

# ***American Bass Anglers, Inc.***

## **American Fishing Tour 2017 Season Rules**

Effective: 10/1/2017

The following rules shall apply to all American Bass Anglers, Inc. American Fishing Tour tournaments during the 2017 season. These rules may be changed by American Bass Anglers (ABA) at any time upon notification to its members, which will be published on the ABA web site at [www.americanbassanglers.com](http://www.americanbassanglers.com). Interpretation and enforcement of these rules will be left exclusively to the Tournament Director.

### **1. RULES VIOLATION:**

In the event of a rule violation, ABA may impose such sanctions, as deemed appropriate, including, without limitation, disqualification, forfeiture of prizes and/or entry fee, probation and prohibition from participation in subsequent tournaments. The decision of the ABA shall be final in all matters. Each competitor agrees to report to the Tournament Director any violation or infraction of any Tournament Rules. Failure to report violations, or suggestions to another competitor that they violated these rules will be cause for disqualification. Rules violations must be reported to the Tournament Director on site in writing within 15 minutes after the announcement "The scales are closed".

### **2. SPORTSMANSHIP/CODE OF CONDUCT: SPORTSMANSHIP/CODE OF CONDUCT:**

Anglers participating in ABA sanctioned event shall observe this code of conduct and the applicable rules for the specific event in which he/she is participating. Anglers shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner becoming ABA anglers and their actions will not reflect unfavorably on ABA, its members, officers or representatives, tournaments or sponsors. To this end, anglers shall use their best efforts to demonstrate professionalism and integrity in support of the sport of bass fishing. Any angler who violates any of the provisions of the Angler Code of Conduct will be subject to fines, forfeiture of tournament winnings, probation, suspension from competing in ABA sanctioned events, permanently banned from competition, or any combination thereof deemed appropriate by ABA. Competitors are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation.

a. The use, possession or consumption of illegal drugs by any competitor during official practice, tournament hours or during pre and post tournament activities will be cause for automatic disqualification from this and all future tournaments.

(Exception; medication prescribed to the angler by a licensed physician). Anglers under the influence of, or testing positive for, illegal drugs will be automatically disqualified from current and all future ABA tournaments. The consumption or possession of alcohol during tournament hours is prohibited. Tournament hours are defined as check-out in the morning through weighing of fish in the afternoon.

b. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially with regard to boating and angling near non-competitors. Any act of a competitor which reflects unfavorably upon efforts to promote water safety, fisheries conservation, clean waters and courtesy, will be reason for disqualification.

c. All competitors are bound by the prevailing statutes and regulations of the state within which the tournament is being held.

d. Chemical substance addiction or abuse, crimes involving moral turpitude, conviction of a felony not specifically exempted by ABA, 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. Any disqualification, suspension from or disciplinary action imposed by fishing organization will be grounds for rejecting any application for participation in a tournament and/or disqualification from a tournament after circumstances are reviewed by the Tournament Director.

### **3. PARTICIPANTS AND ELIGIBILITY:**

a. Participation is open to current members of American Bass Anglers, Inc., who are 14 years of age or older. Proof of age to the satisfaction of tournament officials is the responsibility of the competitor.

b. Competitors must have a valid fishing license for the body of water the event is being held on.

c. During official practice and competition days of an ABA tournament, no competitor may operate a boat unless that contestant has current documented proof of a minimum of \$100,000 boating liability insurance on the boat being used. Proof of insurance must be with the boat being used and must cover the competitor using the boat. Random checks will be conducted.

d. Anglers must sign the Release of Liability form at the event and if not pre-registered with headquarters must present their entry fee to the tournament director prior to the tournament. Tournament officials reserve the right to refund any membership and/or entry fee, if they shall choose for any reason not to accept the application for entrance.

e. Any person entering a tournament that is under 18 years of age must have the signature of his/her parent or legal guardian on the Liability Release form.

