



VAAL RIVER BASS CLASSIC

OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES & COMPETITOR HANDBOOK

2026 EDITION (v6)

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TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the inaugural **Vaal River Bass Classic**.

On behalf of the Steering Committee, Tournament Officials, sponsors and volunteers, it is my pleasure to welcome you to what we believe will become South Africa's premier bass fishing tournament.

The Vaal River Bass Classic has been established by passionate bass anglers with a clear vision—to revive one of South Africa's most iconic bass tournaments while setting a new benchmark for professionalism, fairness, conservation and sportsmanship.

This handbook has been prepared to ensure that every competitor competes under the same Rules and enjoys a safe, transparent and professionally managed event.

Whether you are a seasoned tournament angler or competing in your very first Classic, you are an important part of building a tournament that will become a legacy for generations of bass anglers.

Please read these Rules carefully before arriving at the tournament.

If every competitor understands the Rules before launching, the event will run smoothly, fairly and safely.

Thank you for supporting the Vaal River Bass Classic.

We wish you a safe journey, excellent fishing and an unforgettable tournament.

Tight Lines!

Tournament Director

OUR VISION

To establish the Vaal River Bass Classic as South Africa's most respected and prestigious annual bass fishing tournament.

OUR MISSION

To deliver a professionally managed tournament that promotes:

- Fair competition
 - Integrity
 - Sportsmanship
 - Fish conservation
 - Boating safety
 - Family participation
 - Sponsor value
 - Excellence in tournament administration
-

OUR CORE VALUES

Integrity

Compete honestly.

Win fairly.

Respect the Rules.

Sportsmanship

Respect fellow competitors, Tournament Officials and volunteers.

Conservation

Protect every fish and the Vaal River for future generations.

Safety

No prize is more valuable than human life.

Safety will always take precedence over competition.

Professionalism

Deliver an event that competitors are proud to support.

COMPETITOR QUICK REFERENCE

Item	Information
Opening Skippers Briefing Thursday 19h00	
Tournament Days	Friday & Saturday
Daily Bag Limit	Five (5) Bass
Team Championship	Ten (10) Fish Total
Triple Crown Challenge	3 Boat Team Challenge
Big Fish	Entire Tournament
Minimum Length	300 mm
Artificial Lures	Only
Life Jackets	Mandatory when combustion engine is operating
Kill Switch	Mandatory
Official Time	Tournament Director
Weigh-in	Official Tournament Scales Only

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these Rules:

Artificial Lure means any man-made lure intended to attract fish.

Back Boater means a junior fishing with a registered team

Bag Limit means the maximum number of fish permitted for weigh-in on a competition day.

Chief Weighmaster means the official appointed to supervise all weigh-in procedures.

Co-Angler means the second registered competitor in a two-person team.

Competition Hours means the official fishing period announced during the Skippers' Briefing.

Competitor means a registered skipper or co-angler.

Junior means a competitor 12 years of age or younger on the official tournament start date

Live Fish means a fish displaying natural gill movement while on the official tournament scales.

Official Time means the time displayed by the Tournament Director.

Off-Limits Period means the period during which competitors may not fish, scout or obtain fishing information relating to the tournament waters.

Outside Source means **any person who is not a registered competitor actively participating in the tournament** from whom a competitor receives or attempts to receive any fishing-related information, advice, assistance, or guidance that could provide a competitive advantage.

Skipper means the registered person responsible for the boat and the official team representative.

Team means one or two registered competitors fishing from the same boat.

Tournament Committee means the committee appointed to administer and enforce these Rules.

Tournament Director means the person appointed by the Steering Committee to manage the tournament.

Tournament Waters means the waters declared open for competition by the Tournament Director.

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook contains the Official Tournament Rules governing participation in the Vaal River Bass Classic.

Every competitor is responsible for reading, understanding and complying with these Rules before participating in the tournament.

Where any matter is not specifically addressed in this handbook, the Tournament Director shall determine the appropriate course of action in accordance with the principles of fairness, safety, sportsmanship and the best interests of the tournament.

The Tournament Director reserves the right to amend or interpret these Rules where necessary to ensure the safe and fair conduct of the tournament.

COMPETITOR RESPONSIBILITY

Participation in the Vaal River Bass Classic is a privilege.

Every competitor is expected to:

- Read this handbook in full before arriving at the tournament.
- Understand the Tournament Rules and procedures.

- Comply with all lawful instructions issued by Tournament Officials.
- Promote sportsmanship and conservation.
- Respect fellow competitors, volunteers and sponsors.
- Protect the reputation of the Vaal River Bass Classic.

