

## Freedom Team Trail Rules 2026



\*All teams are required to comply with all state laws, and it is the sole responsibility of said teams to know all laws during Freedom Team Trail events! The Freedom Team Trail Committee is not a source for these laws. Any questions about laws should be directed to the appropriate authority.

\*Taxes of tournament winnings are the responsibility of the winning anglers and not Freedom Team Trail.

\*Teams fishing the current season events are competing for the following calendar year BASS Team Championship.

\*For the remainder of this document, Freedom Team Trail will be referred to as FTT.

**Participants and Eligibility:** Participation in each tournament is open to all angling teams or individuals where one of the individuals is at least 18 years old. For eligibility in the Trail and the BASS Team Championship, both anglers within the team must be in good standing with the State of Maine and BASS Nation.

\*\*Prior to any team's first event, each angler will need a valid BASS ID and we will collect a \$60 registration fee, if not already paid (\$30 MBN Registration + \$30 Bassmaster Team Championship Registration).\*\* See more below:

**1.** All teams fishing for points and eligibility for the BASS Team Championship must be active rostered members of a Maine BASS Nation affiliated club prior to the first event fished. Teams can register for an affiliated Maine BASS Nation club at time of trail tournament registration. Maine BASS Nation dues are \$30 State, \$30 Nation, plus Bassmaster magazine subscription. **The 2026 TOC will be held on split lakes.**

**2. Entry Fees** for each event will be \$140.00, which includes the luncheon pool (see rule below). Entry fees may be paid via exact cash ½ hour before the start of each tournament. Each registered team will be given a number at time of Trail registration, and that will be their number and weigh in position for the season.

\*Please note that some tournaments will be an additional \$5 for use of site. \*

**3. Blast Off Positions** may be determined the day prior to the event for all teams that are pre-registered. Team registering the morning of the event will receive their number in the order that they arrive. The last new team registration will be the starter boat for that event.

**4. Launch and Removing Boats:** All boats must go through an inspection to include a live well check and weed check prior to entering the tournament lake and after the event has been completed. No Tournament anglers are allowed under any circumstances to pull boats from tournament waters with fish in the live wells. All boats competing in the event must have a valid registration and display their current Millfoil sticker prior to entering the tournament water.

**5. Insurance, Liability, & Code of Conduct:** It is the sole responsibility of the boat owner to carry and have proof of adequate liability insurance covering them and passengers. All boat owners must carry insurance liability at a minimum of \$300,000 to participate in any FTT tournament. Tournament staff has the right to ask for proof of insurance at any time and all teams will be required to present their insurance information when they initially register. All contestants are required to sign a waiver absolving the tournament organizers, tournament sponsors, co-sponsors and their employees from any responsibility for any damage or personal injury sustained as a result of their participation in the tournament or related activities. All participants agree to hold harmless FTT, officers, directors, and agents.

**A. Angler Code of Conduct:** Anglers participating in any B.A.S.S.-sanctioned event shall observe this code of conduct and the applicable rules for the specific event in which they are participating. Anglers and family members of anglers shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a professional manner that demonstrates integrity, honor and respect toward fellow competitors, tournament staff and the general public and does not reflect unfavorably on B.A.S.S., its members, officers or representatives, tournaments or sponsors.

Sportsmanship is defined as fair play, respect for opponents and polite behavior while competing in the sport. (i) Following are examples of unacceptable behavior by competitors or family members of competitors in B.A.S.S. events that will be cause for penalties as outlined in this document.

