

2025 Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's

National Team Championship - OFFICIAL RULES updated 2024

Tournament Officials expects strict adherence to the following rules by all contestants. We also recommend the use of livewell additives to help promote the healthy release of fish. In the event of an emergency, please call 911 first and then notify the tournament director ASAP.



1. OFFICIAL RULES & SAFETY REGULATIONS: Interpretation and enforcement of these rules shall be left exclusively to the Tournament Director and are not subject to any appeal. Each contestant agrees to report any rule violation to the tournament director immediately upon discovery. Failure to report violations may be cause for disqualification. In the event of a rule violation, officials may impose such sanctions, as deemed appropriate including, without limitation, fines, forfeiture of prizes or weight, in all or in part, by fish, by day or overall, disqualification and/or prohibition from future participation.

It is 100% each angler's responsibility to know the applicable states laws and regulations that cover the waters you intend to fish in, whether in a tournament or not. The fact that you have entered into a competitive event does not change that legal requirement for you to know and understand the laws and regulations. As any fish and game enforcement official will tell you, ignorance of the law is not an excuse.

2. PARTICIPATION & ELIGIBILITY: Participants must be active members of The Walleye Federation, (TWF) or join/pay for a membership at time of registration for your first event entry of the qualifying year. Clubs or side pot qualifying ends on 12/31 each year as it always has for the NTC. Memberships expire on 12/31 each year. Memberships are non-transferable and non-refundable. Any person under the age of 18 (19 in Alabama and Nebraska) must have the signature of a parent or legal guardian on the liability release. No persons under age 12 may participate without explicit official approval. Participants must enter as two-person teams (no "Partner TBD" or unknown partner names on entry forms). Eligible partner changes may be allowed up until the close of on-site registration/check in. Each team must complete, agree to and submit an official entry form with payment by the due dates.

During any "official" tournament days no contestant or team may use a boat unless they have documented proof of boating liability coverage in reasonable amounts on that particular boat that covers all claims connected with the event. **Proof of insurance must be with the boat and or produced upon request. Random checks may be conducted at events.**

Officials reserve the right to refuse participation, (including championship/special events), to anyone for any reason including, but not limited to, suspension, disqualification or banning from this or other events, criminal behavior, felony convictions, or any unsportsmanlike behavior that would reflect dishonorably on our sport.

3. ENTRY: Regular online registration opens (by private website link) at 9am CT on January 30, 2025 and closes March 15, 2025 OR when the 300 team limits is reached whichever comes first. Once the 300 team limit is reached all open spots will be forfeited DO NOT DELAY REGISTER EARLY. Entry deadline for any reallocated spots will be March 17, 2025 if there are any. Each team must complete, sign and submit an official entry form along with payment by the published due dates. Participants must enter as two-person teams (no "Partner TBD" names on the entry forms). Partner changes can be made with approval up until the close of on-site registration/check in. This is and always has been a QUALIFER only event, no partners allowed that did not fish the same, event, sanctioned circuit/club or sidepot, etc. where the spot was earned. No one may buy a spot or buy their way into the event. If an NTC qualifying angler would like to fish with their MWC partner, the switch will be allowed as long as the tournament director receives the intent in writing and both NTC qualifying anglers agree to the switch. In this case or in the case of any team split, only one of the NTC qualifying anglers will be allowed to fish the tournament as an NTC team. Tournament officials reserve the right to discontinue or extend the acceptance of applications prior to any deadline. All NTC participants must be active members of The Walleye Federation, (TWF) or join/pay for a membership at time of registration. The entry fee for each team per tournament is \$300. A payment must accompany each entry. Entries may be submitted online at www.walleyefederation.com or faxed to 580.765.2890 or mailed to TWF – 5998 N Pleasant View Rd, Ponca City, OK 74601 Entrants must submit payment for entry fees in full for the tournament at the time of entry application. Any entry forms received after March 1, 2025 may incur a \$100 late fee. No refunds or credits are extended. Money order, check or credit cards are acceptable payments (VISA, MasterCard, Discover). A \$20 processing fee will be applied to all declined credit cards or NSF checks. Mailing address is NTC, 5998 N Pleasant View Road, Ponca City, Oklahoma. 74601 – P-580.765.2319 - Fax 580.765.2890

