

**Lake Ontario Pro Team Official Rules May 31, June 1 (2),
2024. All COVID RULES AND REGULATIONS MUST BE
FOLLOWED**

NOTE: Violation of ANY of these rules MAY result in disqualification for the day or the Tournament

1 – CAPTAINS MEETING:

There will be a **MANDATORY** Captains meeting the Thursday evening before the event for Pro Classic Division teams (**6116 Tachi Drive, Newfane, NY 14108 6 p.m.**). One (1) Team Captain or Team member involved are **required to attend**. Attendance will be limited to one (1) Team Captain or Team member. ALL Team representatives will be required to sign in at the pre-registration table. ANY exceptions to this rule **MUST** be reported to and pre-approved by the Tournament Director. Exact times and locations for Captains meetings can be found at www.lakeontarioproam.net

2 – COMPETITION PARAMETERS:

The Tournament's intent is to fish two days. Hours of the competition are defined in Table A and shall apply to each day unless altered by the Tournament Director based on inclement weather.

- a) In the event of foul weather, two hours of fishing will constitute a full day. One two-hour day will constitute completion of the Tournament.
- b) Teams should be prepared to adjust their schedules to allow for fishing up to 5 PM Friday and Saturday, 4 PM Sunday (Sunday is the day used if Friday or Saturday are not) if weather conditions are a factor.
- c) If the first day is completed any time fished on the second or third day (even if less than two hours) will count towards the day.
- d) All team members and all Registered Tournament Boats are prohibited from returning to the waters of Lake Ontario from the time they cross the pier head day 1&2 until the designated departure time day 2&3. Any exceptions to this rule **MUST** be pre-approved by the Tournament Director.
- e) **NOTE:** There will be no refunds. In the event that the entire Tournament is cancelled due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances all entry fees will be put in escrow and applied to the following year.

TABLE A:

Pro Classic Division West Event (Not Amateur Open):

Disclaimers	Leave starting point	Start fishing	Stop Fishing	In weigh-in line
5:00 AM	5:30 AM	6:00 AM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM

3 – TOURNAMENT LIMITS:

All team members and registered Tournament boats must enter and exit from assigned ports ONLY.

- a) Tournament fishing is limited to U.S. waters ONLY.
- b) Fishing tributaries is prohibited. The Niagara River will be considered a tributary.
- c) It is the responsibility of the team Captain to remain within the Tournament boundaries. Straying outside of Tournament boundaries at any time for any reason is prohibited and will result in disqualification for the day.
- d) Tournament boats are prohibited from all open water boat-to-boat contact unless it involves law enforcement or an emergency. Any exception must be pre-approved by the tournament director or will result in disqualification for the day.

4 – TEAM STRUCTURE:

Teams are not limited to a maximum number of anglers. All Teams are limited to 3 fishing rods per person but no more than 8 fishing rods in the water at any time. Team Captains are responsible for insuring that the appropriate numbers of NYS fishing licenses are present on the boat to accommodate Tournament fish and rod limits.

5 – TEAM CAPTAINS:

- a) Team Captains must ensure that they fulfill their responsibility to log each fish boxed on the score sheet when landed. Items that must be recorded are species, time of catch, estimated weight and exact GPS location (degrees, minutes and seconds). Team Captains **MUST** make certain all required fields are correctly filled in for each fish kept, and then initial the corresponding field. A sample will be provided with each score sheet to ensure accuracy.

- b) Score sheets must be signed by Captain and a teammate **immediately** upon the completion of the fishing day. Both signatures must appear on the next available entry space (i.e. if the last fish was recorded on line 12 the signatures must appear on line 13).
- c) Two team members are required to stay with the team cooler at all times until it has been received by the Tournament Weigh Master. Any exceptions must be approved by a Tournament Official.
- d) Teams are required to remain at the weigh-in site until released by the Tournament Director. Any exceptions must be approved by a Tournament Official.
- e) Team Captains are required to collect **all devices** which **are** capable of communication and place them in a tournament provided bag by the tournament committee. These can include but are not limited to: phones, tablets, pads, watches, and paging devices. These are to be identified and collected by the start of the tournament (leave starting point time: 5:30am) and are to be held until the team returns early with a limit, emergency, or mechanical issues. Once a team is back to their dock, all electronic devices can be returned and used. However, teams cannot contact any teams still out fishing until the other teams have returned to the dock.
- f) Team Captains are allowed to use cell phones in the event of an emergency to call 911 or the Tournament Director.

