



2ND ANNUAL BATTLE FOR THE BUCKLE FISHING TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES

Benefiting Westonwood Ranch (501c3 non profit organization)

September 23–27, 2026

Destin, Florida

1. TOURNAMENT PURPOSE

The Battle for the Buckle Fishing Tournament is a competitive offshore fishing tournament benefiting Westonwood Ranch. 100% of the net proceeds go directly to support the mission and programs of Westonwood Ranch dedicated to creating opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities in Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

All captains, anglers, crews, and registered participants are expected to conduct themselves in a safe, professional, and sportsmanlike manner. Participation in the Tournament constitutes acceptance of these Official Tournament Rules and the decisions of Tournament officials.

2. ENTRY FEE & REGISTRATION

The Tournament entry fee is: \$1,000 PER BOAT

The entry fee provides Tournament registration and eligibility for the applicable Tournament prize categories.

Each boat registration also includes five Tournament shirts. Requested shirt sizes may not be guaranteed for boats registering after September 1, 2026. Boats must register on or before September 23rd, 2026

Registration information is available at:

www.westonwood.org/battleforthebucklefishingtournament

Questions regarding tournament rules may be directed to:

Joe Donovan, Tournament Director

(850) 572-3695

3. TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 Captain's Dinner at Harbor Docks

Registration: 4:00 PM–6:00 PM

Captain's Dinner & Calcutta: 6:00 PM

Captain's Meeting: 7:00 PM

At least one representative from every registered boat should attend the Captain's Meeting.



Final fishing instructions, communications procedures, weigh-in procedures, and any rule clarifications will be announced at the Captain's Meeting.

Thursday, September 24 – Saturday, September 26, 2026

Tournament Fishing Days

Daily fishing will take place Thursday through Saturday.

Daily Weigh-Ins: Harbor Docks 5pm-8pm

Official Lines-In: Sign out at Captain's Meeting

Official Lines-Out: Boats must be inside the Destin Harbor by 7:30pm

Weigh-in closing time: Must be present at the dock by 8pm.

Sunday, September 27, 2026 Awards Brunch

Tournament winners and awards will be presented Sunday Sept 27th 9am-11am.

Awards presentation details will be communicated by Tournament officials.

4. ELIGIBILITY

1. The Tournament is open to properly registered boats, captains, anglers, and crews.
 2. Each participating boat must complete registration and pay the \$1,000 entry fee before fishing.
 3. All anglers competing for Tournament prizes must fish aboard a properly registered Tournament boat.
 4. Participants are responsible for possessing all licenses, permits, vessel documentation, and other credentials required by applicable federal and state law.
 5. Registration constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of these Official Tournament Rules.
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5. OFFICIAL FISHING DAYS

The official fishing days are:

- Thursday, September 24, 2026
- Friday, September 25, 2026
- Saturday, September 26, 2026

Specific fishing hours will be announced at the Captain's Meeting.



No bait, lure, teaser, dredge, or other fishing device may be deployed before the official Lines-In announcement. At Lines-Out, fishing must cease except that an angler actively fighting a fish hooked before Lines-Out may continue fighting that fish until it is caught, released, or lost.

6. WEATHER & SEA CONDITIONS

The captain of each participating vessel is solely responsible for determining whether conditions are safe for the vessel and crew.

The Tournament's decision to conduct fishing does not constitute a representation that conditions are safe for any particular vessel.

Each captain retains complete authority and responsibility for determining whether to:

- Leave port;
- Participate in a fishing day;
- Continue fishing;
- Seek shelter; or
- Return to port.

Tournament officials reserve the right to postpone, modify, shorten, or cancel fishing because of severe weather, unsafe conditions, emergencies, governmental action, or other extraordinary circumstances. Safety shall take priority over competition.

7. FISHING BOUNDARIES

Official Tournament fishing boundaries, if applicable, will be announced at the Captain's Meeting. All boats must comply with any geographic restrictions established by Tournament officials. Tournament officials may request GPS or other vessel-position information when reasonably necessary to investigate compliance with Tournament rules.

8. FISHING RULES

Unless specifically modified by these Tournament Rules or instructions issued at the Captain's Meeting, accepted offshore sportfishing and International Game Fish Association (IGFA) angling principles will govern Tournament fishing. The Tournament is a rod-and-reel sportfishing competition. Fish must be hooked, fought, caught, and/or released in a sporting manner. No fish may be transferred between vessels.

Assistance from another vessel in fighting, boating, or releasing a fish is prohibited.



Harpoons, explosives, firearms, or other non-sporting methods of taking Tournament fish are prohibited. All fishing must comply with applicable federal and Florida fisheries laws.