No refunds will be made nor will credit be extended for any cancellations or are extended to teams that choose not to fish due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances. Disqualification from a tournament for any reason will result in forfeiture of entry fee. No refunds or credits

4. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE, ONSITE REGISTRATION & COMPETITION: There are no restrictions on how early a team can pre-fish, as long as state law is followed. There are no "official" practice days or off-limits days unless otherwise announced in advance for a specific/special event. On the day of onsite registration and mandatory rules meeting, all participants must be off plane, within site of the boat launch, no longer fishing by 4pm local time. In case of emergency please contact us immediately **Tournament hot line at 580.716.4291.**

At least one (1) member of each team must sign in and register in person with official staff at the appointed time/place prescribed for onsite registration in the event fact sheet and must be present for the mandatory rules and safety meeting held prior to each event. In the case of an emergency or unforeseen situation, arrangements must be made with a tournament official if you are unable to attend. (Please call the tournament hot line) Otherwise, if a team arrives 15 minutes or more late without approval they will be disqualified.

There will be polygraph/truth verification tests given at random throughout the year. All competitors are subject to official inspection, or truth verification testing during and/or after the tournament and agree to facilitate, participate in those inspections at any time requested and abide by their outcome. During tournament hours a competitor **may not** transmit by any form of communication including but not limited to; cell phone, CB radio, VHF marine band radio, texting, any other type of communication device for the purpose of locating or catching fish or discussing your daily catch of fish, nor receive any form of communication to aid you in the locating or catching of fish. **Contestants are permitted to transmit by radio or telephone, texting, etc. only in an emergency.** During the competition day(s) competitors may not seek, nor accept the advice or assistance of anyone for the purposes of locating or catching fish or otherwise affecting the daily catch of fish for any reason from anyone except from another confirmed competitor in the same event. No competitor/team or teams may buy or barter a fish, fishing information or a fishing location.

5. SAFETY & TOURNAMENT INTEGRITY: Each passenger must wear a US Coast Guard-approved **chest-type** life preserver fully zippered, strapped and snapped securely anytime the boat is on plane. Inflatable PFD indicators should be checked daily. Inflatable PFDs are allowed if U.S. Coast Guard regulations are met. **NOTICE** - Depending on the type and model of inflatable the Coast Guard now requires that Inflatable PFDs be always worn to be counted and cannot be taken-off, unless there is an equal number of non-inflatable Coast Guard approved PFDs on board readily accessible. **Therefore**, each boat must carry a minimum of two(2) Coast Guard approved chest-type NON inflatable life preservers on board to be legal in case someone in the boat takes off an inflatable PFD they are wearing, even momentarily. Federal law now requires any vessel under 26 feet to have an operational engine shut off device and that it be attached to the driver when the vessel is on plane.

Officials may restrict or alter tournament waters and reserve 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. All TWF qualifying tournaments will have published days of competition, unless delayed, or shortened due to weather or unforeseen circumstances. Any boundaries or restricted zones will be announced at the rules meeting and may be further altered if needed, blow days may or may not be used at the discretion of officials. Participants must abide by all local navigation laws and avoid restricted areas at all times

In the event of lightning, severe weather, limited visibility or any unsafe condition, participants should remove themselves from competition and seek safety or shelter until it is safe to continue. Participants may not leave their boats during tournament hours except in case of emergency. Each boat must have a U.S. Coast Guard rating plate attached to the boat by the manufacturer if required. The horsepower rating of the outboard engine must not exceed the rating specified on this plate. Changing or altering standard factory motor parts to increase horsepower over factory rated horsepower is forbidden. Each contestant agrees to submit their boat and/or motor to an inspection, if requested by TWF.

At the sole discretion of the tournament director, tournament days or waters may be altered, shortened, moved, postponed or canceled due to unsafe weather, water or other concerns/conditions.