**4. POLYGRAPH:**

By his/her signature on the official entry form, each competitor agrees to submit to a polygraph examination/truth verification method as determined by ABA and abide by its conclusion. The Tournament Director will have the discretion to determine the need for a polygraph/truth verification examination. ABA will arrange for an independent expert to administer and interpret the results, and establishing the scope of the questions to be asked during the examination. The competitor will make himself/herself available at the location selected by ABA and shall cooperate in all respects with such examination. In the event a competitor fails to pass the examination, he/she will be disqualified from the event in question and other disciplinary action taken as deemed appropriate in accordance with Rule 2 above. Anglers who are accused of a rules violation will be responsible for any and all cost incurred for taking a polygraph/truth verification method examination, anglers refusing to acknowledge payment will be disqualified. At the National Championship up to 25 boater places will be administered a polygraph/voice test.

**5. PROFESSIONALS:**

Individuals who have fished two or more tournaments as a designated Professional in a Pro/Am event requiring an individual entry fee of \$675 or more in the preceding six months are not eligible to fish. This rule does not apply to Amateur status anglers.

**6. GUIDES:**

Individuals who are serving as a licensed guide on tournament waters or are paid for guiding on tournament waters within the previous 30 day period are not eligible to compete in American Bass Anglers, Inc., events on that lake(s).

**7. PRE-TOURNAMENT PRACTICE/OFF-LIMITS:**

There will be no official practice period (Except for National Championship or special events) prior to the pretournament meeting. No contestant may enter the tournament water for the purpose of catching or locating possible fishing locations after day one weigh-in in multiple day tournaments. Off-limits areas not covered in Rule 18, will be designated and explained at pre-tournament meeting by the tournament director.

**8. REGISTRATION:**

It is recommended that contestants pre-register through National headquarters. Contestants desiring to register at the ramp must do so in person during the official registration period. Registration period is defined as 1 and ½ hours preceding 5am local time during daylight savings time and 6am local time during standard time or the time established by the local tournament director. Once the Safety and Rules briefing begins no tournament entries can be accepted. Failure to attend the pre-tournament meeting of any American Bass Anglers, Inc.,

tournament will result in forfeiture of entry fee and disqualification from the tournament in question.

**9. ENTRY FEE:**

Entry fee for Divisional Qualifying events will be \$70.00. Entry Fee for Divisional Championships will be \$140.00. The entry fee for the National Championship is \$170.00.

**10. LATE FEE:**

All mail in entries must be postmarked or called-in to headquarters with a charge card 10 days prior to the scheduled tournament. Divisional Qualifying Events and Divisional Championship entries not meeting this deadline will be subject to a \$5.00 late fee. All pre-registrations must be sent to the Athens office only, except where noted on schedule. New or renewing members signing up at the tournament, active duty military members, life members, visiting directors, assistant director for that division, and 2014 frequent fishermen anglers are not subject to the late fee for Divisional Qualifying Events and Divisional Championship tournaments ONLY.

**11. SAFETY:**

Safety is paramount and anglers must recognize that; Fishing from an open boat in itself is inherently dangerous, and as a result American Bass Anglers seeks to limit those hazards with reasonable safety rules.

- a. Safe boat conduct and speed limits must be observed at all times by competitors. During official practice and competition, competitors must wear a US Coast Guard-approved chest-type life preserver and must be worn at all times while the combustion engine is in gear. This life preserver must also be strapped, snapped or zippered securely and maintained in that condition until the combustion engine is no longer in gear. Violation of this rule shall be reason for disqualification. "Fanny Pack" preservers are not allowed. In the event a boat is being towed, all anglers in the towed boat must wear a life preserver.
- b. Tournament officials may delay, shorten, restrict tournament waters or cancel the start of an official tournament day because of bad weather or other factors that would endanger the safety of the competitors.
- c. ABA reserves the right to impose boat speed limits during any or all tournaments. The decision to impose a speed limit, the area covered by the speed limit and/or the actual speed limit shall be left exclusively to the discretion of the tournament director.
- d. In the event of an emergency, competitors should call 911 immediately and then notify tournament officials. Competitors are allowed to leave the boat and seek safe shelter in bad weather when danger may be imminent, at which time all fishing must cease.

