

## **2025 American Bass Trail Divisional Series Official Rules and Regulations**

**Official Rules:** Notice: All anglers entering a tournament are subjected to the rules and by entering the tournament you are agreeing that you have read the rules, accept the rules and will abide by the rules. By your participation in this Tournament, you agree to comply with the following rules, and agree to submit to and pass a POLYGRAPH TEST or similar truth test in order to qualify for the receipt of any prize. Tests will be given to teams at ABT discretion.

**1. Entry:** Entries will be per team up to two anglers in the boat with big fish included in entry. (\$220.00 per tournament)

**2. Rules Meeting:** Rules Meeting will take place 30 minutes prior to Take Off.

**3. WEATHER:** In the case of extreme weather/water conditions or National emergencies, ABT shall have the right to postpone or cancel any tournaments with the return of entry fees by mail

**.4. FISHING HOURS:** Fishing hours will be posted on the Tournament Information Page and will be announced at the Rules Meeting.

**5. ENTRY FEE/ REFUNDS:** Entry Fees must be received by the tournament director prior to the start of the tournament. Each director will be allowed to decide if they will collect pre registration money or collect it all the morning of. (This will be posted on the tournament information page for each division)

**6. STATE LAW:** Teams must comply with all State and boating regulations throughout the entire year, including the use of P.F.D.'s and kill switches. Fishing, boating regulations, and licenses are the responsibility of team members. State fishing laws and boating regulations supersede tournament rules. Violation of State or Lake laws is grounds for disqualification.

**7. MEMBERSHIP:** ABT membership is required to fish all ABT events. Failure to have an active/paid membership is grounds for disqualification. ABT reserves the right to refuse and/or revoke memberships without cause, reason and/or explanation and without recourse at our own discretion. Membership does not guarantee the ability to enter a tournament. ABT may deny tournament entry to a member without cause, reason, explanation or recourse. All ABT memberships will be valid for the entire calendar year and must be purchased online at [www.americanbasstrail.com](http://www.americanbasstrail.com) once completed confirmation emailed will be delivered with a custom member number.

**8. PRIZES:** Prizes will be given after the tournament. Teams must be present to receive prizes.

**9. OFF LIMITS:** Will be announced prior to take off at the official rules meeting.

**10. FISHABLE WATERS:** Fishing within 50 feet of a Marina gas pump or within 100 feet of a competitor's boat, which is first anchored, is prohibited (Trolling motors must be in up position

and anchor rope visible or any shallow water anchoring device must be deployed to be considered anchored). A safe and courteous distance (100 feet) should be maintained when trolling motors are in use. Boats may fish anywhere except areas designated as “off limits” or “no fishing” by Local, State or Federal officials or announced at the pre Tournament Meeting. Any violation of off-limits water could result in disqualification. Participants are not allowed to exit the boat to gain access to fishable waters.

**11. ALCOHOL:** Alcohol beverages are not allowed during the tournaments hours. Use of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs during tournament hours is prohibited and could result in disqualification.

**12. POLES:** Teams may use rod and reel combos, hand-held pole and reel combos or hand-held poles.

**13. BAITS:** Artificial bait only. Umbrella Rigs will be division specific and posted under the tournament Information page for each division if allowed in that particular division. No Umbrella Rigs allowed during the ABT classic.

**14. Boat/ MOTORS:** All tournament boats are required to have a minimum 9.9 HP or greater motor along with a built in or portable livewell/Aeration system in place during the tournament.

**15. LANDING FISH:** Bass must be hooked inside the mouth when sight fishing. Landing nets may be used.

**16. LIFE JACKETS:** Life jackets or personal flotation devices must be worn at all times while your combustion engine is operating. Life jackets must be properly secured and maintained secured until the combustion engine is turned off. Kill switches must be properly attached at all times the combustion engine is on. All State and Local rules and regulations supersede tournament rules.

**17. TIES:** In the case of a tie for all paying positions, big fish from each team will break all ties. If neither team that is tied weighs a big fish the money will be split evenly between the two places.

**18. RELEASE:** Team members/ABT members are required to follow high standards of sportsmanship, honesty, courtesy, safety, conservation and to conduct themselves in a manner that will be a credit to themselves ABT, ABT sponsors, the sport of fishing, and ABT efforts to promote the sport. Examples of conduct not complying with those standards include, but are not limited to, the following: • Violation of or failure to comply with any of the official rules. • Consumption of alcoholic beverages or any kind of mind-altering substance during registration or during tournament hours.

**19. SCORING:** Each Divisional Event will be based on a 100 point scale. 1st place=100 points-2nd Place=99 Points- 3rd Place=98 Points etc. Teams that do not weigh in will receive 25 points or if there are 75 boats the lowest score for points will be 25 points.

**20. Limits:** Limit for each tournament in length and number limit will be posted on the tournament information page and cannot exceed 5 fish total.