Ignorance of the Rules shall not be accepted as a defence for any breach of these Rules.

SECTION 1

TOURNAMENT ADMINISTRATION

RULE 1 – PARTICIPATION & ELIGIBILITY

1.1 Eligibility

The Vaal River Bass Classic is an open bass fishing tournament. Participation is open to all competitors irrespective of club, trail or organisational affiliation, provided they comply with these Official Tournament Rules and all applicable South African laws.

Disqualification / Integrity

Participation will **not be permitted** to any angler or competitor who has previously been disqualified, suspended or banned from a recognised bass fishing tournament, organisation, club or trail for **dishonesty, cheating, fraud, deliberate rule violations, unsportsmanlike conduct or any other serious breach of tournament integrity**.

The Tournament Organiser reserves the **absolute right of admission** and may refuse, withdraw or cancel any person's participation where, in the reasonable opinion of the Organiser, their participation could compromise the integrity, reputation, safety or proper conduct of the Vaal River Bass Classic.

The Organiser's decision in this regard shall be final.

1.2 Team Composition

A team shall consist of:

- One (1) registered skipper; or
- One (1) registered skipper and one (1) registered co-angler.

No competitor may compete in more than one team.

1.3 Minimum Age and Junior Competitors

Competitors under the age of sixteen (16) years may compete only when accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or an adult skipper approved by the Tournament Director.

Junior Back Boaters

- An adult team may carry a maximum of **two (2) junior back boaters** per boat.
- To qualify as a junior, the participant must be **twelve (12) years of age or younger on the official opening day of the tournament**.

- Junior back boaters will compete only in the **Junior Biggest Fish Category** and will not form part of any other tournament category or prize division unless otherwise specified.
- A **separate Parent/Guardian Consent and Release of Liability** must be completed and signed by the junior's parent or legal guardian before the junior will be permitted to participate.
- Junior back boaters must comply with all tournament safety rules and must wear an approved personal flotation device whenever the boat's combustion engine is in operation.
- No additional entry fee is payable for eligible junior back boaters

1.4 Team Representative

The skipper shall be the official representative of the team.

The skipper shall:

- submit the official online entry;
- receive all official communications;
- represent the team during protests;
- accept official notices;
- ensure the team complies with these Rules.

1.5 Responsibility and liability

Although the skipper submits the official entry, **both competitors remain individually responsible** for complying with these Official Tournament Rules.

Any breach committed by either competitor may result in penalties against the entire team.

The **skipper and co-angler** jointly and individually accept full responsibility and liability for their participation in the tournament. They agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Tournament Organisers, Tournament Officials, sponsors, venue owners and any affiliated parties against any claims, losses, damages, injuries, death, liabilities, costs or legal expenses arising from or in connection with their participation in the tournament, whether involving themselves, third parties, property or equipment.

This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, any damage to boats, vehicles, equipment, property or the environment, and any claims brought by third parties arising from their actions or omissions during the tournament.

RULE 2 – ONLINE ENTRY & REGISTRATION

2.1 Official Entry

All entries shall be submitted through the Official Online Entry System.

No manual entries shall be accepted unless specifically approved by the Tournament Director.

2.2 Entry Fee

The official entry fee for the 2026 tournament shall be:

R4 500.00 per team

An entry shall not be accepted until payment has been received in full.

2.3 Closing Date

Entries close on Monday 19 October at 12h00.

Late entries may be accepted only at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

2.4 Required Information

The online entry shall include:

- Skipper details
 - Co-angler details (where applicable)
 - Emergency contact information
 - Valid Copies of the Skipper's Certificate of Competence (COC) and the Boat's Certificate of Fitness (COF)
 - Proof of payment
 - Acceptance of Official Tournament Rules and Anglers Handbook
-

2.5 Incomplete Entries

The Tournament Organisers reserve the right to reject any incomplete or inaccurate entry.

RULE 3 – TEAM REPRESENTATION AND ELECTRONIC ACCEPTANCE

Submission of the official online entry constitutes acceptance of these Official Tournament Rules and Anglers Handbook.

The skipper confirms that:

- they are authorised to submit the entry on behalf of the team;
- both competitors have read these Rules and Anglers Handbook;
- both competitors agree to be bound by these Rules and Anglers Handbook;
- both competitors accept the Disclaimer and Indemnity;
- both competitors consent to the processing of personal information in accordance with POPIA;
- both competitors agree to the Media Release and Code of Conduct.

Electronic acceptance shall have the same force and effect as a handwritten signature.

