

## The Michigan Bass Federation 2026 Lake St. Clair State Championship - Official Rules

**1. Safety:** Safe boating conduct must be observed at all times by all tournament competitors. Each competitor is required to wear a Coast Guard approved chest type life preserver. **This preserver must be worn any time the combustion engine is operating.** The preserver must be snapped or zipped securely and maintained in that condition until the competitor reaches his fishing location and the combustion engine is shut off. Violation of this rule shall be reason for disqualification. In addition to the above requirements, 1 (one) USCG-approved throwable device must be on board vessels 16 feet in length or longer and be readily accessible. It is the responsibility of each participant to have in their possession, a current season fishing license and if applicable, a boater safety certificate to operate a boat as required by Michigan Boating and Fishing laws. It is the responsibility of the participant to ensure they abide by all state and federal laws and have all required safety equipment. At the discretion of the tournament director, tournament days may be shortened, postponed or canceled due to unsafe weather or water conditions.

**2. Sportsmanship:** Competitors of our tournament are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety, and conservation. Any infractions of the fundamental sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification for this and all future tournaments. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times especially with regard to boating and angling in the vicinity of non-competitors who may be on tournament waters. Any act of a competitor, which reflects unfavorably upon our efforts to promote fisheries conservation, clean waters, and sportsmanship, may also be reason for disqualification. No alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs shall be allowed in the boats or at the weight-ins. Any participant cited during tournament hours for a violation of State marine or fishing laws may be disqualified.

**3. Tackle and Equipment: Only artificial lures may be used. No "live Bait" or "prepared bait" will be permitted with the exception of pork strips, rinds, etc. Only ONE casting or spinning rod (8 foot maximum length from butt of handle to rod tip) and reel may be used at any one time. All other types prohibited. Other rigs as specified above may be in the boat ready for use, however, only ONE is permitted in use at any given time. All bass must be caught live in a legal conventional sporting manner.**

**4. Horsepower Regulations:** Your boat and motor must conform to B.I.A. Horsepower Ratings. Simply, your engine's horsepower is not to exceed the horsepower limitations set by the U.S. Coast Guard horsepower rating plate attached to the boat by the manufacturer. The horsepower of the outboard must NOT exceed the rating plate. Any boat manufactured prior to Nov. 1, 1972, must adhere to the ratings set by the U.S. Coast Guard for similar boats. Each competitor agrees to submit, by signature on the entry, the boat and outboard motor used in the tournament to an inspection by the factory trained personnel, and if there is any reason to suspect the horsepower is in excess of the rating.

**5. Boat and motor: ALL boats must be equipped with some type of ignition kill switch. Kill switch must be in working order and attached to driver anytime the combustion engine is running.** Fishing boats may be used that are 16 feet or more in length. A small motor, gas or electric, may be used for slow maneuvering. Trolling as a method of fishing is prohibited. No "barges" or similar cumbersome craft will be permitted.

**6. Basic Boat Equipment:** Every boat must have all required Coast Guard safety equipment. In addition, it must have a functional bilge pump and LIVE-WELL SPACE MOUNTED IN BOAT BY MANUFACTURER, PROPERLY AERATED TO ADEQUATELY MAINTAIN ALIVE UP TO A LIMIT OF 5 BASS THE TEAM USING THE BOAT. No coolers. Tournament officials shall have the sole authority for determining whether aeration and capacity is "proper and adequate".

**7. Permitted Fishing Locations:** Fishing on the tournament waters is permitted anywhere **except within 50 yards of any marina gas pump or within 50 yards of another competitor's boat, which was first anchored.** A boat is considered anchored only if it is tied to an object or has anchor line over its side with trolling motor out of water. No such anchored boat shall permit selected competitors to fish within a 50-yard circle claimed by his to exclusion of any other competitor. **Also, any off-limits area discussed at the pre tournament meeting. All angling must be done from the boat. Contestants must not depart to land fish. Boat must remain in tournament waters during the tournament day.** Contestants must leave and return to the official checkpoint by boat. If a competitor must violate any of these conditions due to emergency, or any other reason, his catch of the day shall not be

counted in the tournament. **Competitors must not leave their boat (both feet out) except in case of emergency.**

**8. Official Check Point:** there shall be only one official point for checking out in the morning, and check in at the end of the tournament day, this point shall be designated at the tournament briefing. At the time of morning check out, all competitors and their boats shall be in full conformance with the rules set forth by the tournament committee. At the end of day check in all boats shall identify themselves by depositing official numbered plate with the check in official at the designated check point, and proceed immediately to the designated weigh in area. Any angler not checked out properly by the tournament director or designee may be disqualified from participation. Any angler who fails to report to the official checkpoint may be disqualified. The tournament director will designate whether the anglers can trailer their boat before weighing in their catch or not. At this tournament you will be able to trailer your boat for weigh in.

**9. Scoring:** Tournament standings and auxiliary awards are determined by total pound and pound fractions of up to 5 bass each team weighed in. Only **largemouth, spotted or smallmouth bass** will be weighed for the team, up to the tournament limit of 5 bass, unless local regulation requires the tournament director to change the limit to a lower number. Prevailing statutes and regulations of the state of Michigan and all jurisdictions within which the competitors fish the tournament shall bind the competitors. **At no time shall a competitor have reduced to possession more than a 5 bass limit described above. Teams with over the tournament limit must immediately cull down to the tournament limit. There shall never be over the daily angler possession limit in the boat. Competitors must present all bass in their possession for weigh in. The official length for bass shall be 14 inches unless local regulations require otherwise – tournament officials will announce any exceptions. Only bass measuring 14 inches or larger in length on the longest starting line, with mouth closed, shall be weighed in.** Any bass that appears to have been mangled, mashed or mauled or otherwise altered will be weighed in and credited only at the discretion of tournament officials. Bass must be caught using legal fishing methods. The tournament committee will furnish specially designed bags, which increase the survival rate, and these bags must be used for weigh in if provided.