**21. Late to Weigh In:** There will be a deduction of 1 lb per minute late to check in. After 15 minutes late will be disqualified for the day. You will still be eligible for a Big Bass award unless you are after the 15 minutes.

**22. Insurance:** All members will carry liability insurance on any boat they might use during any of ABT Tournaments. Failure to do so or reporting of false information will result in disqualification. Participants must include the company name and either the policy number or the name of the agent binding the coverage on their membership form.

**23. Registration:** There will be registration at the tournament site starting an hour and a half or more before the start of the tournament. All teams are required to be at the ramp 30 minutes prior to the start of the tournament. Registration will close 30 minutes before the start of the tournament. Paying entries fees after the tournament registration time will be accepted only at the tournament Director's discretion. Tournament Directors will only accept cash at registration (NO Checks) Each director will be allowed to decide how they collect money for the events (If they allow pre registrations or if they will collect it all the morning of.)Entry fee may be refunded or rolled over to the next tournament, if the director is contacted before the start of the tournament. Failure to contact the tournament director for a refund or roll over will result in a forfeit of entry fee. Tournament take off positions will be determined by when the tournament director receives your entry or by draw at registration (please contact the director for take off procedures). There will be a pre-tournament meeting 30-minutes prior to the start of each tournament.

**24. Short Fish/Dead Fish Penalty:** In case of an illegal fish in regards to length that fish will be removed from the bag along with a 1 LB Penalty. Dead fish will be allowed to weigh but for each dead fish they will receive a ½ lb penalty. Dead fish will not be allowed to weigh for Big Fish.

**25. Leaving your Boat:** Competitors shall remain with the partners in the boat always during the tournament. Except in the event of sickness or brief excursions for "nature calling", a severe storm or other such hazards. If for any reason a team decides to leave the tournament waters early, competitors must try to contact the director, prior to leaving the tournament. If you have boat trouble, one member must remain with the disabled boat. The other team member may board another competitor's boat with that day's catch and bring fish to weigh-in.

**26. Culling:** All culling of fish must be done on the water before weighing in. Each team will have to cull fish out immediately after going over the tournament limit.

**27. TEAMS/ALTERNATES:** Each team will be allowed to have two anglers in the boat with at least one angler being over the age of 18 years old. Each team will be able to have one alternate per team per division. Individuals fishing two or more events in the BASS Elite Series, MLF Invitationals, MLF Bass Pro Tour, NPFL will not be eligible to fish any ABT event.

**28. Classic Alternates:** Teams that qualify for the ABT Classic may use an alternate partner. The alternate used must be from that same qualified teams division. Teams must make director aware before signing up for the ABT classic.

**29. Cheating:** Anyone caught cheating in any tournament event will be immediately barred from fishing in any ABT event. We reserve the right to have a random truth verification test performed at any time. You may not use a cell phone to gain an advantage over the rest of the competitors.

All State rules and regulations must be followed. All protests must be submitted in writing to the Divisional Tournament Director before the close of weigh.

**29. RELEASE:** Suspension/disqualification from any tournament or fishing organization for cheating, refusing or failing a polygraph. • Any other words, conduct or actions (including and not limited to discussion forums and internet sites) reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with the tournament rules, or which fail to comply with these standards set forth in the first sentence of this paragraph.

**30. PROTEST:** Protest must be made in writing to the Tournament Director within 10 minutes following the end of the Official Weigh-In. Protests must cite the rule allegedly broken. Protests must be given to the Tournament Director. Protest must be deemed a legitimate protest by Tournament Director. Both parties may be subjected to a polygraph. All parties involved and all grievances, protests, and complaints shall be handled in house with confidentiality. The Tournament Director's decision/ ABT National Directors is final in all matters.

**31. LIVE WELL/ TAKE OFF PROCEDURE:** ABT tournament officials will have livewell checks during take off. ABT Officials shall have the right to at random, board and inspect the boat of any competing members, at any time from Registration until the end of the tournament. Refusal to allow inspection is grounds for disqualification.

**32. POLYGRAPH:** By your participation in a ABT tournament, you agree to comply with the rules, and agree to submit to and pass a polygraph test or similar truth test in order to qualify for the receipt of any prize. ABT shall have the right to polygraph any competing team, at ABT discretion. Any team having a member who has failed or refused to take a polygraph test or was a team that was disqualified or denied a prize because either member of that team failed or refused to take a polygraph or who has ever been denied a prize because he or she misrepresented compliance with a tournament rule or because of unsportsmanlike conduct may be disqualified and/or have their membership revoked.

**33.POLYGRAPH:** A team member who failed to pass a polygraph or whose condition does not permit the administration of a test because of team member's use of alcohol or drugs will be disqualified. The use of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs during tournament hours is prohibited.