RULE 4 – OFFICIAL NOTICES

Official notices may be communicated by:

- Email
- SMS
- WhatsApp
- The Official Tournament Website
- The Official Facebook Page
- The Official Notice Board at Tournament Headquarters
- The Compulsory Skippers' Briefing

Competitors are responsible for ensuring they receive and read all official communications.

Failure to receive an electronic communication shall not invalidate an official notice that has been published through the approved channels.

RULE 5 – TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS

The Tournament Director shall appoint the following officials:

- Tournament Director
- Chief Weighmaster
- Safety Officer
- Tournament Marshals
- Media & Communications Officer
- Protest Committee
- Appeals Committee
- Volunteers

Tournament Officials shall have the authority to enforce these Rules and issue reasonable instructions to competitors.

Unless otherwise specifically provided for in these Rules, all decisions made by the Tournament Director, Tournament Officials, Protest Committee and Appeals Committee within the scope of their authority shall **be final, binding and not subject to further appeal**. All competitors, by entering the tournament, agree to accept and abide by such decisions.

RULE 6 – TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE

The Tournament Committee shall consist of:

- Tournament Director
- Chief Weighmaster
- Safety Officer
- Two members of the Steering Committee

The Committee shall:

- interpret these, Rules;
- resolve disputes;

- impose penalties;
- consider protests;
- protect the integrity of the tournament.

Its decisions shall be final unless otherwise provided for in these Rules.

RULE 7 – COMPULSORY SKIPPERS' BRIEFING

Attendance by every registered skipper is compulsory.

The briefing shall cover:

- Safety procedures
- Weather forecast
- Launch procedures
- Official Tournament Waters
- Off-Limits areas
- Competition hours
- Weigh-in procedures
- Rule amendments
- Emergency procedures

The Tournament Director may issue binding instructions during the briefing.

Failure to attend may result in disqualification unless prior written approval has been granted.

RULE 8 – MINIMUM BOAT REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the safety of all competitors and the welfare of the fish, every boat entered in the tournament must comply with the following minimum requirements:

- A **boat fitted with a minimum 15 HP outboard motor**.
- A fully operational **livewell** capable of safely maintaining the tournament catch.
- A functional **engine kill switch (emergency stop switch)**, which must be worn and used by the skipper whenever the outboard engine is in operation.
- A fully operational **bilge pump**.

- Valid **boat registration** with the applicable registration numbers clearly displayed.
 - All **mandatory safety equipment** as required by South African maritime regulations.
 - A valid **Certificate of Fitness (COF)** for the boat, together with any other required vessel documentation.
-

RULE 9 – LIVEWELL INSPECTIONS

Every livewell shall:

- be empty before inspection;
- be clean;
- be operational;
- provide adequate aeration;
- be capable of maintaining five healthy bass.

All livewells will be inspected by Tournament Officials prior to take-off on both tournament days. Tournament Officials reserve the right to inspect any competitor's livewell, boat and equipment at any time before, during or after the tournament to ensure compliance with these Tournament Rules.

RULE 10 – OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT WATERS

The Tournament Director shall publish the official tournament boundaries before the event.

Fishing outside the declared tournament waters is prohibited.

The following areas shall be regarded as prohibited unless otherwise announced:

- Private slipways
- Closed conservation areas
- Restricted navigation zones
- Any additional areas declared off-limits

Fishing in a prohibited area shall result in immediate disqualification.

SECTION 2

COMPETITION RULES

"Every competitor competes under the same Rules, ensuring fairness, integrity and sportsmanship."

RULE 11 – OFF-LIMITS PERIOD

11.1 Purpose

The Off-Limits Period is intended to ensure that all competitors begin the tournament under equal conditions.

11.2 Official Off-Limits Period

To ensure fair competition, all tournament waters shall be declared **officially off-limits** from:

20h00 on Sunday, 18 October 2026 unless otherwise amended or announced by the Tournament Director.

11.3 Restrictions

During the Off-Limits Period competitors may not:

- fish within the official tournament waters;
 - practise or scout;
 - locate fish;
 - mark fishing locations;
 - not receive, solicit, or obtain any fishing information, advice, reports, or assistance from any person who fished the tournament waters during the official off-limits periods;
 - instruct another person to fish on their behalf.
-

11.4 Exceptions

The following activities are permitted:

- launching or retrieving a boat for maintenance;
 - participation in official tournament activities authorised by the Tournament Director.
-

11.5 Penalty

Any breach of the Off-Limits Period shall result in **immediate disqualification**, unless exceptional circumstances are accepted by the Tournament Committee.

RULE 12 – OFFICIAL PRACTICE

Practice is permitted only before the commencement of the Off-Limits Period.