9. ELIGIBLE PRIZE CATEGORIES

The 2026 Battle for the Buckle Fishing Tournament will award prizes in the following categories:

- WHITE MARLIN Winner Take All — \$10,000
- CATCH & RELEASE Winner Take All — \$2,000
- HEAVIEST TUNA Winner Take All — \$2,000
- HEAVIEST WAHOO Winner Take All — \$2,000
- HEAVIEST DOLPHIN Winner Take All — \$2,000
- JR. ANGLER YOUTH Winner Take All — \$2,000

Unless otherwise specifically stated, each category is winner take all.

10. WHITE MARLIN DIVISION

The White Marlin Division carries a guaranteed Tournament prize of:

\$10,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL

The winning White Marlin shall be the heaviest eligible White Marlin officially weighed during the Tournament.

The fish must satisfy all applicable federal requirements and the Tournament minimum qualifying requirements announced at the Captain's Meeting.

Tournament officials strongly encourage the release of White Marlin that are unlikely to contend for the Tournament prize.

11. CATCH & RELEASE DIVISION

The Tournament will award: **\$2,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL**

.Eligible species, release points, documentation requirements, and tie-breaking procedures will be confirmed at the Captain's Meeting.

White Marlin 5 points

Blue Marlin 2 points

Sailfish 1 points

Unidentified Billfish 1 point



A release must be properly documented and reported according to procedures established by Tournament officials. Tournament officials may require photographs, video, time information, catch reports, or other reasonable evidence to verify species and release.

12. HEAVIEST TUNA

The Tournament will award: \$2,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL to the eligible angler/boat weighing the heaviest qualifying Tuna during the Tournament. Eligible Tuna species and any applicable Tournament minimum weight will be announced at the Captain's Meeting.

13. HEAVIEST WAHOO

The Tournament will award: \$2,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL to the eligible angler/boat weighing the heaviest qualifying Wahoo during the Tournament.

14. HEAVIEST DOLPHIN

The Tournament will award: \$2,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL to the eligible angler/boat weighing the heaviest qualifying Dolphin/Mahi-Mahi during the Tournament.

.JR. ANGLER YOUTH DIVISION

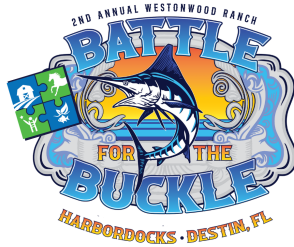
The Tournament will award: \$2,000 — WINNER TAKE ALL in the Jr. Angler Youth Division.

The qualifying age for a Jr. Angler and the method used to determine the winning Junior Angler will be announced or confirmed by Tournament officials before fishing begins.

A Junior Angler must meet the Tournament's age requirement on the first official fishing day.

16. DAILY WHITE MARLIN JACKPOT

A separate: \$1,000 DAILY WHITE MARLIN JACKPOT will be offered in conjunction with the Tournament. The Daily White Marlin Jackpot will operate as a Jackpot-Style Calcutta conducted at the Captain's Dinner.



10% of the Calcutta supports Westonwood Ranch.

Participation in the Calcutta is separate from the Tournament's base entry unless otherwise announced.

Specific jackpot eligibility, payout, rollover, tie, and daily qualifying procedures will be explained at the Captain's Dinner and Captain's Meeting.

A boat must be properly entered in the applicable Calcutta before fishing to be eligible for its prize money.

17. MINIMUM QUALIFYING SIZES

All retained fish must comply with federal and state law.

Tournament officials may establish Tournament minimum qualifying sizes or weights that are greater than applicable legal minimums.

Final Tournament minimums will be announced at the Captain's Meeting.

A fish that does not satisfy the applicable Tournament minimum is not eligible for Tournament prize money.

18. BILLFISH CONSERVATION

The Battle for the Buckle Fishing Tournament supports responsible billfish conservation.

Captains and anglers are strongly encouraged to release billfish unless they reasonably believe the fish has an opportunity to qualify for a Tournament prize.

A billfish that does not satisfy applicable legal and Tournament retention requirements must be released in accordance with applicable law.

19. WEIGH-IN

All official Tournament weigh-ins will take place at Harbor Docks, Destin FL from 5pm-8pm.

Boats must be back to the dock not later than 8:00pm

The Tournament's official scale and Official Weighmaster shall determine Tournament weight.

Only the weight recorded by Tournament officials will be recognized for prize purposes.

Tournament officials may inspect, photograph, measure, or otherwise examine any fish submitted for competition.



20. CONDITION OF FISH

All fish presented for weighing must be in a fresh and natural condition.

Tournament officials may reject any fish that appears to have been:

- Mutilated in a manner inconsistent with normal capture;
- Altered to increase weight;
- Improperly preserved;
- Previously caught;
- Transferred between vessels; or
- Caught or handled in a manner inconsistent with Tournament rules.

Tournament officials may consult fisheries professionals or other qualified experts when necessary.