**34. RELEASE:** At the request of ABT, one member of each team that qualified for a prize must submit to and pass a polygraph test and/or any other test deemed necessary to determine compliance with tournament rules. Contestants agree to release ABT, its staff and all sponsors from any liability arising from the administration of the test and/or the decisions made in result of the test. All decisions regarding compliance with these rules and the interpretation of these rules will be made by the Tournament Director and ABT, which reserves the right to make additional reasonable rules for the conduct of its tournaments if circumstances require. All decisions are final and all matters are not subject to appeal. A pre-tournament Seminar is held for the review of the rules. You are liable to abide by the rule changes made during the Seminar, therefore, one team member is required to attend unless absence is pre-approved by Tournament Director ABT does not discriminate for reasons of race, creed, color or national origin.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

*Contestants participating in any ABT event shall abide by this code of conduct and the applicable rules for the event in which they are participating. Contestants shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner becoming of a professional that will not reflect unfavorably on ABT, its members, events or representatives. The favorable public reputation of ABT as an organization in the sport of fishing, the integrity of its officials, and the reputation of its media properties are valuable assets and tangible benefits for ABT. It is an obligation of contestants to refrain from comments to the media that unreasonably attacks or disparages the integrity of tournaments, tournament officials, sponsors, fellow members, fellow contestants or the ABT organization. Responsible expressions of disagreement with ABT policies are acceptable; however, attacks upon the integrity of the rules or officials are not tolerated. Public comments that an angler knows, or should reasonably know, will harm the reputation of ABT, ABT officials or sponsors shall be considered unacceptable conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Contestants shall demonstrate professionalism and integrity in support of the sport of professional fishing. Any angler who violates any portion of the Angler Code of Conduct may be subject sanctions up to disqualification.*

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

*Contestants in ABT tournaments are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation. Any infraction of these fundamental sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification. Use of alcohol or drugs (other than those purchased over-the-counter or prescribed by a licensed physician) by any contestant during the open practice or during the tournament will not be tolerated and shall be cause for automatic disqualification from this and all future ABT tournaments. No alcoholic beverages, other stimulants or depressants, prescription or otherwise, shall be allowed in the boats during the open practice or competition days or when in the weigh-in area. Any contestant(s) deemed under the influence by the tournament director may be disqualified. The use of any tobacco products or smoking prior/during takeoff, from check-in through weigh-in while cameras are present is prohibited. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially with regard to boating and angling in the vicinity of non-contestants who may be on tournament waters. Any act of a contestant which reflects unfavorably upon efforts to promote fisheries conservation, clean waters and courtesy shall be reason for disqualification. All contestants are bound by the prevailing statutes and regulations of the various states within which they fish. Contestants are responsible for research of fishing and boating regulations. Chemical substance addiction or abuse, conviction of a felony or crimes involving moral turpitude or other conduct reflecting unfavorably upon efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship, fair competition and compliance with tournament rules shall be grounds for rejecting any application for participation and/or for disqualification after circumstances are reviewed by the Tournament Director. Any disqualification suspension from or other disciplinary action regarding any tournament or fishing organization shall be grounds for rejecting any application for participation in an ABT tournament and/or disqualification from an ABT tournament after circumstances are reviewed by the Tournament Director. A written statement may be accepted by the tournament director from any contestant in question.*

## **MEDIA**

*All official contestants of an event are required to cooperate with the media personnel that cover the event. Contestants do not have the option of not being filmed or interviewed during the official event days. Any act deemed by ABT officials to have the intention of preventing media coverage will result in disqualification from the event.*

## **PUBLIC CONDUCT, SPORTSMANSHIP & COMPETITIVE INTEGRITY**

*Contestant agrees that the integrity and competitive honesty of fishing contests is paramount to any fishing tournament circuit's continued existence and success. Contestants compete in ABT contests at the sole discretion of ABT. The ABT reserves the right to refuse service to any potential contestant and enforce its tournament rules at its discretion. Contestants are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of morality, honesty, fair play and sportsmanship. Contestants will not do anything which shall be detrimental to ABT, its sponsors or competitive fishing in general. Contestants agree to conduct themselves, at all times, with regard to public conventions and morals. Contestants agree not to engage in any conduct that will reasonably tend to degrade him/her or bring ABT into public hatred, contempt or ridicule or tend to offend the fishing community or integrity of competitive angling. Contestant agrees that this provision is necessary to protect ABT's goodwill in the community in which the contestant represents it and to protect the profitability and competitive integrity of ABT's business. ABT may ban any member from any contests for a serious or intentional violation of any law, rule, regulation, constitutional provision, bylaw, or any act of dishonesty, theft or misappropriation of ABT property, moral turpitude, insubordination, or any act injuring, abusing, or endangering others. ABT does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin.*

## **PATCHES AND/OR SIGNAGE**

*Contestants are encouraged to wear their own clothing which may bear patches, logos and other signage promoting the angler's sponsors. ABT may, however, restrict the use of patches, logos, signage, etc. which are, in ABT's sole judgment, in poor taste. ABT will provide as much advance notice as possible to the contestants in such instances. Contestants are also encouraged to wear ABT's logo on their tournament jerseys.*