

VIRGINIA BEACH TUNA TOURNAMENT RULES 2026

1. RULES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- ▼ It is the responsibility of each captain, crew, and angler to read, understand and abide by the Tournament's rules, including, but not limited to, any special instructions that may be announced during the Captain's Meeting at which at least one representative from each team must be present.
- ▼ The Captain's Meeting takes place Wednesday, **June 24th, 2026 at 7:30 PM** on the point at Southside Marina, 416 Southside Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23451. Rules are subject to change. Final instructions are given at the Captain's Meeting.

2. PERMITS AND LICENSES

- ▼ Registered boats and anglers must comply with all Federal and State fishing laws regarding licenses, size limits, bag limits and any other fishing regulations that may apply.
- ▼ For information regarding Federal HMS permits refer to hmspermits.noaa.gov/ or call 888-872-8862.
- ▼ For information regarding Virginia State Saltwater fishing licenses refer to dwr.virginia.gov/licenses/ or call 866-721-6911.
- ▼ For information regarding the Virginia Fisherman Identification Program refer to mrc.virginia.gov/FIP

3. OFFICIAL CLOCK

- ▼ Official tournament time is continuous GPS time and starts at **7:00 AM Thursday, June 25th, 2026**.

4. FISHING DATES AND TIMES

- ▼ Teams may fish one of the three available fishing days, Captain's choice. Tournament fishing days are **Thursday-June 25th, Friday-June 26th, and Saturday-June 27th**.
- ▼ Fishing hours are from **7:00 AM to 3:00 PM** on all three days.
- ▼ **EACH BOAT AND REGISTERED PARTICIPANT (CAPTAIN, MATE, OR ANGLER) MAY FISH THE TOURNAMENT ONLY ONE DAY.**
- ▼ No lines or teasers may be in the water before the official start or after the official end of tournament fishing. Any fish hooked and reported to a Committee Boat prior to lines out may be fought until caught or released.

5. LAY DAYS

- ▼ You must submit your lay days via the Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament App **before 7:00 AM** on the days you choose to lay.
- ▼ **FOR IPHONE USERS DOWNLOAD THE APP HERE:** <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/virginia-beach-tuna-tournament/id1620436145>
- ▼ **FOR ANDROID USERS DOWNLOAD THE APP HERE:** <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.reeltimeapps.vbtuna&hl=en&gl=US&pli=1>
- ▼ **IF, ON ANY FISHING DAY, THE TOURNAMENT IS NOT NOTIFIED THAT A BOAT IS LAYING, THE BOAT IS RECORDED AS FISHING THAT DAY. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.**

6. TOURNAMENT COMMUNICATIONS

- ▼ Official Tournament Text/Google Voice Number: 757-204-1148
- ▼ Tournament Officials and Committee Boats monitor VHF Channel 74.

7. WEATHER, CANCELLATION, AND WITHDRAW POLICY

- ▼ Weather related decisions are at the sole discretion of each Captain. Participants enter at their own risk and discretion and accept full responsibility for the following: their boat, equipment, crew, anglers, and guests. The Tournament Committee does not declare a "weather" day in the event of severe weather conditions.
- ▼ In the event of a natural disaster that makes fishing impossible, or no eligible fish are weighed, the tournament will have a drawing from the registered tournament boats to award the prize money. The drawing will be held at the tent at Southside Marina, **Saturday, June 27th, 2026 at 9:00 PM**. A team representative must be present to win. If no registered team member is present within three minutes of his or her team's number being drawn, the Tournament will keep drawing until a winner is selected. In the event that a drawing is necessary, prize money is split 60%, 30%, 10%.
- ▼ There will be no refunds from the tournament after the early entry deadline on **Monday, June 15th, 2026**. If you choose to withdraw prior to the early entry deadline, the tournament will refund any calcuttas but retain the base entry fee.

8. BOUNDARIES

- ▼ Boats may leave from any inlet in Virginia, but must return to Rudee Inlet to weigh fish.
- ▼ The Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament boundaries are 85 NAUTICAL miles from Cape Henry Buoy RW "CH" (formerly "CBJ"). All fish must be hooked within these boundaries, but may be fought outside of the boundaries once hooked.

