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**VFW FISHING TOURNAMENT RULES 2024**

**Amended 01/15/2025**

1. **REGISTRATION**

All boats and anglers, to include Captains and mates, must be registered and entry fees paid to qualify for prizes (Including Calcutta). Any boat not previously registered, can register from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM Friday June 14th at the VFW. Any boat may be substituted prior to the tournament, but must be registered with the tournament committee prior to fishing.

1. **CAPTAINS MEETING**

At least one person from each boat should attend and is responsible for knowing the rules including any changes that will be announced at the captains meeting on Friday evening June 14th 7:00 P.M. at the VFW.

1. **FISHING DAYS \*\*\*\*\*\*\* See Addendum # 1**

Saturday, June 21st andSunday, June 22nd are the available days to fish. Captains, Crew and Anglers may fish **BOTH DAYS.**

1. **FISHING TIMES**

7 A.M. to 3 P.M. Saturday **and** Sunday. No lines or teasers or bait (to include live bait, dead bait, chunks or chum) in the water prior to 7 A.M. A fish hooked before 3 P.M. can be played but must be reported to (1) a committee boat or (2) another boat by 3 P.M. The fish may be played until boated but must reach the weigh-in dock no later than 4 P.M.

1. **WEIGH IN**

Weigh-in 2P.M.-4P.M. at Stock Island Yacht Club and Marina (Key West) or Big Pine Key Resort 33000 Overseas Hwy Big Pine Key, FL

Fish may be brought to the scales by either boat or motor vehicle. Scales will close precisely at 4:00 P.M. (TMobile Time). An angler (with fish) in line at 4:00 P.M. that is visible and acknowledged by the weighmaster will be allowed to weigh fish. Fish that are freshly mutilated by other fish or boat (Propellers, etc.) are not allowed to be weighed in. The weighmaster has the discretion to eliminate a fish for mutilation.

1. **REGULATIONS**

It is the captains’ and anglers’ responsibility to know and comply with all federal and state regulations including licensing requirements, current recreational size and recreational bag limits and circle hook requirements. All anglers must meet current federal and state licensing requirements.

Winning fish in each category, Dolphin, Wahoo, Tuna (Black fin, Skipjack(Requires an HMS permit) or Yellowfin),

Grouper (Black or Gag(Season closes on June 15th, no GAG on 16th) or Red), and Snapper (Yellowtail, Mutton, Mangrove, or Lane),

will be determined by heaviest weight. In the event of a tie, the fish that was weighed in earliest will be the winner.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Tournament channel is TBA at the Captain’s meeting.

 **8)** **ROD AND REEL RULES**

This is a rod and reel, hook and line tournament. The following practices are illegal in this tournament: (a) use of hand line or rope or cable directly attached to the line, leader, or lure without a release device, (b) spearing, harpooning, free-gaffing or shooting a fish (with a spear gun or firearm), (c) use of electric reels, winches or “bandit” type reels, (d) transferring fish from one boat to another.

1. **PRIZES \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* See Addendums #2, #3,#4, and #5**

There are cash prizes for the heaviest fish in each category

BOAT AWARDS.

Super Prize Dolphin $ 50,000.00 -Heaviest Dolphin Over 50 lbs

1st place Dolphin $ 5,000.00

2nd place Dolphin $ 3,000.00

3rd place Dolphin $ 1,500.00

1st place Wahoo $ 600.00

1st place Tuna $ 600.00

1st place Snapper $ 600.00

1st place Grouper $ 600.00

VFW SLAM\* $1000.00

4 Dolphin Aggregate\* $1000.00

ANGLER AWARDS

1st place Pee-wee $ 400.00 (Age 10 and under)

1st place Junior Angler $ 400.00 (Age 11-15)

1st place Lady Angler $ 400.00

1st place Active Duty Angler $ 400.00 (U.S. Armed Forces)

1st place Veteran Angler $ 400.00 (veteran US Armed Forces, not active duty/Reserve

1st place Senior Angler $ 400.00 (age 65 or older)

1st place First Responder $ 400.00 (EMT, Paramedic, Firefighter, Police Officer)

 **$ 66,700**

**Any and all anglers (Including Captains and Mates) on boats winning a prize above, must submit to a polygraph exam if asked to do so.** No one under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs will be allowed to be polygraphed. Failure to submit to, and pass the polygraph exam will result in disqualification of vessel and catch and forfeiture of any and all prizes including Calcutta.

In the event that no fish are caught in one or more categories, that prize will go back into the prize pool and be distributed proportionately among other winners.

If there are no qualifying fish caught in any category, winners will be drawn for 1st (35%), 2nd (25%), 3rd (20%), 4th (15%), 5th (5%).

1. **PROTESTS**

All protests must be submitted prior to 6PM on the day of fishing. All protests must be written and accompanied by $200.00 which will be refunded if the protest is upheld. All decisions by the tournament committee are final.

1. **AWARDS CEREMONY**

There will be a dinner and awards ceremony held, starting at 6:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 16th at The American Legion 5610 College Rd Key West, Florida.

1. **PRIZE DISTRIBUTION**

Calcutta prizes are not subject to limitation. (Example: angler who wins heaviest dolphin is also eligible for Calcutta(s), if entered.) See Calcutta addendum. Sharing and/or Culling the catch in order for other anglers in a crew to win a prize is not allowed.

1. **VIOLATIONS**

Any violation(s) will result in the entire catch being disqualified and there will be no refund of entry (to include Calcutta fees).

 ADDENDUM # 1 - The intent of the rule change allows all entrants to fish both days with all legal, qualifying fish to be entered for prizes.

 ADDENDUM # 2- The intent is to differentiate between Boat Award and Angler Award. Boat Award means that any number of anglers including captain and mate(s) may handle the rod, handle and adjust the reel, and­ fight the fish. The fish will be eligible for a Boat Award only in the five eligible species. For the Angler Award, the angler must fight the fish the entire time. Upon the fish striking the bait/lure, any other crew member may remove the rod from the rod holder, and hand it to the angler. At that point the angler who receives the rod is the “angler of record”. Should he or she hand the rod off to another angler, allow the rod or reel to be touched by anyone else, that fish will be eligible only for the Boat Award. In the interest of good sportsmanship, we ask all participants to understand and comply with this rule.

 ADDENDUM # 3 – If a Super Prize Dolphin is caught, the next 3 heaviest Dolphin will be the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prize winners in the Dolphin category.

 ADDENDUM # 4- VFW SLAM winner will be the BOAT with the heaviest combined weight of 3 of the 5 eligible species.

 ADDENDUM # 5 - 4 Dolphin aggregate winner will be the BOAT with the heaviest combined weight of 4 Dolphin including at least 1 bull and 1 cow.