6. SPORTSMANSHIP: Participants will conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike, courteous, safe and ethical manner at all times maintaining professional demeanor in public and in communication with officials. Any unfavorable conduct, speech or action by a participant in our efforts to promote sportsmanship, clean waters and conservation can be grounds for disqualification. Each competitor is expected to participate in the marshaling of the field to help maintain the highest integrity of competition. Use of or possession in the boat of alcohol or marijuana/cannabis products, ("medical" or otherwise) or any mind-altering drugs by any participant during the official event or tournament days or in our weigh-in process area and/or any use by the final day designated "leaders" until any polygraph examinations are complete will not be tolerated and shall be cause for disqualification. Any incidents observed during tournament hours should be reported to tournament officials for

investigation. Any violation of these basic sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification. In case of conduct not complying with these standards, TWF shall have the right at its sole discretion to refuse an application to compete, to deny a confirmed application to compete by returning the entry or to disqualify or fine a contestant.

7. TACKLE & EQUIPMENT, INSPECTIONS, PERMITS, LEGAL FISHING AND BAITS: Participants must possess all necessary fishing licenses permits, required AIS inspections if required by law, all tournament boats must be cleaned of all harmful exotic aquatic species CLEAN, DRAINED and DRY prior to entering the water and upon departure from tournament waters and commit to following all regulations. All state rules regarding fishing will be observed unless more stringent regulations are specified at the rules meeting. NTC will follow state/local laws or lake limit's whichever is more restrictive on the number, limit and size of rods that can be used. **HOWEVER, NO sliders, clips, or other removable or detachable "type" lines are permitted to be used. All lines and or baits must originate from and be permanently tied to the one main line coming off of one (1) main reel, per each rod.** No lines may be unfastened or able to be unfastened, unclipped or unsnapped from the one main line to facilitate landing a fish or aiding in landing a fish, all lines must be permanently tied or attached to the one main line coming off of one (1) main reel, per rod. The only exceptions herein are traditional walleye hand line set ups which are allowed. The intent of this rule is clearly to limit detachable lines, sliders, "curtain rings" or other such similar devices, which may result in too many lines in the water at one time per state laws. If ANY set up is in question, the "more restrictive" interpretation will always be used. Any questionable homemade multiline sets up should be reviewed by tournament officials prior to use and the most restrictive interpretation will always be used.

Fishing is defined as having a lure attached to a line with the lure in the water. All fish must be caught alive and in a conventional sporting manner as defined by state statute or by tournament officials. Live bait and artificial lures are permissible in NTC events, except for any special laws or tournaments announced and defined by NTC. Trolling as a method of fishing is permitted. Any fish accidentally "foul hooked" must be immediately released. "Foul hooked" is defined as any fish accidentally hooked where the only embedded hook(s) is located anywhere behind the opening of the gill plate, unless state law is more restrictive than this interpretation, in which case state law will apply. Further any fish that is "visible to and specifically being targeted by" an angler (with or without the use of electronics) must be verified by the other partner in the boat that the fish was not foul hooked before being unhooked to be counted as a legal catch.

It is 100% each Angler's responsibility to know the applicable states laws that cover the waters they are going to fish whether they are entered in a tournament or not. The fact that you have entered into a tournament does not change that legal requirement for you to know and understand the rules.

An event official or NTC approved person may approach or board your boat at any time for any reason, refusal to allow an approved official on board or any efforts to impede their work may result in disqualification.

8. BOAT, MOTOR & SAFETY EQUIPMENT: Each boat MUST be given, prior to each day's start, a livewell and SAFETY INSPECTION check by a tournament official, also a boat marker, which MUST remain in or on the boat and turned in during check-in at the end of each day. NTC reserves sole discretion to assign boat numbers in any manner.

There shall be an official safety checkpoint for checkout in the morning/ check-in in the afternoon and this point shall be designated at the tournament briefing. At the time of checkout/check-in all competitors and their boats shall be in full compliance with all set forth by officials. At check-in all boats shall identify themselves to the check in official and proceed immediately to the designated weigh-in area. YOU MUST CHECK-IN EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FISH. Failure to go through boat checkout in the morning or failure to check in at the check-in point in the afternoon may result in disqualification or fines. **It is each angler's responsibility to know what time they are due in.** All fishing must cease upon check-in. **Safe boating conduct must be observed at all times.** Boaters are solely responsible for the safe operation of it and for the safety of any and all occupants in it at all times. Participants must abide by all local navigation laws and avoid restricted areas at all times.