9. EQUIPMENT AND ANGLING RULES

- ▼ IGFA Saltwater Equipment and Angling rules apply, unless stated otherwise in these rules or at the Captain's Meeting. Copies of the IGFA rules are available during registration and also available here: igfa.org/international-angling-rules/
- ▼ This is a trolling tournament; the boats must remain in motion while fishing.
- ▼ **THE FOLLOWING FISHING METHODS ARE NOT ALLOWED: LIVE BAIT, CHUNKING, KITE FISHING, CHUMMING OR THE USE OF GREENSTICKS.**
- ▼ Spreader bars are permitted. Planers are permitted, even with wire line. Planer bridles are permitted and will be considered part of the leader. IGFA leader length rules apply except when used with a planer.
- ▼ Boats are permitted to troll ONLY eight rods, however, additional hookless teasers are permitted.
- ▼ Omnidirectional sonar use is **NOT PERMITTED** by any tournament boat/participant between **Thursday, June 25th, 2026 at 12:00AM & Saturday, June 27th, 2026 at 3:00PM**.
- ▼ This is a boat tournament. Any crew member may set the hook and fight a fish OR pass the rod immediately to one other angler. After the angler has taken the rod, the fish must be fought unassisted until boated. A rod may not be passed more than one time. Fighting a fish from a rod holder is prohibited. All crew members are considered registered anglers, including the captain and any mates.

10. WEIGHING FISH

- ▼ All fish must be weighed at the Official Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament Weigh Station at The Virginia Beach Fishing Center in Rudee Inlet. The scales open at 4:00 PM and close at 7:30 PM on all three days of fishing. A boat's fish may be weighed after 7:30 PM on Thursday or Friday ONLY (not Saturday) under these circumstances: if the boat was fighting a fish after lines out, in case of mechanical problems, or due to an unavoidable delay as determined by the Tournament Committee. The Tournament Committee must be notified of the situation prior to 7:30 PM.
- ▼ The tournament reserves the right to add an additional weigh station should circumstances warrant.
- ▼ Fish are weighed to the tenth of a pound.
- ▼ Eligible TUNA species are: Yellowfin, Bluefin, Big Eye, True Long Fin Albacore, and Blackfin. Dolphin and Wahoo are eligible to score in a separate category not affecting the aggregate tuna weight.
- ▼ This is an aggregate weight format tournament. Scoring is based on the total weight of up to three tunas (any combination of the eligible species).
- ▼ The tournament will weigh what you select as your top 3 tuna, one dolphin, and one wahoo. If any of your top 3 tuna are not yellowfin, the tournament will weigh up to 3 additional yellowfin per boat to accommodate the yellowfin stringer calcutta (regardless of entry in the yellowfin calcutta). It is up to the crew to decide which fish they choose to weigh before they head to the scales.
- ▼ The Tournament will make an exception for lady and junior anglers. Each lady and junior angler (16 and under) per boat may weigh ONE additional fish (tuna, dolphin, or wahoo) however, since these are trophy only categories, the additional fish caught will not be counted as part of your total aggregate weight. The lady angler and junior angler awards will be presented to the largest tuna weighed in each category. If no tuna are weighed, the award will be presented to the largest dolphin/wahoo.
- ▼ Culling fish is prohibited. Teams may practice catch and release in hopes of catching a larger fish, but disposing of a dead fish to replace it with a larger fish is strictly prohibited.
- ▼ Boats are lined up to weigh in the order in which they arrive. If a boat arrives in line before the close of the scales, they are allowed to weigh their fish. A boat will be defined as "in line" by entering Rudee Inlet.