- Heated public disagreements with B.A.S.S. officials, other competitors and fans and volunteers during an event.
- Public attacks through media, including social media, upon the integrity of B.A.S.S. rules or officials.
- Public comments that an angler or family member knows, or should reasonably know, will harm the reputation of B.A.S.S., B.A.S.S. officials or its sponsors
- Displays of anger and displeasure for reasons related to fishing competition where members of the public, including other anglers, spectators, and the media, are present.
- Publicly questioning or criticizing a tournament official or official decision, ruling or penalty except through the proper channels.
- Abuse (physical, verbal, threatening or slanderous) of tournament officials, volunteers, fellow competitors, or others connected with a B.A.S.S. event, including on social media.
- Offensive or slanderous comments with racial, cultural, or sexual overtones regarding event officials, event personnel or fellow anglers.
- Intentionally interfering with a fellow angler's ability to compete.

Any disqualification, suspension or other disciplinary action imposed by any tournament or fishing organization may result in disqualification from competition and rejection of an application for participation in a B.A.S.S. tournament.

**6. Safety:** Boating safety must be observed at all times during competition. U.S. Coast Guard approved life preservers must be worn, fastened with kill switch attached anytime the combustible engine is operative. A violation during a competition will result in a disqualification. \*FTT has the right to conduct a complete boater safety check.

**A.** For safety reasons anglers must be in the cockpit section of the boat while the combustible engine is in gear. The only two exceptions are for beaching a boat or leaving a beach position, or to assist in navigating a water way. It IS NOT an exception to be standing in any part of the bow section or stern section of a boat while the combustible engine is operative for the search of fish, to improve your fishing position or fishing while the combustible motor is in gear. A violation during a competition will result in a disqualification.

**B. PASSING ON PLANE and the WATER SAFETY ZONE:** Boat captains are asked to use great caution when passing another boat on the water! Maine State Law reads as follows:

Water Safety Zone: The area of water within 200 feet of any shoreline, whether the shoreline of the mainland or an island. Watercraft may not be operated at a speed greater than headway speed while within the water safety zone or within a marina or an approved anchorage in coastal or inland waters. "Headway speed" means the minimum speed necessary to maintain steerage and control of the watercraft while the watercraft is moving. The operator of any watercraft must operate at a reasonable and prudent speed for existing conditions and regulate the speed of a watercraft so as to avoid danger, injury or unnecessary inconvenience in any manner to other watercraft and their occupants, whether anchored or under way. The operator must consider the effect of the wash or wave created by their watercraft to waterfront piers, floats or other property or shorelines.

**C. Reckless Operation of a Watercraft:** It is illegal to operate any watercraft, water ski, surfboard, or similar device in such a way as to recklessly create a substantial risk of serious bodily injury to another person.

**7. Sportsmanship:** All teams are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety, and conservation. Any team who displays poor sportsmanship, violates these rules, or any Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, state or local laws, or brings unfavorable publicity to the sport of bass fishing is subject to disqualification upon the tournament director's discretion. FTT reserves the right to cancel membership at any time. FTT reserves the right to refuse service to anyone. Any citations from Maine Game Wardens will result in an automatic disqualification for that event and potentially the season. The tournament director's decision is final.

**8. Tournament Protection:** Any act or inflammatory statement by any contestant that, in the opinion of the Tournament Authority, is detrimental to the bass tournament, to FTT, or any of its staff, sponsors, or to permitting agencies or their officers (such as park rangers, fisheries biologists, or other officials), during the tournament, may result in the temporary or permanent suspension from all future FTT events. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH CONTESTANT to know these rules.

**9. Boats and Motors:** There is a 250-horsepower limit for all vessels! Teams entering and improperly powered boat will forfeit that day's entry fees and prize eligibility. All boats must be equipped with working live wells, navigation lights, kill switch and all other required safety equipment according to state law.

**10. Tackle and Equipment\*:** All fish must be caught in a legal sporting manner. Intentional snagging of fish will not be allowed and will lead to disqualification. Trolling with the aid of combustion or electric motors is not permitted. Only artificial lures may be used. No live bait or prepared bait is permitted except for pork rinds or mammals hide. Liquid fish attractants are allowed. Eligible fish for the tournaments are smallmouth or largemouth bass that are a minimum of 12 inches or more in length. Only one (1) rod per angler may be used at any one time. Other rods may be in the boat and ready for use, however, every cast and retrieve must be completed before another cast is made. The official measuring board for FFT is the Golden Rule (flat board). Only non-penetrating cull tags are permitted. Any team caught using penetrating cull tags will have their days catch disqualified. Nets designed for landing fish are allowed.