Competitors practise entirely at their own risk.

No Tournament Officials shall provide advice regarding productive fishing locations or techniques.

RULE 13 – COMPETITION HOURS

Competition hours shall be from 07h00 – 16h00 for the first and 07h00-15h00 for the second tournament day.

No competitor may commence fishing before the official start.

All competitors shall report to the official weigh-in before the published deadline.

The Tournament Director may amend competition hours due to weather or safety considerations.

RULE 14 – PERMITTED FISHING METHODS

Competitors shall fish only by means of:

- rod;
- reel;
- artificial lure.
- live scoping

Each competitor may fish with only one rod at any one time.

Multiple rods may be carried in the boat provided only one rod per competitor is actively in use.

14.1 Casting

Fish shall only be caught by casting and retrieving an artificial lure.

14.2 Hooking

Fish intentionally foul-hooked shall not be presented for weigh-in.

Fish accidentally foul-hooked may be accepted at the discretion of the Chief Weighmaster where there is no evidence of deliberate misconduct.

14.3 Landing Fish

A landing net may be used.

Only the registered skipper, registered co-angler, or a registered junior back-boater (where applicable and officially entered in the tournament) may assist in landing a fish

No outside assistance is permitted.

RULE 15 – ARTIFICIAL LURES

Only artificial lures may be used.

The use or possession of natural bait during competition hours is prohibited.

Examples include:

- live bait;
- dead bait;
- worms;
- insects;
- crabs
- cut bait.

Attractants, scents and commercially manufactured lure enhancers may be used.

RULE 16 – ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

The use of marine electronics is encouraged.

Competitors may use:

- GPS chartplotters;

- sonar;
- LiveScope;
- forward-facing sonar;
- side imaging;
- down imaging;
- mapping systems.

However, competitors may not receive live fishing information from persons outside the tournament.

16.1 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones may be carried for:

- emergency communication;
- safety;
- official tournament communications.

They may not be used to obtain fishing information or assistance during competition hours, from any outside persons not registered or competing in the tournament.

16.2 Drones

The use of drones by competitors during competition hours is prohibited unless authorised by the Tournament Director for official media purposes.

RULE 17 – BOAT OPERATION

Only the registered skipper may operate the combustion engine while the boat is underway, **unless a life-threatening emergency develops that requires another occupant to take control of the vessel to protect life or prevent serious injury.** Any such incident must be reported to the Tournament Director as soon as reasonably possible.

The Tournament Director may authorise an alternative operator in exceptional circumstances where safety requires it.

17.1 Safe Operation

Every competitor shall comply with:

- South African maritime legislation;
- navigation rules;
- speed restrictions;
- no-wake zones;
- instructions issued by Tournament Officials.

Unsafe or reckless boating shall result in disciplinary action.

RULE 18 – SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Safety is the highest priority of the Vaal River Bass Classic.

Every competitor shall:

- wear a properly fastened personal flotation device whenever the combustion engine is running;
- attach the engine kill switch to the skipper whenever the combustion engine is engaged;
- operate the boat safely at all times.

Failure to comply may result in immediate disqualification.

RULE 19 – SPORTSMANSHIP & COURTESY

Competitors shall display courtesy at all times.

Competitors shall not:

- deliberately interfere with another competitor;
- crowd another boat;
- obstruct access to navigation channels;
- create excessive wake near fishing competitors;
- use abusive language;
- intimidate or threaten another person.

Professional conduct is expected throughout the tournament.

19.1 Fishing Distance

Competitors shall maintain a respectful fair distance from other competitors already fishing an area.

As a guideline, competitors should remain at least **50 metres** away unless invited closer by the first boat.

The Tournament Director may determine whether interference has occurred based on the specific circumstances.

RULE 20 – REMAINING IN THE BOAT

Both competitors shall remain within the boat during competition hours.

A competitor may leave the boat only:

- in an emergency;
 - to prevent injury;
 - to assist another competitor;
 - to relieve himself / herself
 - with the approval of a Tournament Official.
-

20.1 Wading

Wading or fishing while standing outside the boat is prohibited.

RULE 21 – EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Competitors are expected to assist any person in genuine danger.

The Tournament Director may award appropriate time or other relief where a team loses fishing time while rendering emergency assistance.

Human life shall always take precedence over tournament results.

RULE 22 – MECHANICAL BREAKDOWNS

22.1 Mechanical Assistance

A team experiencing a mechanical breakdown may receive assistance from another boat or authorised person **solely for the purpose of restoring safe navigation or towing the disabled boat to safety**. No assistance may be received that provides a competitive advantage.