- ▼ All fish being weighed must come to the scales by water on the boat on which they were caught. If your boat cannot get to the scales due to height restrictions, contact the Tournament Committee prior to fishing to make provisions for weighing your fish. In this case, the fish must remain in the boat and can only be offloaded when a tournament official is present.
- ▼ If your boat is docked at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center adjacent to the scales and you wish to offload your fish from your slip, a tournament official must be present and the Weighmaster must be notified.
- ▼ Mutilated fish will not be weighed. IGFA rules apply regarding mutilated fish.
- ▼ The decision to reweigh a fish must be made while the fish is still hanging.
- ▼ At least one team member must remain with the fish for the entire weigh-in process.
- ▼ The weighmaster and VBTT Officials reserve the right to refuse to weigh any fish that does not meet tournament requirements. **DECISIONS MADE BY THE TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE ARE FINAL.**

WEIGH STATION NOTES

- ▼ On your tournament fishing day, if you do NOT plan to weigh any fish, please call the weigh station on VHF channel 74, or call/text 757-204-1148 to let the weighmaster know. It helps us to account for the boats we have not heard from and to plan accordingly.
- ▼ If there is a line when approaching the weigh station, call the weighmaster on VHF channel 74 to see how to proceed.

11. TOURNAMENT ENTRY FEES & CASH AWARDS

▼ Entry fees and Calcuttas may be paid by check, cash or credit card. If a credit card is used to pay a **3% surcharge will be added**. Cash awards are based on the number of boats entered in the Tournament. The Tournament will retain \$400 from each \$800 entry to offset the cost of producing the Tournament. The remaining \$400.00 of each entry fee will be paid as follows:

- ▼ Aggregate Tuna: 1st Place-55%; 2nd Place-25%; 3rd Place-10% (If only 2 places-1st Place-60%; 2nd Place-30%; If only one place-1st Place-90%)
- ▼ Top Dolphin-5%; Top Wahoo-5%

▼ In the event that NO eligible tuna are caught, the Tournament proceeds as a Dolphin and/or Wahoo tournament. The Dolphin and/or Wahoo aggregate weight will replace the aggregate tuna weight in the Tournament and optional Calcutta award distribution. As the rules are written, each boat may weigh one dolphin and one wahoo. This will stay the same and the Dolphin/Wahoo aggregate will be determined from: ONE dolphin **AND** ONE wahoo, or ONE dolphin **OR** ONE wahoo.

▼ Dolphin/Wahoo Award protocol: If no eligible Dolphin are weighed, the prize money allocated to that award is added to the Top Wahoo Award and vice versa. If no eligible dolphin or wahoo are weighed, the 10% allocated from the base tournament entry to those awards is added to the 1st Place Aggregate Tuna. In the event that no qualifying Dolphin/Wahoo are weighed in the Dolphin/Wahoo Calcutta, a drawing will be held for all participants in the Dolphin/Wahoo calcutta. Winner takes all.

▼ In the the event that a small boat calcutta participant does not weigh a tuna, the prize money allocated in that calcutta will follow the same protocol as the tournament. If a small boat does not weigh a tuna, a dolphin, or a wahoo, a drawing will be held for all participants in the small boat calcutta. Winner takes all.

12. OPTIONAL CALCUTTAS

▼ THERE ARE **SEVEN OPTIONAL CALCUTTAS** THAT TEAMS MAY CHOOSE TO ENTER, OR NOT, IN ADDITION TO THE BASE ENTRY.

▼ The calcuttas are incremental. You must enter Level 1 before you can enter Level 2, and Level 1 & 2 before you can enter Level 3 (A or B) and so on through Level 7.

Level 1	\$100	Single Heaviest Tuna	Winner Takes All
Level 2	\$250	Heaviest Dolphin and/or Wahoo	Winner Takes All (split if both species weighed, see Dolphin/Wahoo Award protocol under Rule 11)
Level 3A	\$250	Heaviest Aggregate Weight	Split 50%, 30%, 20%
Level 3B (Small Boat)	\$250	Heaviest Aggregate Weight	Split 50%, 30%, 20%
Level 4	\$500	Heaviest Yellowfin Stringer	Split 50%, 30%, 20% (total weight of up to 3 yellowfin)
Level 5	\$500	Heaviest Aggregate Weight	Split 50%, 30%, 20%
Level 6	\$1000	Heaviest Aggregate Weight	Split 50%, 30%, 20%
Level 7	\$2000	Heaviest Aggregate Weight	Split 50%, 30%, 20%

SMALL BOAT ELIGIBILITY

▼ A small boat shall be defined as ANY boat with a factory listed LOA (length overall) of 34'0" or less. All other tournament rules apply.