21. TIES

For weight-based categories, if two qualifying fish have the identical official weight, the fish officially weighed first will receive the higher placement unless a different tie-breaking procedure is announced at the Captain's Meeting.

Tie-breaking procedures for the Catch & Release and Jr. Angler divisions will be announced before fishing begins.

22. CATCH & RELEASE DOCUMENTATION

All releases submitted for Tournament credit must be reported according to the procedures announced at the Captain's Meeting.

Tournament officials may require:

- Boat name;
- Angler name;
- Species;
- Time of release;
- Captain or mate verification;
- Video evidence; and/or
- Other reasonable documentation.
- Tie is based on time

Tournament officials shall make the final determination regarding whether a release qualifies for Tournament points or prizes.



23. PROTESTS

Any participant alleging a Tournament Rule violation must promptly notify Tournament officials. A formal protest may be required in writing and must identify:

1. The boat or participant involved;
2. The alleged Rule violation;
3. The relevant facts;
4. Available witnesses or evidence; and
5. The person submitting the protest.

Tournament officials may establish a protest deadline and protest deposit at the Captain's Meeting.

Tournament officials may investigate suspected violations independently whether or not a formal protest has been submitted.

24. TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS

Tournament officials shall have final authority to interpret and enforce these Rules.

Officials may review any reasonably relevant evidence, including:

- Official weigh-in records;
- Catch reports;
- Photographs;
- Video;
- GPS information;
- Vessel tracking information;
- Fishing equipment;
- Witness statements;
- Electronic records; and
- Other information relevant to Tournament eligibility.

Decisions of Tournament officials concerning eligibility, scoring, rule interpretation, and prize determination shall be final.



25. DISQUALIFICATION

A fish, angler, boat, or Tournament entry may be disqualified for violation of these Rules.

Grounds for disqualification include, but are not limited to:

- Fishing outside permitted hours;
- Fishing outside established Tournament boundaries;
- Receiving prohibited assistance;
- Presenting an ineligible fish;
- Falsifying catch or release information;
- Manipulating the weight of a fish;
- Transferring a fish between vessels;
- Refusing a reasonable Tournament inspection;
- Providing materially false information to Tournament officials; or
- Conduct inconsistent with fair competition or good sportsmanship.

Tournament officials may determine whether a violation results in disqualification of a fish, angler, fishing day, prize category, or entire boat entry.

26. COMPLIANCE WITH LAW

All participants must comply with applicable:

- Federal fisheries regulations;
- Florida fisheries regulations;
- Licensing requirements;
- Permitting requirements;
- Vessel safety laws; and
- Other applicable laws and regulations.

Nothing in these Tournament Rules authorizes the possession or retention of a fish prohibited by law.

If a governmental requirement is stricter than a Tournament Rule, the governmental requirement controls.

An illegally caught or possessed fish is automatically ineligible.



27. PAYMENT & REGISTRATION

Registration payment may be made by check or credit card.

Checks should be made payable to:

Westonwood Ranch
4390 State Hwy 20 W
Freeport, FL 32439

Completed registration materials may be mailed to the address above or emailed to:

WESTONWOODRANCH@GMAIL.COM A 3.5% processing fee applies to credit card payments.

28. HOLD HARMLESS & ASSUMPTION OF RISK

All boats, captains, anglers, and crews acknowledge that offshore sportfishing and boating involve inherent risks, including the risk of serious injury or death.

As a condition of participation, all participants must agree to the Tournament's Hold Harmless Release contained in the official registration materials.

Participants agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Westonwood Ranch, its directors, and employees as provided in the official Tournament registration and release.

The signed registration release shall govern the participant's acknowledgment and agreement regarding these matters.

29. PHOTOGRAPHY & MEDIA PERMISSION

By executing the Tournament registration and release, participants grant Westonwood Ranch permission to use their name, boat name, photographs, and/or video for advertising and marketing as provided in the official Tournament registration materials.

Tournament participants should expect Tournament activities, catches, weigh-ins, awards, and related events to be photographed or recorded.

30. TOURNAMENT AUTHORITY

Tournament officials reserve the right to interpret these Rules and resolve circumstances not specifically addressed herein in a manner intended to protect:

- Fair competition;
- Participant safety;
- Tournament integrity;



- Sportsmanship; and
- Responsible fisheries conservation.

Tournament officials may correct administrative or scoring errors and make reasonable modifications necessitated by weather, safety concerns, governmental action, emergencies, or changes in applicable fisheries regulations.

Material changes will be communicated to registered captains.

31. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Registration and participation in the 2026 Battle for the Buckle Fishing Tournament constitute acknowledgment that the captain, anglers, and crew have read, understand, and agree to comply with these Official Tournament Rules.

TOURNAMENT CONTACT

For Rules

Contact Tournament Chair

Joe Donovan

(850) 572-3695

