

NORTH FLORIDA SWORDFISH CHALLENGE

Tournament Rules · 2026 Edition

June 11 – July 31, 2026 · 51 days · Atlantic Ocean

Print and bring offshore for reference. Updated through May 1, 2026.

QUICK REFERENCE

Tournament window	June 11 – July 31, 2026
Captain's meeting	June 2, 2026 · 7:00 p.m. · NEFMA Clubhouse, St. Augustine FL
Entry fee	\$600 through May 31 · \$700 from June 2 (paid online)
Calcutta fees	Cash or check, due at the captain's meeting
Periods per boat	2 total — any combination of day or night, declared in advance
Daytime / nighttime	8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. · 8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
Boundaries	29°25.000'N – 30°55.000'N · Atlantic only
Lines / hooks / tackle	6 lines max · 2 hooks per line · 1 bait · recreational buoys reel-attached only
Min size	50 inches fork-to-jaw
Declaration deadline	8 p.m. night before · text 904-558-5900 + 954-366-3368 with date + period
Weigh-in window	10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Weigh stations (default)	Beamish Custom Tackle (St. Augustine) · Stellar Marine Services (Jacksonville)
Weigh station (reserved)	NEFMA Clubhouse — large fish only, weigh time per tournament discretion
Protest deadline	August 1, 12:00 p.m. · \$600 fee, refunded if upheld

FULL RULES

01. Event Dates

June 11 – July 31, 2026.

02. Eligibility

Recreational vessels with HMS permit. Florida saltwater licensed crew. No commercial entries. Committee members are eligible to fish.

03. Registration & Entry

General Tournament entry: \$600 through May 31, \$700 from June 2 — paid online at registration via Square. Optional Calcutta side pots: Two-Fish Aggregate \$500, Daytime \$300, Nighttime \$300, Biggest Pomfret \$100. Calcutta fees are due in CASH OR CHECK at the captain's meeting on June 2 (no online payment for Calcuttas). No retroactive Calcutta entries after lines-in.

04. Declarations

Text BOTH 904-558-5900 AND 954-366-3368 before 8:00 p.m. the night before fishing. Declaration MUST include: boat name, captain, the specific calendar date, and the period (Day, Night, or back-to-back Day+Night). If you intend to fish back-to-back day-then-night, you must declare BOTH periods at the time of declaration — you cannot decide to extend into a back-to-back period while offshore or after the declaration deadline. Undeclare deadlines: day-fishing declarations must be undeclared by 8:00 a.m. on the declared morning; night-fishing declarations must be undeclared by 8:00 p.m. on the declared night. One free undeclare per boat per tournament. Subsequent undeclares are subject to committee review.

05. Fishing Periods Per Boat

Each registered boat may fish a maximum of 2 fishing periods during the 51-day tournament window. A period is either a daytime window (8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.) or a nighttime window (8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). Allowed combinations: two daytime periods, two nighttime periods, one of each on different days, OR a back-to-back day-then-night counted as 2 periods (must be declared in advance per Rule 4). Boats may NOT fish more than 2 periods total.

06. Boundaries

29°25.000'N to 30°55.000'N, Atlantic Ocean only. In-bound hookup with out-of-bound drift requires continuous video evidence. Committee final authority on boundary disputes.

07. Tackle & Reels

6 lines maximum attached to boat. 2 hooks per line. 1 bait per hook. Recreational buoys are permitted ONLY when attached to a reel; commercial buoys and handline gear are prohibited. Electric reels are permitted (2 hooks per bait per reel maximum).

08. Fish Eligibility

Swordfish and Pomfret (Pomfret eligible only for the Pomfret Calcutta). Mutilated fish are eligible if 50 inches or greater fork-to-jaw.

09. Minimum Size

50 inches fork to jaw. Weighmaster decision is final.

10. Aggregate

Two-fish total. A single fish can win Aggregate if it outweighs another team's two-fish total.

11. Day / Night Side Pots

Side pot eligibility is per declared period. Boats declaring Both periods are eligible for both Day and Night Calcuttas, but each fish counts only toward the Calcutta of its catch period.