*\*Restrictions on the use of umbrella rigs, also known as Alabama rigs: B.A.S.S. announced they will no longer be permitted in the Bassmaster Opens or any other B.A.S.S. event that leads directly to a Bassmaster Classic qualification thus they are not permitted in FFT events.*

**11. Protest:** All protests must be submitted to the Tournament Director or Committee prior to officials closing the scales. This means once the tournament is over, it's over. You must have at least one witness to confirm the violation other than your partner. The Tournament Director will hear protests and the decisions of the Tournament Director will be final. You may, however, use photographs with date stamps... i.e., cell phones to assist in your protest in lieu of a second party. The director's decision will be final based upon the information provided.

**12. Substitution Rule:** When a team first registers, the team identified on the registration form is the team for the tournament season. Teams are allowed **2** (substitution per team member) substitutions in the season. ~~, after that teams may only substitute with a junior angler, the age of 16 years old or younger. There are several junior clubs in the State who can be contacted for parental contacts, if need be.~~ Substitute anglers must meet the above eligibility requirements to fish

for points. Teams may elect to have one angler fish or finish an event, if a suitable substitute can't be found, but may only hold 5 fish in the live well.

**A.** Substitutions are not allowed during the TOC for teams competing for the BASS TEAM Championship. Extenuating circumstance requests may be considered by the FTT tournament committee.

**13. Official Boats:** Official boats, including but not limited to our tournament staff boats, may be on the lake for boat inspection and observation during tournament hours. Each team is required to cooperate with all requests.

**14. Scoring:** Tournament Scoring: Only largemouth or smallmouth bass will be scored. Each team may weigh-in seven (7) fish per day with a minimum of 12 inches in length (or per I&FW permit or lake rules). Fish will be measured on a Golden Rule (flat board) with the mouth closed. A penalty of .25lb per dead fish will be deducted from the total weight. It is the team's responsibility to properly dispose of their dead fish (see 19). The Tournament Director has the final say regarding fish health. Any team bringing more than seven (7) fish to the scales will lose their largest fish for that weigh-in. Once the fish have been turned over to the weigh master, any short/dead fish cannot be returned without a penalty. Tournament standings will be determined by the total weight for the competition days of the tournament. Any team weighing in a fish shorter than the legal tournament length will lose that fish for that weigh-in. Fish intended to be weighed in for Lunker MUST be tagged prior to arriving at the weigh in sink. You are responsible for letting the weigh master know if you are interested in weighing in a big bass for the event.

Each team is required to leave and return to a specified checkpoint. Any team returning to the checkpoint late will be penalized at the rate of one (1) pound per minute up to 15 minutes. After 15 minutes no weight will be allowed. If requesting a reasonable exception, the Tournament Director or President MUST be notified at least 15 minutes prior to weigh in. The Tournament committee will make a ruling on the request. Fish weighed for lunker must be alive. Tournament Staff can't help in identifying the lunker to be weighed.

**15. Prize Payout:** Prize money will be awarded following the weigh-in at each tournament. One place will be paid out per 5 teams entered with a maximum of 10 places paid. \$10 from each entry will go towards the big bass pot. \$5 from each

entry towards Maine BASS Youth. \$10 to the regular season champions if they attend the National Team Championship. \$10 to the TOC team champions if they go to the national team championship.