6 - BOAT RESTRICTION AND IDENTIFICATION:

Boat size will be limited to no less than 17 feet. All boats are required to have a working VHS radio and GPS which must be functional at all times as well as USCG regulated safety equipment. Each team (except Amateur Open's) will be issued a pennant which must be affixed to the boat's antenna. Tournament Control will monitor Channel 16 and all boats will be directed to channel 9 for announcements. It is the Captain's responsibility to maintain contact with Tournament Control in the event of foul weather.

7- START AND END TIMES:

Communication and Radio Use Restriction: All participating boats must be equipped with an operational VHF radio. Radio silence and all forms of communication will be prohibited throughout tournament hours for all team members; this is a CLOSED communication event. Tournament control will operate on Channel 9. All boats are required to remain and monitor channel 16 at all times except when directed to Channel 9 for communication by tournament control. Use of cellular phones, tablets, pads, paging devices, communication watches, and VHF scanners is prohibited. Bags will be provided for the team captains to gather all communication devices in. Team Captains MUST collect all communication devices prior to the official start time (leave starting point time: 5:30 a.m.). Radio use or cell phone use for reasons other than emergency will result in disqualification. In the event of an emergency, the team captain can retrieve a phone and make a phone call on behalf of the team.

WiFi capable GPS units for navigational use, airplane mode must be activated. In

addition to electronic forms of communication, any form of communication, such as: conversing from boat to boat, sign boards, hand signals, etc. are a violation of the intent of this rule and may result in disqualification. If teams catch a limit of fish early and/or heads to port early for other reasons, the team captain can return all electronic devices for use once you have docked.

Summary: The objective of this rule is to not allow any form of communication between boats during tournament hours. The start of the tournament is considered to be the noted time that teams are allowed to leave the dock each morning.

PRO CLASSIC DIVISION TEAMS:

- a) Must turn in their signed Disclaimer forms at the designated locations announced at the Captain's meeting BEFORE leaving the dock. Disclaimer forms may be turned in starting at 5:00AM.
- b) In the event of inclement weather, a weather announcement will be made prior to the Disclaimer turn in time of 5 AM. No fishing will take place during a Small Craft Advisory.
- c) Teams may leave the starting points at 5:30AM. For Niagara, this is your assigned docks.
- d) Start fishing time will be 6:00AM. All electronics may be used prior to start fishing time including temp probes. Planer boards may be deployed. Nothing used to attract, hook or land a fish may be placed in the water before the start fishing time.
- e) Teams must stop fishing by 2:00PM.
- f) All teams must be in the weigh-in pre-check line at Krull Park, Olcott no later than 3:00PM.
- g) Failure to abide by these rules will result in disqualification for the day.

8 - WEIGH-IN:

- a) Upon returning to port the cooler containing the day's catch must be immediately drained of water and loose ice and transported to the weigh-in site.
- b) Any attempt to alter the weight of a tournament fish (excessive soaking, floating your days catch in water, pumping, injecting, rinsing etc.) will result in a self-inflicted DQ for the day.
- c) The cooler containing the day's catch may not leave the boat until your big fish for the day is tagged with a zip tie (in the mouth and out the gills) provided by the Tournament. Failure to do so will result in you and your teammate being "held" in the pre-check area until a Tournament official is available to oversee the proper "tagging" of your fish.
- d) As soon as the cooler leaves the boat it will be considered "sealed." The handling of your fish by anyone other than a Tournament Official is prohibited.
- e) At least two team members must remain with the day's catch until surrendered to the Weigh-in Official. Any exception to this rule must be pre-approved by a tournament official.
- f) Failure to abide by these rules will result in disqualification for the day.

9 - COOLERS:

- a) To qualify for scoring, all coolers must return to your designated harbor in your designated boat.
- b) All coolers must be marked with the team's name and number.
- c) All coolers must arrive at the weigh-in free of loose ice and water. ONLY block, bagged cubes, and frozen plastic containers are approved. Failure to abide by these rules will result in self-induced removal to the back of the pre-check line for correction.
- d) Absolutely no water in coolers (Soaking Fish) other than run off from approved block, bagged cubes or frozen plastic containers. Failure to abide by this rule will result in disqualification.