All tournament boats are required to have in their possession all Coast Guard-required safety equipment, including but not limited to approved CHEST TYPE personal flotation devices (**SEE RULE #5 above**), a type IV throw cushion, fire extinguisher, distress horn/flag/whistle, and display a boat marker/engine sticker (supplied by TWF). Great Lakes, Canadian border and some other navigable waters require flares. Tournament boats are required to have a functioning bilge pump and Federal law now requires any vessel under 26 feet to have an operational engine shut off device and that it be attached to the driver when the vessel is on plane. In addition, a marine band radio it is recommended.

Driver must be seated behind the steering wheel or at the tiller, in full control of the boat whenever the primary combustion engine is in gear. All boats must be propeller-driven and a minimum of 16 feet in length. All boats must be equipped with wheel or tiller steering; no other steering device will be permitted. No barges or similarly cumbersome craft will be permitted unless being used as an adaptive device. Boats must contain a properly aerated livewell space to maintain alive a limit catch of fish.

Fishing platforms must be factory-installed equipment. No portable platforms may be used in tournament competition. Fuel may be carried only in factory-installed (built-in) fuel tanks. Optional remote engine fuel 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.

9. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS: Tournament waters shall be established by officials for each event. Competitors must obtain this information from officials. Fishing on tournament waters is permitted within the boundaries defined by the tournament director that are available to the public and accessible by boat from the tournament check out location, except: Any water within these tournament boundaries posted "off-limits or no fishing" by local, state or federal officials will be OFF-LIMITS, the removal of official local, state or federal property or barricades at any time to make an area more accessible by boat is strictly prohibited. Also, any live fish release area established by the Tournament Director will be off-limits and will be announced at the Tournament Briefing. No contestant may "Buy" or "Barter" a fish or a fishing location. Only that water open to ALL public fishing accessible by boat from the tournament check out point will be considered tournament waters. Any water closed to public fishing will be closed to contestants. All angling must be done from the boat. On tournament days, participants are prohibited from fishing except during designated tournament fishing hours. Participants should stay off tournament waters before and after tournament hours except to navigate to and from the check-in site and launch facilities. If repairs and/or a test-run are needed an official staff member or an appointed "official" or sponsor service technician should ride along.

10. CONTESTANTS MUST REMAIN TOGETHER/ BREAKDOWN INSTRUCTIONS: 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. No tournament boat may be loaded on a trailer before the team using the boat presents their catch for weigh-in, except with the permission/direction of the tournament director. Both competitors must remain in boat at all times except in case of dire emergency, if they wish their fish to be counted for the day. In case of break down or emergency, in which a team is not able to travel back to the weigh-in site under power, anglers should contact tournament officials. The only legal way to return for weigh-in without your own power is; 1.) By being towed in by a boat operated by another competitor in the event or a designated rescue boat. 2.) By one team member transferring their clearly marked fish to another boat as described above and proceeding directly to the weigh in. 3.) If a tournament official cannot be reached or an official tournament boat is not able to assist, the team with mechanical problems may seek assistance from a fellow competitor or any vessel on the water. This may **not** be done by phone or transmitting on the radio **to link up with a particular team**. Physically flagging down another boat would be allowed or a radio call that was seeking help from **any** boat in proximity to return to the weigh-in site. No one in that rescue boat is allowed to fish until after proceeding directly to weigh in site and all parties communicating directly with tournament officials. Arriving late, because of offering or needing assistance, even with the aid of a rescue boat, as the towed boat or the towing boat is still late and all late or other penalties will apply. No exceptions.

Both parties (the team with boat trouble and team lending assistance) should file separate incident reports with tournament officials. **Any Team involved in a break down "Ride In" that involves transferring fish in which either boat/team wins/places high in that event, in the Tournament official's sole opinion, WILL BE POLYGRAPHED.**

11. LATE PENALTY: Competitors who are not at the official safety check in point as described above at the appointed return 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 Fish 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." Return time shall be defined as off-plane and plainly visible by the official timekeepers.

12. SCORING: Scoring shall be determined by the pound/ounce weight of each team's catch during the tournament. Each team's total weight will determine the final standings. Walleye, sauger and saugeye will be weighed where permissible by state law. Length and bag limits of eligible fish will be set and announced prior to the start of each event.