**16. FTT Scoring:** Trail scoring will be as follows for the FTT season for all eligible teams.

**A.** The 1st place team in each event will be awarded 200pts. 2nd place 198pts, 3rd place 196pts etc.

**B.** Lunker: The team that weighs the largest fish (lunker) for the tournament day will be awarded an additional 5pts.

**C.** No points may be transferred from one team to another.

**D.** Points Champion will be determined by using points from the top five finishes of the season. So, each team can drop their lowest score if fishing all six events, or if they missed one event. Points Champion automatically qualifies for the Bassmaster Team Championship.

**E.** Each team MUST fish a minimum of 5 of the 6 FTT sanctioned events to qualify for the FTT TOC.

**F.** Each team with a trail score of 600 or more will qualify for the FTT TOC.

**G.** Any team that wins an event is automatically qualified for that year's FTT TOC so long as they fish for a minimum of 3 events.

**H.** Any team that fishes for all 6 regular season events will be automatically qualified for the FTT TOC.

## **17. Bassmaster Team Championship**

**A.** FTT is a sanctioned trail of the Bassmaster Team Championship. Through this partnership, FTT can qualify 1 (one) team per every 25 (twenty-five) teams paid registration for the Bassmaster Team Championship. All expenses for the Bassmaster Team Championship are the responsibility of the qualifying teams. Awarded qualified positions defined below.

**i.** 1st team = Points Champion.

**ii.** 2nd team = FTT TOC Winner.

iii. All remaining qualification spots will come from points standings.

iv. If the TOC winner does not accept their qualification, the spot reverts to season point standings.

B. FTT will collect a set amount from each entry to be put towards additional prizes. See payout schedule for details.

C. See BASS Team Championship rules for additional details.

D. Teams fishing for the 2026 season are qualifying for 2027 BASS Team Championship.

E. Team Championship contract must be signed. See contract for details.

**18. Culling Fish:** It is the responsibility of each team to keep no more than a maximum of 7 fish in a live well. If more than the 7 fish limit is present in the live well during the event you will be subject to disqualification. You can cull a dead fish. You cannot cull a fish after checking in at the end of the event.

**19. Fish Care:** It is the responsibility of the tournament anglers to assure all fish caught are cared for properly, prior to being returned to the tournament waters. This includes venting a fish's bladder if required. Anyone observed releasing an improperly cared for fish or releasing a fish in a non-designated area are subject to disqualification. All dead fish must be returned to the lake and sunk to the bottom and not remain visible to the public. It is suggested that you cut from the chin to the exit hole on the belly of the fish.

**20. Permitted Fishing Waters:** All fishing must be done from a previously inspected boat. Boats may not be trailered to and from weigh-in during tournament hours unless under the direction of the tournament director. No fishing is allowed within 50 yards of another anchored or tied tournament boat with the trolling motor out of the water without the anchored boat's permission. Both team partners must fish from the same boat. Only contestants may be in the boat during the tournament hours unless arranged with the tournament director prior to the start of the event. Having a non-contestant sit in a hole for you (save your spot) will not be tolerated. Contestants cannot leave a boat to land a fish. Navigable waters are the only waters to be fished during the tournament. Contestants must be able to drive the boat into the fishing area without getting



out of the boat. The practice of restricting the natural movement of fish by any means such as, but not limited to, the use of nets, tanks, or dams will not be tolerated and will result in disqualification. Restricting access to waters normally accessible by all anglers, by any means such as, but not limited to the falling of trees or the construction of obstructions will not be allowed and will result in disqualification. For any restricted fishing areas, the restricted area will act as a wall and cannot be fished within.

**21. Practice Fishing:** There are NO "OFF LIMITS" dates during the regular season. You can fish the lake whenever the lake is open prior to the tournament. During the tournament, a competitor may not use a CB radio, a VHF marine band radio, a cellular phone, or any other type of communication device for the purpose of locating or catching fish. These devices may be used for emergency purposes only or family calls. During the competition day(s) a contestant must not have the assistance or advice from anyone to locate bass except from another contestant in this tournament. Failure to report violations or suggestions to violate these rules will be cause for disqualification.