## **12. MEDIA COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTACKS;**

The favorable public reputation of ABA as a sanctioning 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 ABA. Accordingly, it is an obligation of competitors to refrain from comments to the news media that unreasonably attack or disparage the integrity of tournaments, tournament officials, sponsors, fellow members, fellow anglers or the ABA organization. Competitors are encouraged to express themselves and have the right to question rules officials. Responsible expressions of legitimate disagreement with ABA policies are encouraged as opposed to attacks upon the integrity of the rules or officials. However, public comments that an angler knows, or should reasonably know, will harm the reputation of ABA, ABA officials or sponsors shall be considered conduct unbecoming a professional and will result in disciplinary action.

## **13. TACKLE AND EQUIPMENT:**

Only artificial lures may be used. No "live bait" or "prepared bait" will be permitted during official practice and competition, with the exception of pork strips, rinds, etc. Alabama Rig/Umbrella Rigs are prohibited. Only one rod and reel combination may be used at one time. No fly rods or rods over 8 feet are allowed. Trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited. All bass must be caught live and in a conventional sporting manner. All angling must be done from the boat and anglers must stay on tournament waters during tournament hours. Anglers are not permitted to leave the boat to land a fish or leave the boat to gain access to secluded waters. Competitors must leave and return to official checkpoint by boat. Both competitors must remain in boat at all times except in case of dire emergency. In such an emergency, competitors may be removed from their boat to: 1) a boat operated by another competitor, 2) a rescue boat designated by the tournament director. **MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN;** In the event of a mechanical breakdown one or both anglers may board another competitors boat only and ride to the weigh-in with their catch (if one angler brings both catches to weigh-in, fish must be clearly marked). In the event boater is alone he may have another competitor only bring his catch to weigh-in. Mechanical Breakdown does not extend tournament time.

## **14. HORSEPOWER REGULATION:**

**MAXIMUM HORSEPOWER FOR ALL OUTBOARD MOTORBOATS USED IN OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT PRACTICE AND IN TOURNAMENT COMPETITION WILL BE 250 HP.** Horsepower cannot exceed the limitations set by the U.S. Coast Guard. It is required that all boats have a U.S. Coast Guard or Manufacturer's horsepower-rating plate attached to the boat by the manufacturer. The horsepower of the outboard engine must not exceed the rating specified on this plate nor the horsepower maximum set by American Bass Anglers. Each competitor agrees to submit, by their signature on the official entry form, the boat and outboard motor used in the tournament, to an inspection by factory-trained personnel, if there is any reason to suspect the horsepower is in excess of the rating. Changing or altering standard factory parts of your engine to increase the horsepower over the

factory horsepower rating is forbidden, and will result in disqualification. Falsifying information on entry forms or altering the horsepower-rating numbers on the engine also would be cause for immediate disqualification from American Bass Anglers, Inc., tournaments.

**15. BOAT AND MOTOR:**

ALL BOATS MUST BE EQUIPPED WITH SOME TYPE OF IGNITION STOP SWITCH. This ignition-kill device must be attached to the driver's body any time the combustion engine is in gear. Any time the combustion engine is operating and in gear, there must be a driver in the driver's seat in full control of the boat. Fishing boats less than 16 feet in length may not be used. No barges, cumbersome craft or boats without steering wheel will be permitted. Contestants may not use boats equipped with "stick steering" during official practice or during tournament hours. Each boat must also have a properly aerated or re-circulating live-well to maintain a live limit catch of bass by both contestants. Boaters are required to provide a back fishing seat for co-anglers.

