



# Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 through Sunday, June 8 2025

## 2025 TOURNAMENT RULES

**Rules are Subject to Change. Changes to the rules and final instructions are given at the mandatory Captain's Meeting which takes place Wednesday, June 4 at 6:00-6:30 P.M. on site at the Golden Nugget - Biloxi**

**Tournament Entry Fee is \$6,000 per boat through May 5, 2025 and covers four anglers. The Captain and Mate can attend all functions. Each additional angler is \$600. After May 5, there will be a 10% late fee added to all entry fees. Beginning May 5, 20% of the entry fee is non-refundable and non-transferable. There will be no refund of any fees or optional entry fees once the tournament officially begins.**

The MGCBC is a sportfishing tournament where participants agree to fish in a fair and ethical manner. While the tournament does not strictly enforce the use of IGFA rules, it certainly expects that only minor technical differences will be employed by anglers. One noted exception is the allowance that the rod may be handed off one time within the first minute of the fight.

**TOURNAMENT DATES: Wednesday, June 4, 2025 through Sunday, June 8, 2025**

<b>WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4</b>	Registration from 1:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., mandatory Captain's Meeting at 6:00 P.M., Captain's Banquet at 6:30 P.M.
<b>THURSDAY, JUNE 5</b>	Boats may depart from Point Cadet Marina at 11:00 A.M. and fishing begins at 11:00 A.M.
<b>FRIDAY, JUNE 6</b>	Weigh scales open at 3:00 P.M., Weigh scales close at 8:00 P.M.
<b>SATURDAY, JUNE 7</b>	Weigh scales open at 3:00 P.M., Weigh scales close at 6:00 P.M.
<b>SUNDAY, JUNE 8</b>	Awards ceremony at 10:30 A.M. at the Golden Nugget - Biloxi.

### 1. RULES MEETING/CAPTAIN'S MEETING

- The mandatory Captain's Meeting will be held from 6:00-6:30 P.M. at the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi, on Wednesday. All participants are invited to attend the Captain's Banquet which follows at 6:30 P.M.
- The captain/owner or designated representative must sign-in and be present at the captain's meeting for rule changes and instructions.

### 2. PERMITS AND LICENSES

- An Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Angling Permit IS required and participants must be familiar with and follow HMS regulations.
- To qualify for state record, anglers MUST obtain a state of Mississippi Saltwater Fishing License prior to the tournament start which can be purchased locally or online at <https://www.mdwfp.com/licenses-permits> NOTE - a MS saltwater fishing license is not required to fish this event, however, it is a requirement in order to submit an application for a state record and receive any prizes or awards for the record.

### 3. TOURNAMENT START

In the interest of true sportsmanship and to keep all participants on as near an equal basis as possible, the start of the tournament will be as follows: Boats must depart from Biloxi by water any time after 11:00 A.M., Thursday. A boat parade will head west from Point Cadet Marina beginning promptly at 11:00 A.M. Fishing also begins at 11:00 A.M. Please check-out using VHF channel 78. Boats must leave from Point

Cadet Marina in the water and may not be trailered until returning to Point Cadet Marina following fishing hours on the last day.

## 4. FISHING HOURS

Boats may begin fishing at 11:00 A.M. on Thursday and continue fishing until the scales close at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday. All boats, including those with only catch & release videos to turn in, must be inside the designated markers at the scales before 6:00 P.M. on Saturday. Boats may not be trailered during the event and must return to the scales by water.

One day or part thereof of offshore fishing by one-third of the boats entered constitutes a complete tournament. In the event of inclement weather, the tournament will be completed on the first day that the tournament director and tournament committee declare fishable.

## 5. WEIGH STATION HOURS

Scales will open in Biloxi at 3:00 P.M. and close at 8:00 P.M. on Friday and 6:00 P.M. Saturday. Note the earlier close time on Saturday. All fish caught during the tournament must be weighed before scales close on Saturday night. Boats inside the designated markers by 8:00 P.M. on Friday and 6:00 P.M. on Saturday will have their fish weighed in order and scales will close immediately after the last fish is weighed. All billfish catch forms for boated and/or released fish must be turned in before close of scales on Saturday.