22.2 Transfer of Fish

Where a disabled boat is unable to continue safely, the team's catch may be transferred to the assisting boat, provided that:

- The fish are kept in a **separate, clearly identifiable livewell** from the assisting team's catch.
- The **co-angler from the disabled boat** accompanies the transferred fish at all times.
- The fish are transported **directly to the official weigh-in** without unnecessary delay or deviation.
- The Tournament Director is notified of the transfer as soon as reasonably possible.

22.3 Notification of Breakdown

If a team is unable to return to the official weigh-in under its own power due to a mechanical breakdown or other emergency, the skipper shall immediately notify the Tournament Director or an appointed Tournament Official.

22.4 Failure to Notify

Failure to notify the Tournament Director of a mechanical breakdown or failure to comply with the provisions of this rule may result in penalties, including **disqualification**, at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

SECTION 3

SCORING, FISH CARE & WEIGH-IN

"Ensuring fairness, conservation and accurate results for every competitor."

RULE 23 – TOURNAMENT CATEGORIES

The Vaal River Bass Classic shall recognise the following official competition categories:

23.1 Overall Team Championship

Awarded to the team recording the greatest combined weight of ten (10) legal bass over the two competition days (*2 bag limits for each of the 2 tournament days*).

23.2 Big Fish Championship

Awarded to the team weighing the single heaviest legal bass during the tournament.

23.3 Triple Crown Team Challenge

The **Triple Crown Team Challenge** is an optional team competition in which **three (3) registered tournament teams** compete collectively as a single unit for additional team honours.

There is **no additional entry fee** to participate in the Triple Crown Team Challenge, and all participating teams remain eligible for all other tournament prizes and awards.

Triple Crown entries may compete in one of the following categories:

- **Boat Builders Challenge**
- **Corporate Challenge**
- **Club & Trail Challenge**
- **Open Challenge** – Open to any three (3) registered teams that do not qualify for one of the above categories.

With the exception of the **Open Challenge**, organisations may enter **more than one Triple Crown Team** in the same category, provided that each team is registered under a **unique and clearly distinguishable team name** (e.g. *Team Garmin 1, Team Garmin 2* or *ABC Boats Blue, ABC Boats Gold*).

The Tournament Director reserves the right to determine the eligibility of any Triple Crown Team and to allocate entries to the appropriate category where necessary.

23.4 Additional Awards

The Tournament Organisers may introduce additional prizes or special awards without prior notice.

RULE 24 – ELIGIBLE FISH

Only live **Largemouth Bass** legally caught within the Official Tournament Waters shall qualify.

24.1 Daily Limit

Each team may present a maximum of:

Five (5) bass(bag limit) per competition day.

The maximum tournament limit is therefore:

Ten (10) bass.

24.2 Minimum Size

Every bass shall measure at least:

300 mm

measured with the mouth closed on the Official Tournament Measuring Board.

24.3 Short Fish

Any undersized fish shall not be weighed.

The Tournament Director may impose additional penalties where appropriate.

RULE 25 – FISH CARE

Fish conservation is a cornerstone of the Vaal River Bass Classic.

Every competitor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure fish remain healthy throughout the tournament.

Competitors shall:

- maintain clean livewell water;
 - operate livewell aerators continuously where practical;
 - monitor water temperature;
 - avoid overcrowding;
 - minimise handling;
 - wet hands before touching fish;
 - return fish promptly to the livewell.
-

Competitors shall not:

- place fish on hot carpet;
 - intentionally injure fish;
 - overcrowd the livewell;
 - use chemicals or substances prohibited by law;
 - tamper with fish in any manner.
-

Fish Care Tips

To improve fish survival competitors are encouraged to:

- exchange livewell water regularly;
 - use approved livewell treatments;
 - avoid unnecessary handling;
 - proceed directly to the weigh-in queue.
-

RULE 26 – WEIGH-IN PROCEDURES

Only fish presented at the Official Weigh-In shall be eligible.

26.1 Official Scales

Only the Official Tournament Scales shall determine the recorded weight.

No other scales shall be recognised.

26.2 Weigh Bags

Competitors shall use only the official tournament mesh weigh bags provided by Tournament Officials.

26.3 Fish Presentation

Fish shall remain in water until immediately before weighing.

Fish shall be handled carefully at all times.

26.4 Official Weight

The weight announced by the Chief Weighmaster shall be the official recorded weight.

26.5 Re-Weigh

A re-weigh may only be authorised by the Chief Weighmaster where an equipment malfunction or recording error is suspected.