**16. BOAT OPERATION:**

Any competitor answering yes to the question: "Will you enter as a boater?" will be expected to make that boat available for the tournament. Partners must discuss sharing time for his/her selected waters prior to ooze-off. Each partner is entitled to an equal number of hours to fish his/her selected waters during divisional and national qualifying events. Any contestant who, in the judgment of the tournament director, operates the boat in such a manner as to unfairly handicap their partner shall be disqualified. It is the responsibility of the non-boater to reimburse the boater in an amount mutually agreed. It is suggested that reimbursement be ½ of fuel cost to defray daily expenses (Based on current fuel prices and running time, cost could be from \$30.00 to \$50.00). Non-boater not paying their share as prescribed here and at the time of the event shall be cause for being disqualified and/or may also result in entries not being accepted into future American Bass Anglers events.

**17. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS:**

Tournament Director for each tournament shall establish Tournament waters at the tournament briefing and define any known OFF-LIMITS areas including locking from established tournament waters. Fishing on tournament waters is not permitted: within 50 yards of a marina gas pump. Any water within tournament boundaries posted Off-Limits or No Fishing by state or federal agencies will be OFF-LIMITS.

**18. OFFICIAL CHECKPOINT:**

There will be only one official point for check-out in the morning and check-in in the afternoon, as designated by the tournament director. Competitors not at the checkpoint at the designated time will be penalized at the rate of 1 pound per minute, deducted from their total weight for the day. Any competitor more than 15 minutes late for send-off or check-in will be disqualified for the day. Official

start and weigh-in times will be announced at the pretournament meeting. Our best effort will be given to allow at least 8 hours fishing time. In the case of adverse weather conditions, the tournament director will open weigh-in at 12 noon for safety.

**19. SCORING:**

The total weight of each competitors catch will determine tournament standings and placement. Only largemouth, spotted, red eye or smallmouth bass will be weighed. The creel limit shall be five (5) unless the prevailing state/lake limit is less (The tournament director may impose a creel limit of less than five fish if they deem weather and/or local conditions warrant the reduction). At no time shall a competitor have in his/her possession more than the tournament limit. Culling must be done immediately upon catching a sixth fish. CULLING OF DEAD FISH IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED. Minimum length will be 12 inches (measured on a flat board) unless the prevailing state/lake rule is larger. In most cases the state's longest length limit will be used. A penalty of 1 pound will be deducted from the total weight for each short fish and a penalty of eight (8) ounces or (.50) pounds will be deducted from the total weight for each dead fish. In the event the anglers' big fish is dead a penalty of eight (8) ounces or (.50) pounds will be deducted from the big fish weight. A contestant that presents more fish than the tournament limit will be disqualified immediately. Mangled, mashed, mauled or otherwise altered fish will be weighed only at the discretion of the tournament director. No regurgitated baitfish will be weighed. Fish will not be put on a stringer at any time. All fish presented at the weigh-in become the property of American Bass Anglers. All live fish will be returned to the tournament waters and the tournament director will dispose of any dead fish.

**20. PAIRING:**

Assignments of partners will be by open draw. All angling must be accomplished from the boat. Competitors must stay on tournament waters and in sight of each other throughout the tournament day from send-off until weigh-in (Exception: Nature call). Any contestant refusing to take or go with another contestant in his/her boat will be subject to immediate disqualification. Tournament directors have no responsibility for finding lost partners. Each contestant is to meet his/her partner at least 30 minutes prior to take-off. The tournament director may reassign pairings prior to morning ooze-off to accommodate problems or emergencies. With prior approval from American Bass Anglers, headquarters, the tournament director may allow paired boaters to fish alone.

**21. TIE:** Ties will be broken using the following criteria:

- a. Largest number of legal fished weighed.
- b. Largest number of legal live fish weighed.
- c. Largest bass weighed
- d. If the tie is not broken by applying the foregoing procedures, place monies will be split evenly, and place points will be awarded accordingly. Other ties

will be awarded duplicate points and monies divided. Event winners' tiebreaker may result in a fish-off.