## 6. ACCEPTABLE FISH

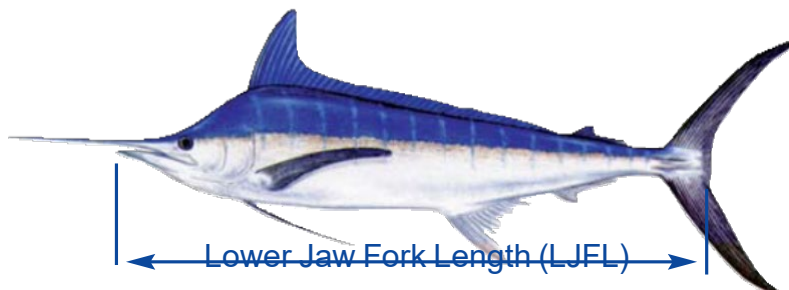
The following species are eligible for competition when caught by properly registered anglers in accordance with tournament rules:

### Eligible for Catch & Release:

- Blue Marlin
- White Marlin
- Sailfish
- Spearfish

### Eligible for weigh-in at the scales:

- Blue Marlin - 110 inch minimum (LJFL)
- White Marlin - 72 inch minimum (LJFL)
- Tuna - 20 lbs. minimum weight
- Wahoo - 20 lbs. minimum weight
- Dolphin - 20 lbs. minimum weight



**Boated Blue Marlin must measure at least 110 inches in length from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail (LJFL). Boated White Marlin must measure 72 inches (LJFL).**

No angler or boat may have in their possession more than one blue marlin per day. Any angler in violation of this rule will be banned from further participation in the tournament without refund.

For each day the scales are open (Friday and Saturday), each boat will be allowed to bring to the scales a maximum of 1 blue marlin, 1 white marlin, 3 tuna, 3 wahoo and 3 dolphin.

The tournament committee reserves the right to reject any fish entry because of poor condition or one that does not meet the eligible requirements set by this tournament. The condition of the fish will be left to the scrutiny of the tournament committee. **THEIR DECISION IS FINAL.**

## 7. WEIGH-IN PROCEDURES

**IMPORTANT: A tail tag with boat name and angler's name must be attached to each fish before unloading at the weigh scales. These bright orange or green tail tags will be included in your boat information packet at registration.**

Tournament scales will be located at the weigh-in dock behind the Golden Nugget at Point Cadet Marina. Boats having fish to weigh must be inside the Mississippi Sound Waters (specifically, inside the channel marker #34 to the East, and inside channel marker #2 to the West) by the designated closing time each day for the closing for the scales. **ALL FISH MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE SCALES BY THE BOAT FROM WHICH IT WAS CAUGHT.** A winning fish in any of the categories must be

caught and presented at the weigh-in by the officially registered and qualified angler with tournament tail tag attached to fish. The angler must remain with the fish until completion of the weigh-in procedure. The angler must sign the weigh-in statistics sheet to verify the weight, at which time will make the weight official.

**FISH WEIGHED AT THE SCALES MAY BE RETURNED TO THE BOAT OR BE DONATED TO THE TOURNAMENT FOR THE PURPOSES OF RESEARCH AND FEEDING THE HUNGRY.**

**8. REPORTING OF BILLFISH**

Each boat is required to record on the **Billfish Scorecard** all billfish boated or released in the order in which the fish are caught. The order of the recorded releases should match the order that appears on the boat’s Catch & Release video. The Billfish Scorecard will be available in your boat information packet.

**Committee boats** will be utilized but only for conservation and informational reporting. Please contact a committee boat or the tournament weigh station cell number(s) to report boated or released marlin. Prompt reporting of the measured length and girth of blue marlin will help in the effort to minimize killing of under- sized and non-competitive fish.

**To report a billfish be prepared to give the following information to committee boat or weigh station:**

- 1. Name of Boat
- 2. Name of Angler
- 3. Species of Fish (Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Spearfish, Sailfish)
- 4. Time released or boated.

**DO NOT report Tuna, Wahoo or Dolphin on the Billfish Scorecard.**

Names of Committee boats and any changes to communication frequencies will be announced at the Captain’s Meeting. Please use alternate frequencies for conversations not related to the reporting of billfish.

