tournament Director. Failure to do so could result in disqualification.

10. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS, OFF LIMITS AREAS, AND POSITIONING:

- Contestants may fish anywhere on tournament waters accessible by boat and available to the public, except areas designated as “off limits” or “no fishing” by State or Federal Officials. Contestants may not fish within 50 yards of a competitor’s boat which was first anchored (an anchored boat is a boat held in a stable position by a line attached to a weight, shallow water anchor or similar device, with the trolling motor in the up position), or within 25 yards of a non-anchored competitor’s boat unless agreed upon by the other tournament angler/team. All such boats are required to advise any other competitor when such boat believes the competitor is close to being within these distances.
- The act of moving bass from one area of the lake to another confined area of the same lake at any time, whether or not during official practice days or competition days, is not permitted. The live bass release area established by the tournament director will be off limits. This area will be announced at the tournament briefing. Violation of the rule will result in immediate disqualification.

11. CONTESTANTS MUST REMAIN IN BOAT: All angling must be done from the boat. Contestants may not leave their boat to land a fish or make the boat more accessible to fishing waters. Boats must remain in tournament waters during each tournament day. Contestants must leave and return to official checkpoint by boat. Both competitors must remain in the boat at all times except in case of an emergency. No trailering of tournament boats will be allowed except by the direction of the Tournament Director.

12. OFFICIAL CHECKPOINT: There shall be only one official location for boat inspection and check-out in the morning and check-in in the afternoon. The posted launch site is designated as such for each tournament. Following a mandatory live well check, and safety inspection, all contestants are expected to be in the water ready for a safe light take-off. Take-off will be in order of number assigned by the Tournament Director. Failure to go through boat check-out in the morning or failure to officially check-in at the checkpoint will result in loss of that day’s weight. It is the sole responsibility of each Contestant to arrive at the designated check-in location on time. Regardless of what you are told or understand, it is



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the responsibility of each contestant to verify their flight time, or check-in time. All fishing must cease upon check-in or at such other time designated by the Tournament Director.

Trailing is not allowed. However, in the event of severe weather, alternate take-off and check-in instructions will be given at the registration site and tournament briefing, at the sole discretion of the Tournament Director. Contestants may launch their boat at any available public boat ramp other than the designated take-off location, but all contestants must come through the official checkpoint location before leaving to fish. Contestants must leave and return to the check-in by boat. Contestants' boats must remain in the tournament waters during the event. In the event of a mechanical breakdown, there are two permitted methods of returning to the check-in:

1. By remaining in the boat and being towed in by water.
2. By boarding the boat of another competitor. Team members must stay together through the weigh-in process. If boarding the boat of another team make every effort to notify the Tournament Director.

Contestants must return to the official checkpoint in time to avoid a late penalty. Contestants who elect to return to the check-in by any other means will forfeit their day's catch. 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 the Contestant to locate the Tournament Director to request a restart.

13. SCORING:

- Each Team may weigh a 5-fish limit of bass that meet the length requirements specific to tournament waters (courtesy check is allowed). Teams who present bass at weigh-in which do not meet length requirements for that body of water, shall lose that fish from their day's catch. A 3-fish bag limit may be implemented during summer months (June-September) in the interest of keeping fish alive.
 - On lakes where Statewide Rule length limits are in place the minimum legal length is 14".
 - On lakes where slot limits are in place, bass below and above the slot length limit may be presented at weigh-in.
 - Bass shall be measured with mouth closed tail swept (not pinched).
- Scoring will be based upon a 200 points + weight, system. (Example-200 + weight for 1st, 199 + weight for 2nd, 198 + weight for 3rd and so on through the placements). Points drop by one for each position until all Teams are awarded points who weighed fish. A "team" not weighing fish shall be awarded 10 points less than the points awarded for the last point placement Team.
- Each Team should ask to have his/her big fish weighed.
- Culling of fish is each contestant's responsibility and no more than 5 fish may be kept in the live-well. Culling of dead fish is not allowed. Teams who present more than the allowed limit of fish at weigh-in will reduce the number of fish in their bag to the tournament limit by removing live



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bass. Each bass removed from their bag will result in a 2 pound penalty to be deducted from their daily weight.

- Only Largemouth, Guadalupe, Smallmouth Spotted Bass and their hybrids are permitted to be weighed in.
- Any bass that appear to have been mangled, mashed, or otherwise altered will be weighed and credited only at the tournament official's discretion. It is the contestant's responsibility to ensure all fish presented for weigh-in are of legal length according to the TBOTT official measuring board.

14. KILLING YOUR CATCH: Each competitor is expected to keep his catch alive and properly aerated. There will be a 0.50 lb. penalty for each dead fish presented at the weigh in. The culling of dead fish is a violation of Texas law, and a violation of B.A.S.S. rules. Any contestant that culls a dead fish shall lose that day's catch. No dead bass will be eligible for Big Bass awards or prizes. It is strongly recommended that anglers follow live well management procedures as described in the Keeping Bass Alive document on the Bassmaster website (https://www.bassmaster.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/KBA_LivewellManage.pdf).