**22. ANGLER OF THE YEAR TIE BREAKER:** in the event there is a tie for 1st place points, Director will ask each angler if they want to do a fish-off. If anglers do not consent to a fish-off, Angler of the Year will be determined by using the following criteria:

- a. 1st - Most weight for the year
- b. 2nd - Most number of legal live fish weighed for the year
- c. 3rd - Largest big fish weighed for the year
- d. If the tie is not broken by applying the foregoing procedures, a fish-off will be scheduled by the tournament director. In the event a fish-off is required, all ABA rules apply. If one of the tied competitors refuses to participate in the fish-off, the Angler of the Year title will go to the other angler.

**23. TRANSFERS:**

Entry fees may be transferred or refunded only if proper notification is made to American Bass Anglers, headquarters or tournament director by 12 noon on the Friday preceding the tournament. Refunds will be assessed a 10% service charge however, there is no fee for transfers. Refunds for National Championship will only be accepted up to 10 days prior to official practice.

**24. POINT SYSTEM:**

One-day divisional qualifying tournaments are worth 200 points. Maximum points are awarded for a minimum of 20 contestants. For tournaments with less than 20 contestants, 1 point per person short of the minimum will be deducted from the total points available. Points will be awarded in 1 point decrements depending on place of finish. No contestant weighing a fish in the tournament will receive less than 75 points regardless of place of finish. All contestants not weighing fish will receive 50 show points. A contestant may fish multiple one-day tournaments for point accumulation, but only the best four tournaments will be counted. The 2-day Divisional Championships are worth 400 points. Maximum points are awarded for a minimum of 20 contestants. Points will be awarded in 2 point decrements depending on place of finish. For tournaments with less than 20 contestants, 2 points per person short of minimum will be deducted from the total points available. No contestant weighing a fish in the tournament will receive less than 150 points, and 100 points will be awarded to those not weighing fish. A contestant may fish multiple 2-day Divisional Championships, however only their best two-day finish will be counted. Contestants who are more than 15 minutes late for weigh-in, will not be allowed to weigh their fish, but will receive show points for the event. Contestants must have fished at least four (4) one day tournaments to be eligible to compete in the 2-day Divisional Championship. A perfect score is 1200 points: 4 one-day tournaments at 200 points each = 800 plus and 1 two-day Divisional Championship at 400 points. The National Championship is worth 2000 points to the winner. Points will be awarded in 5 point decreasing increments depending on place of finish.



## **25. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP:**

The top 500 national point holders plus 30 Active Duty Military will be invited to compete in the National Championship. If one or more of the top 500 do not accept the invitation, the remaining slots will be filled from a list of qualified anglers by points. Contestants must meet the minimum qualification requirements which is; the successful completion of four (4) one-day tournaments and one two-day tournament within their division.

- a. There will be three winning positions in the National Championship, one for the overall winner of the event, one for the highest placing non-boater and one for Angler of the Year.
- b. The top 250 anglers by points will have the opportunity to register as a boater and be guaranteed use of their boat. If one or more of the top 250 do not accept the invitation, the remaining slots will be filled from a list of qualified and pre-registered anglers by points. The top 250 boaters may or may not have a partner during the event. In the event a boater draws a non-boater, Rule 17 applies, including the non-boater being entitled to an equal number of hours to fish his/her selected waters.
- c. ABA will take registrations for non-boaters slots from qualified anglers by points, until all 250 boater slots have been filled. Those anglers registering as a non-boater will be paired with a boater and be entitled to their equal number of hours to fish his/her selected waters, see Rule 17.
- d. Divisional Anglers of the Year will compete within the National Championship tournament event.
- e. No angler will be allowed to win more than one boat in any calendar year. The Championship lake will be off limits approximately 15 days prior to the first official practice day. All tournament information pertaining to the Championship will be published on the ABA web site NLT September 1, 2017.