**NOTE: Your committee boats will be monitoring VHF Channel 78 and weigh station phones 850-341- 8877 or 850-380-8961. You can leave a voice or text message regarding the 4 requested items above.**

**9. TOURNAMENT AWARDS**

**All Tournament Awards are based on 100 registered tournament boats. For 2025, the tournament is paying out a \$100,000 bonus for breaking the state of Mississippi white marlin record of 80.32 lbs.**

**Awards for Heaviest Fish** will be presented to the angler/boat for fish caught in the following categories:

	1st	2nd	3rd
BLUE MARLIN	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$25,000
TUNA	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$10,000
WAHOO	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$10,000
DOLPHIN	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$10,000

**Each Boat can weigh a maximum of 1 Blue Marlin, 1 White Marlin, 3 Tuna, 3 Wahoo and 3 Dolphin per day scales are open.**

In the event that no qualifying fish are weighed in a given category above, the cash award assigned to that category will be added to the cash awards of the qualifying fish in the other Categories in a proportional manner as determined by the Tournament Committee. If no qualifying blue marlin is weighed, the tournament awards for blue marlin will roll down and be divided evenly between four categories: Catch & Release, Tuna, Wahoo and Dolphin.

**Catch & Release Awards**

The Albert “Bill” McLellan Catch & Release Awards will be presented as follows to the boats with the most accumulated catch and release points utilizing video verification.

	1st	2nd	3rd
COMBINED RELEASE POINTS FOR BLUE MARLIN, WHITE MARLIN, SAILFISH, SPEARFISH	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$10,000

### **Top Lady Angler and Top Junior Angler Awards**

Awards will be presented to the one Lady Angler and the one Junior Angler with the most accumulated points based on the following:

- Points per pound for Blue Marlin weighed at the dock.
- 700 points for Blue Marlin release.
- 200 points for White Marlin release.
- 150 points for Sailfish, Spearfish and any unidentifiable Marlin release.

If no marlin is brought to the scales or released for points, the heaviest meat-fish and time of weigh-in will be used to determine the prize for top angler in that division.

NOTE: the \$600 additional angler fee is waived for junior anglers.

## **10. OPTIONAL ENTRY AWARDS**

Participants may pay an Optional Entry Fee in one or more of the following:

CATEGORY	DIVISIONS				
	1	2	3	4	5
Catch & Release	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
Blue Marlin	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
White Marlin		\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
Tuna		\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
Wahoo		\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
Dolphin		\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500
<b>Crew Division \$500 (heaviest fish, 100% payout, 50/30/20 split).</b>					
<b><i>All divisions will pay 1st, 2nd, and 3rd with a 50%, 30%, 20% split.</i></b>					

- Payment of an Optional Entry Fee is not required to compete for overall Tournament Awards.
- If any division has less than 10 boats in it or has less than 3 winners, the pay will be adjusted to 60%/40% split. If any division has less than 6 boats in it or less than 2 winners, the pay will be adjusted to winner-take-all.
- 90% of all Optional Entry Fees collected are distributed in the form of Optional Cash Awards Except for the Captain and Mate (Crew) category. It pays 100% of the entry.
- Participants who wish to pay an Optional Entry Fee prior to May 31, may pay by personal or company check made payable to the MGCBC.
- Participants who wish to pay an Optional Entry Fee after May 31 must do so at Tournament Headquarters, or such other location as may be determined by the Tournament Committee, during the Optional Entry Fee registration hours on Wednesday, June 8, between 1:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M.
- Optional Entry Fees collected after June 1 must be paid in United States Currency, Credit Card or by Cashier's Check made payable to the MGCBC.
- Optional Cash Awards for Catch & Release divisions are determined by points according to Tournament Rules.
- Optional Cash Awards for boated Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Tuna, Wahoo and Dolphin are determined by weight according to Tournament Rules.
- In the event that no qualifying fish are weighed by an Optional Entry participant in a given Division eligible for an Optional Cash Award, 90% percent of all Optional Entry Fees collected for that division



are returned to the Participant(s) who paid Optional Entry Fees for that division.