RULE 27 – DEAD FISH PENALTIES

Any fish presented dead at the official weigh-in shall not be weighed and shall incur the prescribed dead fish penalty in accordance with these Official Tournament Rules. The decision of the Chief Weighmaster regarding the condition of any fish shall be final.

The penalty shall be:

1 kg (1000 grams) per dead fish

or such other penalty as published in the Official Tournament Programme.

Responsibility

Competitors remain responsible for ensuring the health of their fish.

RULE 28 – LATE WEIGH-IN

Every team shall report before the official check-in deadline.

Late Penalties

Late Arrival	Penalty
Up to 1 minute	0.5 kg
More than 1 minute up to 5 minutes	1 kg
More than 5 minutes	Disqualification

The Tournament Director may waive penalties where delays result from assisting another person in danger or other exceptional circumstances beyond the competitor's control.

RULE 29 – TIES

Where teams record identical weights, the following tie-break procedure shall apply:

First

Heaviest single bass.

Second

Heaviest bag on Day Two.

Third

Heaviest bag on Day One.

Fourth

If still tied, the teams shall share the placing and any prize money equally unless otherwise determined by the Tournament Organisers.

SECTION 4

TOURNAMENT GOVERNANCE

"Protecting the integrity, fairness and reputation of the Vaal River Bass Classic."

RULE 30 – PROTESTS

30.1 Right to Protest

Any registered competitor who believes these Official Tournament Rules have been breached may submit an official protest.

Only registered competitors may lodge a protest.

30.2 Official Protest Form

All protests shall be submitted on the Official Tournament Protest Form available from the Tournament Director.

No verbal protest shall be accepted.

30.3 Protest Fee

Each protest shall be accompanied by a non-refundable **R1000.00 Protest Fee**.

30.4 Time Limit

Protests shall be submitted within **30 minutes** after the official weigh-in closes.

Late protests shall not be considered except where exceptional circumstances exist.

30.5 Contents of Protest

The protest shall include:

- Name of protesting competitor
 - Boat Number
 - Rule allegedly breached
 - Time and location of the incident
 - Supporting facts
 - Witnesses (if any)
 - Any photographs, video or other evidence
-

30.6 Investigation

The Tournament Committee may investigate by considering:

- Witness statements
 - Photographs
 - Video recordings
 - GPS tracks
 - Live scoring records
 - Electronic evidence
 - Social media evidence
 - Official observations
 - Polygraph results (where applicable)
-

30.7 Decision

After considering all available evidence, the Tournament Committee may:

- dismiss the protest;
 - uphold the protest;
 - issue a warning;
 - impose a weight penalty;
 - disqualify a competitor;
 - suspend a competitor;
 - permanently exclude a competitor from future tournaments.
-

30.8 Final Decision

The Tournament Committee's decision shall be final.

RULE 31 – DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The Vaal River Bass Classic maintains a zero-tolerance approach to conduct that compromises the integrity or reputation of the tournament.

Misconduct includes

- Cheating
 - Fraud
 - Fish transfer
 - Fish tampering
 - Aggressive behaviour
 - Threats
 - Assault
 - Verbal abuse
 - Damage to property
 - Abuse of Tournament Officials
 - Abuse of volunteers
 - Abuse of sponsors
 - Deliberately providing false information
 - Bringing the tournament into disrepute
-

Possible Sanctions

The Tournament Committee may impose one or more of the following:

- Verbal warning
 - Written warning
 - Weight deduction
 - Loss of tournament placing
 - Forfeiture of prizes
 - Disqualification
 - Suspension
 - Permanent exclusion
-

RULE 32 – POLYGRAPH EXAMINATIONS

To protect the integrity of the Vaal River Bass Classic, the Tournament Director may require any competitor to undergo a polygraph examination.

Selection may include

- Overall Champions
 - Big Fish Champions
 - Triple Crown Champions
 - Protested competitors
 - Randomly selected competitors
 - Any competitor where reasonable grounds exist
-

Refusal

Failure or refusal to submit to a requested polygraph examination shall result in:

- Immediate disqualification
 - Forfeiture of prizes
 - Removal from official results
-

Examiner

The Tournament Director shall appoint a suitably qualified independent examiner.

RULE 33 – MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY & PUBLICITY

The Vaal River Bass Classic reserves the unrestricted right to:

- photograph;
- film;
- livestream;
- record;
- broadcast;

- publish tournament results;
- conduct interviews.

By participating in the tournament, every competitor grants the organisers a perpetual, royalty-free licence to use their:

- name;
- photograph;
- likeness;
- voice;
- video footage;
- catch details;
- tournament results,

for promotional, educational and commercial purposes without further consent or compensation.