10 - SCORE SHEETS:

Team Score sheets will be reviewed and must be in compliance with Tournament rules (see Rule 5 Section a and b). NOTE, Team Score sheets must reflect the number of fish brought to the weigh-in, the EXACT (degrees, minutes and seconds) GPS numbers recorded, and the time caught for every fish boxed. You will not be allowed to correct this information after the fact. Failure to abide by these rules will result in

disqualification for the day. Failure to record all other required information in the appropriate spaces will result in your cooler being held at the pre-check area until such a time as a tournament official can review the sheet. Any sheets coming to weigh in and the information is not complete at the top of the sheet will result in a 10-point reduction. All score sheets must accompany you at the pre-check line. If you don't have your sheet at precheck and precheck has closed, you will be disqualified for the day.

11- SCORING:

Pro Classic Team Limit:

- a) Tournament limit shall be no more than 12 fish, of which no more than one (1) may be a Lake Trout and of which no more than eight (8) can be Steelhead.
- b) The first Tournament legal limit of 12 fish on board must be kept. **NO CULLING**. Upon landing your limit of fish teams must cease fishing and return to the harbor.
- c) You will still zip tie the largest fish overall.

Points:

- a) Each Tournament legal fish will score 10 points.
- b) One (1) point will be scored per pound of fish weighed.
- c) All Pro Classic Division teams are qualified to enter fish and build points in the Pro Classic competition. Recognition and reward will be based on where you place overall in the Classic. Daily awards will also be handed out for the largest fish for the Pros.
- d) All Classic Division teams will be accumulating scores from both days to determine the overall winner.

12 - NYS AND TOURNAMENT LEGAL FISH DEFINITIONS:

FOR ALL TEAMS:

Steelhead - NYS legal length is 21 inches. Minimum Tournament length is 21 ½ inches. Captains are allowed the discretion to release Steelhead up to but not exceeding 22 inches. Attempting to weigh-in a Steelhead between 21 and 21 ½ inches will result in the loss of the fish and 25 points from your box score that day. **Attempting to weigh-in a Steelhead less than 21 inches will result in disqualification for the day.**

Atlantic Salmon –NYS legal length is 25 inches. Minimum Tournament length is 25 ½ inches. Captains are allowed the discretion to release Atlantic's up to but not exceeding 26 inches. Attempting to weigh-in an Atlantic between 25 and 25 ½ inches will result in the loss of the fish and 25 points from your box score that day. **Attempting to weigh-in Atlantic less than 25 inches will result in disqualification for the day.**

All Other Trout and Salmon –Minimum length is 18 inches. Captains are allowed the

discretion to release fish up to but not exceeding 18 ½ inches. Attempting to weigh-in a fish less than 18 inches will result in the loss of the fish and 25 points from your box score that day.

HANDLING FISH:

- Teams must make every reasonable effort to immediately land every fish that is “hooked-up”.
- All fish brought to the boat must be immediately landed by netting. Landing fish by lifting them into the boat by hand, line, rod and reel or gaff is prohibited.
- Team Captains must verify the exact length and species of all “potential” undersized fish prior to releasing them.
- Any intentional act to cull fish such as, but not limited to, shaking off, over-aggressive reeling, breaking off, knocking off with the net, burning off or leaving a fish “hang” (Example: Allowing a hooked fish to sit in a rod holder unattended intentionally) is prohibited. This will be enforced!
- Any attempt to alter the length of a fish by breaking the spine or other form of mutilation is prohibited.
- Teams found in violation of these rules after a thorough investigation (to include a lie detector test) by Tournament officials will be disqualified.

HANDLING YOUR LIMIT FISH:

- The moment a team has boated 11 Tournament legal fish, the next fish “hooked-up” will constitute “possession” of your “limit” (12th) fish.
- While a team is in “possession” (fighting/landing) of their “limit” (12th) fish, any additional fish “hooked-up” must be brought to the boat, and at the discretion of the Captain, may be secured in the net but not lifted from the water or boated.
- When your limit fish (12th) is netted, boated, determined to be Tournament legal and boxed, your team will be “limited-out” and must immediately release any additional fish at the boat, cease fishing and return to the harbor.
- Teams found in violation of these rules after a thorough investigation by Tournament officials will be disqualified.

Certified measuring boards will be used at the weigh-in site. These boards will be present at the Captain’s meeting for teams to compare their own measuring devices to. This board will be the “OFFICIAL” measuring boards of the Tournament and will be used to determine whether or not a fish is “tournament legal.”