## **11. CATCH & RELEASE RULES**

### **Billfish Catch Definition**

A billfish is considered caught when the leader connection is shown wound to the tip of the rod, or a team member is shown touching the leader.

### **Billfish Release Definition**

The billfish is considered released when, after being caught by the above definition, the rod and angler are shown with the fish no longer connected to the line or the billfish is shown in the water, no longer connected to the line.

### **Tournament Designator/Identification Marker**

Designators will be assigned at the mandatory Captain's meeting. These markers must appear in all video submissions.

### **Billfish Scorecard**

All billfish released or boated must be logged on the Billfish Scorecard in the sequence in which they were caught; scorecards must be signed by the Boat Captain indicating they agree to the information as recorded. Detailed instructions are printed on the billfish scorecard which is included in the team packet handed out at registration.

### **Video Verification and Points Awarded for Catch & Release**

Points for catch and release are awarded when, in the process of the catch and release as defined above, all technical elements are shown on video. Tagging is not required for points and billfish removed from the water or boated will be disqualified.

Video submitted for consideration for points must include the following technical elements:

- Angler fighting fish, including video of rod and reel.
- Video pan of entire cockpit.
- Tournament designator.
- The Catch (swivel at rod tip or team member touching the leader).
- Video of Billfish for species identification. (Judges use Dorsal, Anal and Pectoral Fins for fish identification).
- The Release (the Billfish being released or video of the rod and angler with the fish no longer connected to the line).
- Secondary cockpit pan after the release.
- AFTER the secondary cockpit pan, a clear video of GPS date & time to be used for official release time. Hold camera steady for several seconds to allow clear focus of GPS Date & Time. This is critical. GPS must display in CDT. Show designator alongside GPS if possible.

*Note* – Verification Videos become the property of the tournament. Verification videos and billfish scorecards must be turned in to the video judges at designated video judging location near the weigh station.

### **Points Values Awarded for Release**

Catch & Release placements are determined by points awarded as follows:

- 700 points for Blue Marlin release.
- 200 points for White Marlin release.
- 150 points for Sailfish, Spearfish and any unidentifiable Marlin release.

Only billfish caught and released according to these Rules are eligible for Tournament Awards and Optional Entry cash Awards as described herein.

The Billfish Scorecard must accompany the Catch & Release video to the weigh-in dock. The form must include boat name, angler's name, species, date and time of release. Catch & Release verification videos and Billfish Scorecard must be turned in to the video judges at the weigh-in dock before the closing of the scales on either Friday, 6:00 P.M. or Saturday, 8:00 P.M.

## 12. SPECIAL VIDEO SECTION

### Submission of Video Recordings

Verification video recordings must be submitted not later than the closing of the scales on final day of fishing. Recordings should be submitted immediately upon return to the marina.

All recorded images and sounds become the property of the tournament and may be used by the tournament for display purposes during weigh in and in future marketing campaigns. Images will be copied from digital hard drive cameras. Tapes, CD's and DVD's, etc.

### Video Tips and Recommendations

- Use fresh, new SD cards.
- SD type Sony and GoPro, etc. cameras which generate consumer type files allowing the judges to quickly copy the recording to a computer which facilitates slow motion and segment by segment scoring.
- *Note: Files with .MXF filename extension cannot be opened or viewed by the judges.*
- Judges will not score from your laptop computer or iPad type tablet.
- Judges will accept more than one video of the same release from a different camera (of the same type), **provided the same previous video requirements are met.**
- If possible and without harm to the fish, have the mate display the dorsal fin on the video at the time of release to assist with identification.
- Underwater video of the release is helpful with identification. Ensure video is adequately long to allow identification.
- Limit recordings to only **video release recordings from this tournament** with the segments staged and cued and ready for scoring. Know before entering the scoring room where images are located on the recording. Have the SD card ready to be inserted into scoring computer.
- It is critical the person sent to scoring clearly understands how to provide the video digital media to the scoring judge. One person per team is allowed in video scoring.
- **Understand how to properly display the GPS date as well as the time on your boat GPS prior to the tournament. This is critical for tie-breaker.**
- Cell phones are not acceptable for digital video submission, or for date and time of release.