Fish weighed must be kept in aerated livewells to keep fish alive and as fresh as possible for release. Any fish mauled, mashed, frozen, stringered, containing foreign or unnaturally placed matter to add weight or showing white gills, soft flesh or other signs of decomposition in tournament official's sole discretion will result in disqualification. All balancing weights, markers, buoys or attachments must be removed before fish are presented at the bump tank. **Balancing weights or other attachments in the bump sink will result in a 1-pound penalty.** At no time shall a competitor have in possession more than the stated event possession limit. Tournament officials will conduct checks for violations of this provision. In the event a competitor has in their possession more than the stated limit, officials shall cull, starting with the largest fish first, etc., down to the stated limit.

The official ruler will be "The Judge." Fish will be measured by a tournament official with fish's mouth closed and longest straight line. Only fish which measure the official length(s) shall be weighed-in. Any fish presented for weigh-in which fails to measure the official length limits shall accrue penalties at the rate of one pound for each non-legal fish. Once a competitor's catch has been presented to tournament officials, that team may not alter nor add to their catch or return to their boat until their catch has been weighed and recorded.

13. CATCH & RELEASE: An 8-ounce deduction will be made for each legal fish presented to the bump master for weighing that is determined to be dead. Every boat must have adequate livewell space, properly aerated, to sufficiently maintain, in a healthy condition a limit catch by competitors using the boat. TWF recommends the use of livewell additive such as G-Juice and ice, in warmer water months to improve oxygen levels and promote a healthy release of fish into natural habitat. Tournament Officials shall have the sole responsibility for accessing any penalty points or for determining whether aeration and capacity is "proper and adequate."

14. TIES & POINTS: If a tie occurs at an event, Tie breakers are as follows. 1.) Most number of legal fish weighed, 2.) Most number of legal fish weighed alive, 3.) Heaviest single days catch, 4.) Second heaviest single days catch, 5.) Means selected by tournament Officials. However, no cash awards will be given to any zero weights.

15. PROTESTS & TRUTH VERIFICATION TESTS: RANDOM TRUTH VERIFICATION TESTS WILL BE GIVEN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. Additionally, any witness has a right to protest a team. An official written protest with \$100 fee must be made with a tournament official within 15 minutes of the last flight check in time OR within 10 minutes of the last fish being weighed that day, whichever is latest. The fee will be returned if the protest is found valid. Tournament Officials, in their sole discretion, reserve the right to consider rule violations reported or not and discovered at any time for any reason, by any persons, before or after a tournament has ended and assess penalties for any past or future event including denying entry to compete. Following interviews with concerned parties or truth verification testing if required, a final ruling will be made. In the event rules infractions occurred a penalty of daily and/or tournament weight may be applied, and cash, prizes and awards must be returned if so requested. If a protest is found valid, the disqualified party must pay all investigative costs.

Each participant agrees with submission of their entry form and by their participation in the event, to submit to a polygraph or voice stress analyzer test or Truth Verification Test, should they be asked to for any reason and to abide by its conclusion. Tournament Officials shall have sole discretion to select scope, when, where and who shall administer such an exam. Participant will make themselves available at their own expense for testing as scheduled. In the official's sole discretion, refusal to submit to exam or failure to pass a truth verification exam will result in disqualification.

18. TOURNAMENT "Officials": A event official or officially approved media person may approach or board your boat at any time for any reason and at any time during the event, refusal to allow an approved official on board or to impede their work will result in disqualification.

19. STANDINGS, AWARDS & QUALIFICATIONS: The top 25 NTC Teams will advance to Saturday's Final round. The heaviest 3-day total weight wins.

20. PATCHES, SIGNAGE & PROMOTIONS: NTC has no intention to restrict the use of logos, patches or signage and encourages their use to promote your various supporters. Realizing we are in a TV \ media \ sponsorship field that MAY sometimes restrict the use of some signage NTC reserves the right to restrict the use of such signage in our promotional endeavors with as much advance notice as possible. Further all anglers agree to use any and all "Official" products, equipment or jerseys so specified and provided by NTC if asked to in our efforts to promote NTC, TWF, youth, conservation and clean waters, if applicable. Further if you are being filmed for television no tobacco products may be used while filming.

REGISTER ONLINE AT: WalleyeFederation.com
5998 N Pleasant View Road, Ponca City, Oklahoma 74601 Office – 580-765-9031
Tournament Hotline 580-761-4291