13. BREAKING TIES

▼ Ties between the aggregate weight of tuna are broken by the weight of the heaviest single fish in the group. For example, If Team A weighs three tuna at 60 lbs., 50 lbs., and 40 lbs. their aggregate weight is 150 lbs. If Team B weighs three tuna at 70 lbs., 50 lbs., and 30 lbs. their aggregate weight is also 150 lbs., but Team B would win the tie because their heaviest single fish weighs more than Team A's. If there is still a tie, the second heaviest fish is considered, then the third.

▼ If there is a tie in the dolphin or wahoo categories, or in the Level 1 optional calcutta, the prize money is split evenly between the teams that are tied.

14. POLYGRAPH EXAMINATION

▼ By virtue of signing the entry form, registered participants agree to submit to a polygraph examination if requested to do so by VBTT Officials. Failure to comply will result in disqualification of that Participant and, at the discretion of VBTT Officials, the Participant's entire team. Disqualified participants/teams or participants/teams that fail a polygraph examination forfeit any and all entry money, prizes or prize money, and may be refused entry to future VBTT tournaments. The decision of The Rules Committee is final.

15. PROTESTS

▼ Registered Participants may submit a protest against any fish entered. Protests must be submitted in writing to The Tournament Committee by 9:00 AM on the day following the catch of the disputed fish, except on the final day of fishing in which the protest must be submitted by 8:00 PM. Protests must be accompanied by a \$250 deposit, which will be refunded only if the protest is upheld. The Rules Committee, at their discretion, may use a polygraph examination to reach a decision. By virtue of signing the entry form Registered Participants agree to the final decision of The Rules Committee. The Tournament reserves the right to inspect any entered boat without notice.

16. LEGAL

▼ By entering the Tournament, all anglers, crews and guests, hereinafter referred to as Participant(s), agree to, and understand the following:

▼ THAT offshore fishing has numerous obvious and non-obvious inherent risks that are always present in such an activity regardless of safety precautions used. Related injuries can be severe requiring hospitalization and resulting in more lasting residual effects than injuries in other activities. All participants acknowledge such risks and hereby freely assume responsibility for their activities.

▼ **PARTICIPANTS AGREE THAT:** in consideration of the Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament and Sinclair Communications, hereinafter referred to as the Tournament, allowing participation in this activity under the terms set forth herein and in the Tournament rules participants on behalf of themselves, and on behalf of their heirs, administrators, personal representatives, or assigns, do agree to hold harmless, release, and discharge the Tournament, Sinclair Communications, the hosting marinas, their owners, agents, employees, officers, directors, representatives, assigns, members, owners of premises, affiliated organizations, insurers, and others acting on their behalf, hereinafter collectively referred to as Associate(s), of and from all claims, demands, causes of action, and legal liability, whether the same be known or unknown, anticipated or unanticipated, due to the Tournament and/or its Associate's ordinary negligence and participants do further agree that except in the event of the Tournament's gross and willful negligence, participants shall bring no claims, demands, actions and causes of action, and/or litigation against the Tournament and its Associates, as stated above in this clause, for any economic and/or non-economic losses due to bodily injury, death, or property damage sustained in relation to the operation of the Tournament. By entering the Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament, Participants, and their guests or other attendees, do allow their person/image to be photographed, videotaped, and/or filmed for the purpose of being used in any marketing efforts desired by the Tournament. This is an open tournament. The Tournament Committee reserves the right to deny entry to any boat, team, or person. Decisions made by the Tournament Committee are final.



Rules were written by Tournament Control and are revised annually by the Virginia Beach Tuna Tournament

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