***Remember. Report releases to a Committee Boat on VHF Channel 78 so that we can track them for unofficial reporting to the media and the verification committee. Releases may also be reported to weigh station phones 850-341-8877 or 850-380-8961.***

## 13. PAYMENT OF CASH AWARDS

Prior to fishing, each tournament boat must designate a representative payee to receive payment of all cash awards. Payment of Cash Awards is by check. For winners of cash awards a single check will be written to the boat's representative payee for the combined total of tournament cash awards and optional cash awards.

Checks will be written after the Tournament Awards Ceremony on Sunday.

The Tournament accepts no responsibility for the distribution of any cash awards, whether tournament cash awards or optional cash awards, between team members.

## 14. MISCELLANEOUS

**Deck Checking Prohibited:** Billfish removed from the water for the purposes of deck checking will be disqualified

**Polygraphs may be administered at the discretion of the tournament committee.**

All tournament entries are non-transferable and non-refundable. Payment of the entry fee constitutes a

representation by each entrant that he/she has read and fully understands the tournament rules that he/she will abide by such rules and the decisions of the tournament committee.

### **State Records:**

All cash awards and prizes (award packages) allotted to breaking a state of Mississippi record in this tournament will be given as follows: Because records may be broken more than once over the course of the tournament, only a single state record award package will be given to the boat with the largest certified fish at the end of the tournament for each species. A state record certified fish is determined by following all MGCBC tournament rules, all state of Mississippi and federal fishing regulations.

### **Cancelled Tournament:**

If the tournament should be cancelled due to any cause beyond the control of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, tournament entry fees will be rolled over for one year less a pro-rated share of tournament expenses as solely determined by the tournament committee. Entrants shall have no claim against the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic for return of said entry fees less pro-rated share of tournament expenses.

### **Tie Breakers:**

For Catch & Release awards, team placement is determined by the first team to reach the highest total points as verified by the boats GPS time.

For fish Weighed-in: When there is a tie in weight for any category of fish brought to the scales, placement is determined by the order of weigh-in at the scales. The recorded time of weigh-in determines placement.

In case of a tie for Top Lady Angler or Top Junior Angler on points, placement is determined first by the heaviest fish and then by the first angler to reach the highest total points as verified by the boats GPS time. If it comes down to weighed fish only to determine tie breaker, placement will be determined by the recorded weigh-in time at the scales.

## **15. PROTESTS**

All protests must be presented in writing along with a \$1,000 deposit by the team captain to the tournament committee no later than 15 minutes after the last fish is weighed and recorded on the final day of the tournament. All entrants agree to abide by tournament rules. Poor sportsmanship will be grounds for disqualification from this tournament. **All decisions of the tournament director and rules committee are final.** Any violation of these rules resulting in disqualification will result in forfeiture of entry fee and prize money.

## **16. WAIVER/DISCLAIMER**

It is expressly understood that all participants in this tournament, Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, enter at their own risk, and that the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, officers, sponsors, directors, and all persons connected directly or indirectly with the operation of said tournament, shall be exempt from any liability for libel, slander, loss, damage, negligence, harm, injury or death suffered by any participant, entrant, sportfisherman, his/her companions, boat captains, mates, crew members, vessels and equipment which may occur during or in conjunction with the tournament. By tournament entry, the captain consents that the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic may use without payment or restriction, any photographs in which he/she or any of their crew may appear for any purpose whatsoever; including, but not limited to resale, advertising, commercial or promotional material. The captain and his crew further release the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic, officers and directors, and all persons from injury, loss or damage which may result. All state record winners must submit to and pass in a conclusive manner, a polygraph examination administered by a licensed polygraphist provided by tournament officials. All entrants agree to submit to a polygraph examination at the request of the tournament committee if there is a conflict involving said entrant. Failure to submit to such an examination will result in disqualification of the entrant at the sole discretion of the tournament committee.

## **17. ALL DECISIONS OF THE TOURNAMENT JUDGES AND RULES COMMITTEE WILL BE FINAL.**