**10. Dead Bass Penalty:** A penalty of 8 ounces for each dead bass weighed in will be deducted from the total weight of all legal bass in the sack. Only the tournament director/officials will determine if a bass is counted as live or not.

**11. Short Bass:** Deduction will be made for short bass as well as dead bass. Any bass presented for weigh-in by contestant that fails to measure 14 inches or more, according to the method described above, will be removed from the sack and disallowed. In addition, a one-pound penalty will be given to the overall weighed of the remaining 4 fish. The total responsibility for having short bass in possession at any time will be that of the contestant.

**12. Late Penalty:** Competitors who have not returned the placard/plate to the official checkpoint area as described at the pre-tournament meeting by the appointed time shall be disqualified. There shall be no excuses for tardiness, and in no case shall a competitor be allowed to make up lost time.

**13. Standings and Advancement:** Final standings for each team will be determined by total weight of all bass legally weighed in after penalties are applied and barring protest. **The top 6 Teams will be eligible to advance as 1 Boater and 1 Co-angler with entry paid into the Bass Federation National Semifinal Tournament (NSF).** Should one or both not fish the NSF the Michigan Bass Federation will determine the anglers to replace them and the entries will be forfeited. **ONLY the winning team may be allowed to advance directly to the TBF National Championship as 1 Boater and 1 Co-Angler. There are no substitutions for the National qualification.** Additionally, to advance the winners directly to Nationals, Michigan Bass Federation must achieve a minimum of 50 Active Adult TBF members AND must send a minimum of 6 boats to the current year TBF National Semifinals.

**14. Ties:** In the event of a tie for 6th place (or the last qualifying position), 1<sup>st</sup> tie breaker is number of fish, 2<sup>nd</sup> tie breaker is number of live fish, 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be a one-hour fish off to determine the final boater and non-boater. If there is still a tie after any fish off the winner will be determined by a coin flip. In the event of a tie for any big bass award or any other money prize, money will be split among those anglers.

**15. Rulings:** The tournament director (or tournament officials) and his/their designated appointees shall reserve all rights for rule interpretation and rulings thereof. Decisions of the tournament director are final in all matters and are not subject to appeal. Furthermore, the tournament committee reserves the right to change the date of or the site of any given tournament. Protests must be in writing signed by the protester and filed within 10 minutes of the

conclusion of the weighing of fish. The tournament director has sole authority to deny the eligibility of any person at any time to participate in the tournament.

**16. Pairings:** It will be the responsibility for the anglers to meet. The Michigan Bass Federation will assist in linking individuals to form a team where possible. Boaters are in control of fishing locations and running the front of the boat. (see Boat Operation).

**17. Boat Operation:** Boaters will control the fishing positions in the boat. Boaters will have complete control of boat operation and waters to be fished. At the discretion of the boater either angler can operate the boat. The use of mobile communication devices, including but not limited to, cell phones, marine radios, walkie-talkies, CBs, etc., for communication of fishing information during tournament hours is strictly prohibited. Communications can be used in an emergency, severe weather, breakdowns, to communicate with the tournament director, emergency personal or others strictly for assistance. If boat installed electronics fail, boaters may use cell phone GPS and mapping apps with approval from the tournament director. Co-anglers are not allowed to record GPS waypoints or fishing locations without permission from the boater. If a special circumstance arises that inhibits a contestant's ability to compete, the tournament director may allow the contestant to withdraw from competition and maintain the weight caught to that point. During tournament hours contestants may not obtain or receive assistance from noncompetitors, follow a noncompetitor's boat or participate in the practice of "hole sitting" or the placing of markers by anyone else.

**18. Courtesy Board:** Please measure all bass before they come to the scales. A courtesy board will be provided. Any bass that are doubtful of making the legal length will be measured. **Once bass are presented at the weigh-in tables, only TBF of MI tournament officials will be allowed to handle bass.**

**19. Eligibility:** Participation is open to all participants 16 years of age or older. Proof of age to the satisfaction of tournament officials is the responsibility of the potential contestant. Persons 16 years of age but not having reached the age of majority must also have a signed authorization slip from a parent or legal guardian. **Entry fees are NON-REFUNDABLE after the entry deadline except in the case of an emergency or as determined by the tournament director.**

**20. Registration:** Each team must be preregistered and go through boat check.

**There will be a mandatory pre-tournament meeting following morning check in that one angler from each team must attend.**

**21. Pre-Tournament Practice:** There will be no practice period off-limits.

**22. Liability Insurance:** Liability insurance is required for all boats being used by contestants in Michigan Bass Federation tournaments.

**23. No Wake Zones:** All legal no wake zones and areas are **NO PASS** unless the boat being passed is fishing, is on a different course or gives you verbal permission to pass. This applies to all boats in the same navigation channel. It is the responsibility of each angler to know the local laws and regulations.

**24. Polygraph Test:** Each contestant agrees to submit, by their signature on the official tournament entry form, to a polygraph examination and abide by its conclusion. Failure to pass the examination will result in disqualification. Polygraphs will be used at Michigan Bass Federations' sole discretion and the determination of the meaning of the results will be made solely to Michigan Bass Federation.

**25. Post Tournament Meeting:** There will be a mandatory meeting for the top 6 teams to go over Semi Final Information and photos.