In no case will a team’s score be made less than zero.

13 - PROTESTS, RULINGS AND LITIGATIONS:

- a) Any contestant witnessing a violation of the rules is **required to IMMEDIATELY** report the alleged violation to Tournament Control.
- b) Any suspected violations will be turned over to the Competition Committee for review. This committee will report all information to the Tournament Director. The Tournament Director will attempt to facilitate a resolution of the issue, before an Official Protest is filed.
- c) Any Team member has the right to file an Official Protest by completing and signing the Official Protest Form provided by the Tournament Director. This form must be presented to the Tournament Director within 30 minutes of receiving the form. Upon receiving the Official Protest form the Tournament Director will present the protested team with 15-minute opportunity to resolve the protest. Any unresolved protests will be forwarded to the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency for investigation.
- d) A \$100.00 (one hundred dollar) non-refundable protest fee (cash only) must accompany any filed protest form.
- e) The Tournament scores of protested teams will not be considered official, and any awards won by a protested team will be withheld until a complete investigation is finalized.
- f) Failure of any team to cooperate with the Competition Committee or the Tournament Director will result in immediate self-induced disqualification from the event.
- g) THE "SPIRIT" OF THE RULES – ALL RULES HAVE "LOOPHOLES". IT IS THE INTENTION OF THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR TO PROVIDE A FAIR AND SPORTSMAN LIKE TOURNAMENT. ALL QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS ARE TO BE REFERRED TO THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR. THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR HAS THE SOLE JURISDICTION IN DETERMINING THE APPLICATION OF THE RULES. ALL DECISIONS OF THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR WILL BE FINAL.

14 - **INSPECTIONS:**

All teams must at any time, allow Tournament Officials to board their boat for inspection. All Tournament boats must be available for inspection for the duration of the event. Inspections shall include, but not be limited to, GPS units, fishing tackle and coolers. Failure to comply with an Official's request for inspection will result in immediate disqualification.

15 - **MISCONDUCT:**

Any inappropriate, improper or abusive conduct by any participant towards any Tournament Official, volunteer, or fellow participant shall be deemed a violation of the rules and may subject the violator to penalties or disqualification as determined by the Tournament Committee. Any person or team that has been disqualified by any other Tournament or Derby for an overt act to deceive or defraud may be barred from entry into any future events. Any bribery of any tournament official will lead to automatic disqualification to all future events of the Niagara County Pro-Am.

The tournament committee reserves the right to decline entry or participation by any person, team, or boat, as deemed necessary to ensure such things as integrity, image, reputation and relationships with sponsors, participants and supporting groups.

16 - LIABILITY:

Every reasonable precaution will be taken by the Tournament Committee to protect persons and property during the event. However, the Committee, its judges, sponsors, officers, directors, volunteers or employees of the same will not be held responsible for the safety of persons or property participating in the tournament. All participants further understand and agree to hold harmless members of the aforementioned groups from any liability or claim of damages.

- a) All Tournament boats should carry liability insurance.
- b) Each Contestant will be required to sign a liability disclaimer each morning before the Tournament begins.

17 – GENERAL:

- a) All fish will remain the property of the Tournament until released to the teams.
- b) All fish may be tested for legality.
- c) Disposition of all fish is the team's responsibility and must be in compliance with state and local laws. There will be no illegal dumping/wasting of harvested fish.

18 – LIE DETECTOR TEST:

Lie detector test may be given to any participant upon request by the Tournament Director. Failing a test or refusing to take one will result in disqualification.

19 – Integrity:

To protect the integrity of the event, anyone accused of cheating in any organized fishing tournament or derby, prior to this event, and after vetting such claim, will be requested to take a lie detector test. Failure to pass a lie detector test will disqualify said person from competing in any future Niagara County Pro-Am events.

20 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING;

All entrants agree that their purchase of a registration or participation in any of these events shall constitute an acknowledgement of the rules and they further acknowledge that they understand their obligations and responsibilities outlined within and they agree by these rules and the decisions of the Tournament Officials.

NOTE: Violations of ANY of these rules MAY result in disqualification for the day or the event. See specific rules for exact penalties.

This is a cumulative two-day tournament.

Should one of the days be cancelled due to weather, Sunday will be used as a bad weather day. You must make yourself available. There are no refunds.