

# Official Rules for VBT 2026

**1. Rule Changes:** These rules will remain unchanged during 2026. The decisions of the tournament director are final. It is the responsibility of each contestant to familiarize themselves with and abide by all rules.

**2. Eligibility of Competitors:** The tournament will not be open to a competitor who has:  
 1) Declined or failed a polygraph screening in a previous tournament, or refused to allow a tournament appointed observer or media boat in a tournament trail or previous tournament. 2) Been bared from a tournament trail or a previous tournament. 3) Conviction of a felony in the last 36 months or still on probation. In case of any miss conduct or not complying with the standards set forth above in rule #2, VBT shall have the right to refuse any application, or to deny a confirmed application by returning the entire entry fee of a previously accepted application or to disqualify a contestant.

**3. Participation and Entry Fees:** Pick your partner or fish alone. Participation in each tournament is open to all members in good standing of VBT. Entry fee \$200.00 per boat (includes \$10.00 Big Fish). \$25.00 membership per person per season. State Championship entry fee \$200.00 per boat (includes \$10.00 Big Fish).

Participants 17 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult 18 years or older. When both partners are 17 years or younger, they must be accompanied by a non-fishing boat captain 18 years or older. Additionally, participants under the age of 17 must obtain a parental or legal guardian's signature on the entry release form to be eligible for fishing.

**4. Registration:** A properly completed entry form and entry fee must be paid no later than safe light day of tournament. Boat number will be decided by order of entries received. If conditions arise, which preclude participation in a tournament where you have paid an entry fee, you may transfer or request a refund of your entry, as long as VBT is notified by 6 pm local time Friday, the day before the tournament. The burden of notification lies solely with contestants.

**5. Pre Tournament Practice:** No off-limits.

**6. Safety:** Safe boating will be observed at all times during competition hours. Each contestant is required to wear a chest like life preserver any time the combustion engine is in operation. All boats must be equipped with an emergency shut off device, which must be attached to the driver's body whenever the combustion engine is in operation. During the official tournament hours a competitor may not use communication devices such as cellular telephones, marine radios, walkie talkies, etc for the purpose of gathering or relaying information concerning fishing locations, techniques, lures, etc. Mobile communication devices can be used in emergency situations.

**7. Sportsmanship:** All teams are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation. At no time during tournament hours are any alcoholic beverages or drugs, other than prescriptions, allowed in the boat or consumed. Any violation of this rule (7), may be deemed cause for disqualification.

**8. Boat and Horsepower regulations:** All boats must be a minimum of 15ft. in length. All boats must be equipped with an emergency shut-off device. Each boat must have all required U.S. Coast guard safety equipment. Boats must contain a properly aerated live-well space to maintain a live limit catch. Each boat must have a U.S. Coastguard Horsepower rating plate attached by manufacturer. The horsepower of the outboard engine must not exceed the rating specified on this plate. By signing the entry form, each contestant agrees to submit his boat and/or to a motor inspection by factory trained personnel. Falsifying information on entry forms will be cause for disqualification and loss of entry fee.

**9. Permitted Fishing Methods:** No trolling, no long lining with either the combustion engine or trolling motor. All state and local laws, concerning lures, must be followed. All bass must be caught live in a conventional manner. Only artificial lures may be used with the exception of pork trailers. Only one rod per contestant may be used at a time. Sight fish must be caught inside the mouth, no snagging.

**10. Permitted fishing locations:** Locking is not permitted. Contestants may fish anywhere on tournament waters accessible by boat except areas designated as off-limits or no fishing by local, state, federal, or tournament officials. There will be no fishing within forty yards of another contestant's anchored boat (trolling motor up). During competition, contestants may not obtain or receive assistance or follow a non competitor's boat for purpose of locating fish. Hole sitting is prohibited.

**11. Equipment Failure or Emergency:** In the event of equipment failure or emergency, there will be only two permitted methods of returning to the official check-in: 1) both partners remaining in their boat and being towed by water or, 2) by one partner entering the boat of another VBT tournament contestant. Under these two conditions, catches may be counted (normal penalties apply, dead fish, late penalty, etc.) No tournament boat may be loaded on the trailer before the weighing of fish, except first gaining permission from the tournament director. If a team must violate any part of this rule due to emergency, or for any reason, their catch for that day will not be counted.