12. Weigh-In

Weigh-in window: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. DEFAULT weigh-in stations: Beamish Custom Tackle (76 Dockside Dr #111, St. Augustine FL 32084) and Stellar Marine Services (14603 Beach Blvd, Jacksonville FL 32250). RESERVED weigh-in station: NEFMA Clubhouse (3030 Harbor Dr, St. Augustine FL 32084) — used only for fish that cannot be easily transported on land, weigh time per tournament discretion. Fish caught during a NIGHT period must be weighed the same day as your morning check-in (return to inlet in the AM, check in, weigh same-day during the 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. window).

13. Check-In

Check-in is required for every declared fishing day AND every declared fishing night. Day-fishing: check in by midnight on the night of your fishing day. Night-fishing: check in by noon the following day (return to inlet in the AM and check in immediately). Check-in is satisfied by weigh-in attendance, text confirmation, or a no-fish text. Hooked-fish provision: if a fish is hooked during your declared period and the fight extends beyond your check-in window, video evidence is required showing (a) clear evidence that a fish is in fact hooked, (b) the sun up (day-declared) or down (night-declared) at the time of hook-up, (c) the tournament-provided boat number, and (d) a visual timestamp at the time of recording. Submit immediately to the tournament committee for a check-in allowance. Failure to check in voids forward eligibility for that fishing period.

14. Photo / Video Proof

All required photos and videos must (a) capture your tournament-issued boat number and (b) be submitted to the tournament by your check-in time via the tournament-designated upload portal — NOT at weigh-in. PHOTO PROOF is required for any landed fish to be eligible for weigh-in. VIDEO PROOF is required for inbound-hookup-with-out-of-bound-drift scenarios (continuous video from hookup through landing or release). All proof submissions must be unedited.

15. In-Bound Hookup, Out-of-Bound Drift

Continuous video evidence required from hookup through landing or release. Submit prior to check-in via the tournament upload portal. Committee final authority on disputes.

16. Payouts

100% of all entry and Calcutta fees are paid out to the winning boats — the tournament keeps none of the buy-in monies. Payout structure: General Tournament entry pays 75% to first place and 25% to second place (heaviest single qualifying swordfish overall). Each Calcutta pays 75% to first place and 25% to second place when two or more qualifying fish are weighed. Single-qualifier rule: if only ONE boat weighs a qualifying fish for a given Calcutta, that boat receives 100% of that Calcutta pot. Empty Calcutta rule: a Calcutta pot rolls into the General Tournament pool ONLY if no boat weighs a qualifying fish for that Calcutta during the tournament. No refunds of rolled fees.

17. Protests

Protests must be filed by August 1, 12:00 p.m. \$600 protest fee. Refunded if the protest is upheld. Partial-uphold cases are at committee discretion. Committee decision is final.

18. Polygraph

Captains and crew are subject to polygraph examination at committee discretion. Refusal results in disqualification.

19. Weather / Safety

The captain is solely responsible for vessel and crew safety in all conditions. The tournament holds no liability. The committee may suspend the tournament; the committee has no obligation to extend the window.

20. Substitutions

Boat substitution is allowed if the substitute boat is not currently fishing the tournament. Notify the committee by text. Crew substitutions: no notice required.

21. Refunds

No refunds after lines-in (June 11). Pre-tournament withdrawals refunded minus \$50 processing fee.

22. Committee Authority

The committee has final authority on rule interpretation, eligibility, weigh-in disputes, protests, weather decisions, payout, and discipline. Committee decisions are not appealable.

23. Compliance

Compliance with HMS regulations, NOAA reporting, and Florida licensure requirements is the responsibility of each entered captain and crew. Failure to comply results in disqualification.

Compliance with HMS regulations, NOAA reporting, and Florida licensure is the sole responsibility of each entered captain and crew. The tournament committee has final authority on rule interpretation, eligibility, weigh-in disputes, protests, weather, payout, and discipline. Committee decisions are not appealable.

North Florida Swordfish Challenge · NFLswordfish@gmail.com · northfloridaswordfish.com