Commercial filming by third parties requires prior written approval from the Tournament Director.

RULE 34 – SPONSORSHIP & ADVERTISING

Competitors shall not remove, obscure or alter any official tournament branding supplied by the organisers.

The Tournament Director may require the display of:

- Boat numbers
- Sponsor decals
- Tournament branding
- Identification tags

Official sponsors shall receive reasonable recognition throughout the event.

RULE 35 – FORCE MAJEURE

The Tournament Director may postpone, suspend, shorten, relocate or cancel any part of the tournament where circumstances beyond the organisers' reasonable control make it necessary.

Such circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Severe weather
- Floods
- Drought
- Fire
- Pollution
- Unsafe water conditions
- Government restrictions
- Civil unrest
- Public safety concerns
- Mechanical failure of tournament infrastructure
- Any other unforeseen event

No competitor shall have any claim against the organisers arising from such decisions.

RULE 36 – LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY

Competitors participate entirely at their own risk.

The Vaal River Bass Classic, its Steering Committee, Tournament Officials, volunteers, sponsors, venue owners and service providers shall not be liable for any injury, illness, death, theft, loss or damage suffered before, during or after the tournament.

Competitors accept full responsibility for:

- their own actions;
- the safe operation of their boat;
- compliance with applicable legislation;
- their equipment and personal property.

Nothing in these Rules excludes liability where such exclusion is prohibited by South African law.

RULE 37 – TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR'S AUTHORITY

The Tournament Director has the authority to:

- interpret these Rules;
- enforce these Rules;
- issue official directives;
- appoint Tournament Officials;
- conduct inspections;
- determine penalties;
- resolve disputes;
- delay, suspend or cancel competition;
- amend tournament procedures where required for safety or fairness;
- decide any matter not specifically addressed in these Rules.

All decisions made in good faith by the Tournament Director in accordance with these Rules shall be final and binding, subject only to the formal protest procedure contained in Rule 30.

RULE 38 – ENTRY FEES AND REFUNDS

All entry fees are **strictly non-refundable** and **non-transferable**.

No refunds, credits or transfers will be granted under any circumstances, including but not limited to:

- Failure to attend or participate in the tournament for any reason.
- Withdrawal by a team or individual before or during the tournament.
- Mechanical breakdowns, illness, injury, personal emergencies or any other unforeseen circumstances.
- Late arrival, failure to launch, failure to weigh in, or failure to complete the tournament.
- Disqualification for any reason in terms of these Tournament Rules.
- Dissatisfaction with tournament conditions, weather, venue, officiating, rule interpretations, results or any tournament-related matter.
- Cancellation of an entry by the competitor for any reason.

By submitting an entry and paying the entry fee, competitors acknowledge and accept this policy as a condition of entry into the tournament.

RULE 39 – MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

By entering the tournament, all competitors grant the Tournament Organisers the unrestricted, perpetual and royalty-free right to photograph, film, record and otherwise capture their participation in the tournament.

All photographs, video recordings, drone footage, audio recordings and any other media captured by or on behalf of the Tournament Organisers during the tournament shall remain the exclusive property of the Tournament Organisers. The Tournament Organisers may use, reproduce, publish, broadcast, distribute, edit and display such media for promotional, marketing, advertising, educational or commercial purposes in any format or media, without further notice or compensation.

No person, competitor, media representative or third party may use, sell, license, distribute or otherwise exploit any photographs, video recordings or other media captured during the tournament for **commercial purposes** without the prior written consent of the Tournament Organisers.

Nothing in this Rule prevents competitors from using their own photographs or videos for **personal, non-commercial** purposes, provided such use does not imply endorsement by the Tournament Organisers or conflict with the rights of the Tournament Organisers or its sponsors. Any unauthorised commercial use may result in disciplinary action and/or legal proceedings.

OFFICIAL COMPETITOR DECLARATION

By submitting the Official Online Entry Form, the skipper confirms that:

- they are authorised to enter the team on behalf of both competitors;
- both competitors have read and understood these Official Tournament Rules;
- both competitors agree to comply with all Tournament Rules, policies and procedures;
- both competitors accept the Disclaimer and Indemnity;
- both competitors consent to the processing of personal information in accordance with POPIA;
- both competitors accept the Media Release and Code of Conduct;
- all information provided is true and correct.

Electronic acceptance shall have the same force and effect as a handwritten signature.