**22. Fish Transport:** It shall be illegal to "seed" an area with live or dead bait fish or any other type of chum for the purposes of conditioning or congregating fish populations. Such action by participants or third parties acting on behalf of participants shall be grounds for disqualification from the complete trail.

**23. Conservation:** Conservation and safety are the primary concerns of the FTT. Adequate live wells are mandatory on each boat and must provide adequate aeration to maintain fish in good condition. It is also an expectation that anglers maintain their catch in an adequate weigh bag to protect their catch during the weigh in process.

**24. Weigh-In:** Any angler may request a one-time immediate "re-weigh" of their fish before leaving the scale area with their fish. Once a sack of fish has left the scale area, the angler loses his right to request a re-weigh and any request of that nature will be denied. The new "re-weigh" weight will be the final weight used for the event.

**25. Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs:** During tournament hours no contestant shall be under the influence of, or in possession of alcohol or any illegal substance in his or her boat. An infraction of this rule shall result in immediate disqualification for

the offending party. No drugs other than prescription will be allowed in the boat or to be consumed while on the water.

**26. Tie Breakers:** If two teams have the same weight at the end of the tournament, the big fish will break the tie. Big fish must be marked prior to handing it to the weigh master. It is the angler's responsibility to ask to weigh a big bass in at every event. No one other than the weigh master or tournament official may handle the fish after the bag is handed to the weigh master. Any short / dead fish cannot be returned without a penalty.

In the event of a total weight and lunker tie, the points will be awarded to both teams based on primary position.

**A.** If the tying team qualified for a payout, the 2 positions will be combined and split 50/50 amongst the 2 teams.

**B.** In the event of a tie with Lunker, both the points and payout will be split 50/50.

## **27. Release of Liability; Indemnification**

**A.** I expressly assume all risks associated with my participation in the tournament series and for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, next of kin, successors and assigns, I hereby waive, release and discharge Freedom Team Trail and Maine B.A.S.S. Nation, its affiliates and subsidiaries, the hosts, sponsors and tournament series officials ("Released Parties"1 from any and all losses, liabilities, claims, damages and expenses (including without limitation, attorney's fees and related costs), of any kind (hereinafter "Claims"1 arising out of or in connection with my participation in the tournament series, including but not limited to Claims involving, death, disability, personal injury and/or property damage. I hereby INDEMNIFY, HOLD HARMLESS, AND PROMISE NOT TO SUE the Released Parties for any and all Claims arising as a result of my participation in this Tournament. I acknowledge that this Tournament may carry with it the potential for death, serious injury, and personal loss. The risks may include, but are not limited to, those caused by water conditions, temperature, weather, equipment, actions of other people including, but not limited to, participants, volunteers, and spectators. This release of liability shall be construed broadly to provide a release and waiver to the maximum extent permissible under applicable law.

**B.** I shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Released Parties against all Claims, whether or not a lawsuit or other proceeding is filed, to the extent that they arise out of : (1) my breach of the terms of this Agreement, (2) gross negligence, or willful misconduct by me, my agents or those acting on my behalf; (3) my violation of any applicable law, ordinance, rule, or regulation, including but not limited to all rules and guidelines applicable to tournament events; (4) breach of any warranty provided by me to Released Parties hereunder. I shall provide Freedom Team Trail and Maine B.A.S.S. Nation with prompt notice of any claim and give complete control of its defense and settlement to Freedom Team Trail and Maine B.A.S.S. Nation. I shall also cooperate in all reasonable respects with Freedom Team Trail and Maine B.A.S.S. Nation its insurance company, the Released Parties (as applicable) and their legal counsel in the defense of such claim. If I fail to promptly indemnify and defend a covered claim, the Released Parties shall have the right to defend themselves, and in such case, I shall promptly reimburse the Released Parties, for all their associated costs and expenses.

I have read the FTT rules and understand them as written.

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Boater	Non Boater	Date