15. LATE PENALTY: Competitors who are not in the official checkpoint area, as described in rule 12, at the appointed time shall be penalized at the rate of one (1) pound per minute to be deducted from the total weight of his catch that day, including any weight to be counted towards a Big Bass award. Any competitor more than 15 minutes late shall lose all credit for that day's catch. All fishing must cease when that contestant has checked in. After the tournament begins, fishing the tournament water is prohibited except during the tournament hours. Tournament start time and check-in times will be announced at the tournament briefing.

16. TIES: In case of a tie, the following tiebreakers will be used.

1. The team with the most fish weighed in.
2. The flip of a coin will determine the winner of the tie.

17. ENTRY FEE/PAYBACK: Entry fee for each qualifying tournament will be \$175.00, which includes a Big Bass Pot of \$10.00. Payback will be based on an 80/20 split. The tournament payout at each of the qualifying events and the Championship will pay one place per ten (10) entries. Payback for the largest bass is 100%. For the Big Bass prize winnings, no dead fish will be considered. All payback (and any prizes) will be issued at the weigh-in site, or immediately thereafter.

The entry fee for the 2-day Championship tournament will be \$200.00, which includes the big bass fee. The Tournament Director may amend the Big Bass pot to include a 60/40 split for 1st and 2nd place big bass, and award the big bass pot each day, provided sponsorship funds are available.

18. TEAM OF THE YEAR: The Team of the Year award will be awarded to the TEAM, which has registered and participated in all required qualifying tournaments and has the greatest number of total points from qualifying tournaments in a Region. Points do not transfer between Regions. In the event of a tie, the TEAM with the highest place finishes during the Region Trail will be named "Texas Bassmaster Team of



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the Year” in a Region. The Team of the Year in each Region will receive plaques and receive free entry in the State Team Championship.

19. PROTESTS: Any protest must be submitted in writing no later than 15 minutes after the close of the daily weigh-in to the Tournament Director. All participants shall be subject to a polygraph test, including the reporting protestor. Any angler failing the polygraph examination may be subject to disqualification.

20. TEXAS BASSMASTER OPEN TEAM TRAIL CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFICATION: The Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail representative(s) (TEAM or TEAM’s who qualify to attend the National **BASSMASTER TEAM TRAIL CHAMPIONSHIP**) will be determined at a State Team Championship Tournament, after the Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail qualifying tournaments have been concluded. “The Road to the Bassmaster Classic” <http://www.bassmaster.com/news/bass-federation-nation>. Texas Bassmaster Team Trail Championship Qualification is determined by the following criteria:

Teams have the opportunity to qualify for the Team Championship through Region qualifying tournament trail(s). Teams may compete in one or more Regions and qualify for the Team Championship by fishing in three (3) qualifying tournaments in any combination of Regions. Teams will accumulate points in the Regions they compete in. Points accumulated in one Region will not transfer to another Region.

(1) All Teams that “physically participated in” at least three (3) qualifying Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail tournaments qualify to fish the Team State Championship.

(2) All Teams that “WIN” a TBOTT qualifying tournament will earn an automatic qualification to the Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail Championship.

(3) Points Qualification Entry rule - All Team contestants who enter and participate in a qualifying Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail tournament shall receive points as stated in Rule #13. At the conclusion of each Region qualifying tournament trail, FIVE (5) additional teams from each Region that have the highest point totals will also be invited to the to the Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail State Championship Tournament. If one of these teams has already qualified by options one or two above, we will move down the list to the next team with the highest point’s total. These five teams may not have met the criteria stated in items #1 & #2. The Team Division Director will make the final determination on the additional five teams.

The Texas Bassmaster Open Team Trail Tournament Championship first place Team will represent Texas B.A.S.S. Nation at the national BASSMASTER TEAM TRAIL CHAMPIONSHIP. Texas BASS Nation is allowed to send one (1) team to the BASSMASTER TEAM TRAIL CHAMPIONSHIP for every twenty five (25) unique registered teams (50 individuals) that participate during the tournament trail season across the state. The Champion Team will have finished in 1st place at the State Team Championship, and depending upon participation, additional teams will be qualified beginning with the 2nd place finishing Team.

21. CLOSING SCALES: Scales will close 30 minutes after the last flight is due in. Due to certain weigh-in locations this time may be lengthened or shortened at the Tournament Director’s discretion. Any



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change to the above stated official scale closing time will be announced during registration, during boat check-out, or during weigh-in. It is the angler's responsibility to verify the official scale closing time and to be in the weigh-in line by such time.

22. OTHER RULES: The Texas B.A.S.S. Nation Regional Tournament Rules will be used if a rule is not specifically covered in these rules. The Tournament Director reserves the right to make final decisions on any rule/issue.

23. EMERGENCY/LEAVE EARLY: If a contestant wishes to leave the lake prior to weigh-in, that contestant **MUST** notify the Tournament Director or a tournament official or leave a note at the designated check-in area. This is a safety requirement that all must adhere to. At the Tournament Director's discretion any team failing to adhere to this rule may be prohibited from entry in future TBOTT events.