**12. Official Checkpoints:** There will be only one official checkpoint for boat check-in the morning and check that afternoon. Failure to go through either will result in disqualification. All fishing must cease upon check-in. No culling after check-in.

**13. Scoring:** Scoring will be determined by the pounds and ounces of each team's catch. Only largemouth, spotted, or smallmouth bass are accepted species. The limit will be five (5) unless the state or lake limit is less, in which case, the state or lake limit will prevail. At no time should contestants possess more than the tournament limit. Any team who pos-sesses more than the tournament limit will have their catch culled to the tournament limit beginning with the largest fish. The official length limit for bass will be set at tournament director's discretion. Penalty for short fish will be loss of fish plus one pound penalty off total weight for each short fish. Each team's catch must be presented in an official weigh-in bag. Bass may not be stringed or placed in cull nets at any time during the tournament

**14. Live Fish:** (4) onces will be deducted from total weight only for each dead bass presented for weigh-in. Only one dead fish per boat to be weighed.

**15. Late Penalty:** Teams that are not at the official check-in area at the appointed time will be penalized at one (1) pound per minute deducted from the total weight, including any weight to be counted toward big bass award. Any contestant more than fifteen (15) minutes late will lose credit for that day's catch.

**16. Ties:** In case of ties, positions will be resolved by combining the awards and dividing equally.

**17. Points Champions & State Championship Qualifying:** Team must be declared at second tournament participated in. If team changes, a new points total will be started. One alternate can be used one time during the 2026 season without penalties. Must fish 2 out of 5 tournaments to qualify for State Championship. Points will be awarded beginning at 300 points, show points will be awarded for teams who fail to weigh fish. Team of the Year prize package will be decided by the most points accumulated from teams best (4) tournaments. **No alternates at State Championship.**

**18. Polygraph:** All contestants will be subjected to a polygraph test. Failure to submit to a polygraph test will result in immediate disqualification. All participants are subject to an observer or media personnel at any time for any reason. No Exceptions!

## Mail entries along with payment to:

**Volunteer Bass Trail  
 C/O James Nuckols  
 125 Spencer Lane  
 Rockwood, TN 37854  
 Phone (865) 603-6039**

CUT HERE -----

**2026 ENTRY FORM (Please Print)**

Tournament: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Boater's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Boat Brand: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Partner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Alternate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Entry Fee: **\$200.00 per boat**  
                   (Includes Big Fish)  
 Membership Fee **\$25.00 per person**

**TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

1. **LIABILITY RELEASE:** In signing this agreement, I hereby release VBT, its officers, agents, employees, and sponsors from any and all damages, claims, demands, costs, or expenses relating to injury of any persons or damage to any property which I may sustain or which I may cause by reason of participating in or in connection with this or any other VBT Tournament.  
 2. **COVENANT NOT TO SUE & WAIVER OF SUBROGATION:** I further agree that I will never sue VBT for damages on account of any injury or damage I suffer or cause whether known now or which may develop in the future in connection with this or any other VBT tournament. In the event VBT is sued because of my actions, I expressly agree to indemnify and hold VBT harmless from any liability whatsoever, including court costs and attorney's fees, arising with respect to such actions. I understand that in waiving my rights to sue VBT, I also am waiving the rights of recovery from VBT of my insurance carrier for any claims they may pay on my behalf. I further understand that by signing this agreement, I waive any rights my heirs or relatives have or may have to sue VBT for liability.  
 3. **VERIFICATION OF LIABILITY INSURANCE:** I further state that I am a current member of VBT and that I maintain liability insurance on the boat I will use in this or any other VBT tournament.  
 4. **CONSTRUCTION:** If this agreement and the releases, covenants, and waivers contained herein are found by any court to be overly broad in any matter, I ask the court to interpret it as a broadly as possible.  
 5. **READING AND UNDERSTANDING:** I signify by my signature below that I have read and agree to abide by the official rules and the agreements numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4 above.  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Boater's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Partner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_