APPENDICES

Supporting Policies, Checklists and Reference Material

The attached appendices form part of the Official Tournament Rules and contain supporting legal policies, checklists and guidance:

- **Appendix A** – Legal Policies, Declarations & Conditions of Entry
- **Appendix B** – Ethics & Anti-Cheating Policy
- **Appendix C** – Official Penalty Matrix
- **Appendix D** – Competitor Checklist

APPENDIX A

LEGAL POLICIES, DECLARATIONS & CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. Disclaimer & Indemnity

Participation in the Vaal River Bass Classic is entirely voluntary.

Competitive bass fishing and boating involve inherent risks, including but not limited to injury, illness, death, drowning, collisions, adverse weather, equipment failure, theft, loss of property and other unforeseen incidents.

By entering the tournament, every competitor voluntarily accepts these risks.

The Vaal River Bass Classic, its Steering Committee, Tournament Director, Tournament Officials, volunteers, sponsors, venue owners, landowners and service providers shall not be liable for any injury, illness, death, loss, theft, damage, expense or claim arising from participation in the tournament, except where liability cannot legally be excluded under South African law.

Each competitor indemnifies and holds harmless the organisers and associated parties against any claim arising from that competitor's participation.

Competitors remain solely responsible for:

- their own safety;
- the safe operation of their boat;
- ensuring that all required licences and certificates remain valid;
- complying with applicable South African legislation;
- their own equipment and personal belongings.

2. Privacy Policy

The Vaal River Bass Classic collects only the personal information reasonably necessary to administer the tournament.

Information may include:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Telephone Numbers
- Email Address
- Emergency Contact Details
- Boat Details

- Photographs
- Tournament Results

Personal information is collected for:

- Tournament administration
- Competitor communication
- Emergency response
- Prize administration
- Results publication
- Statistical reporting
- Sponsor reporting
- Compliance with applicable law

Reasonable security safeguards shall be maintained to protect personal information from unauthorised access, loss or misuse.

Information will not be sold or shared except where reasonably necessary for tournament administration or where disclosure is required by law.

3. POPIA Consent

By submitting an official entry, competitors consent to the collection, storage and processing of their personal information in accordance with the **Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013)**.

Information may be processed for:

- tournament administration;
- competitor communication;
- emergency response;
- publication of tournament results;
- prize administration;
- historical records;
- future tournament communications.

Competitors may request access to or correction of their personal information by contacting the Tournament Organisers.

4. Media Release

Competitors grant the Vaal River Bass Classic a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free licence to:

- photograph;
- film;
- livestream;
- record;
- broadcast;
- publish;
- reproduce;
- archive;

their participation in the tournament.

This includes the competitor's:

- name;
- likeness;
- photograph;
- voice;
- interview;
- catch details;
- tournament results.

No compensation shall be payable.

5. Code of Conduct

Every competitor shall:

- compete honestly;

- obey these Rules;
- show respect to fellow competitors;
- respect Tournament Officials;
- respect volunteers;
- respect sponsors;
- protect the fishery;
- comply with South African legislation;
- conduct themselves professionally.

Competitors shall not:

- cheat;
- threaten;
- intimidate;
- harass;
- discriminate;
- damage property;
- use abusive language;
- behave in a manner that brings the tournament into disrepute.

Breaches may result in disciplinary action.

6. Health Declaration

Every competitor confirms that:

- they are medically fit to participate;
- they understand the physical demands of boating and competitive fishing;
- they participate entirely at their own risk.

Competitors remain responsible for carrying any required medication.

7. Electronic Acceptance

The skipper submitting the Official Online Entry confirms that:

- they are authorised to enter the team;
- the co-angler has authorised the skipper to accept these Rules on their behalf;
- both competitors have read the Rules;
- both competitors agree to be bound by them;
- both competitors accept all legal policies contained in this handbook.

Electronic acceptance shall constitute a legally binding agreement.

APPENDIX B

ETHICS & ANTI-CHEATING POLICY

Integrity is the cornerstone of the Vaal River Bass Classic.

Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage undermines the tournament, fellow competitors and the sport of bass fishing. Accordingly, the Vaal River Bass Classic applies a zero-tolerance approach to cheating, fraud and dishonest conduct.

APPENDIX B – ETHICS & ANTI-CHEATING POLICY

1. Purpose

The Vaal River Bass Classic is founded on the principles of **fair competition, honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, and conservation**. Every competitor is expected to compete ethically and to uphold the reputation of the tournament at all times.

Any form of cheating, deception, or conduct that brings the tournament into disrepute will be treated as a serious offence and may result in immediate disqualification and further disciplinary action.

2. Competitor Responsibilities

Every competitor shall:

- Compete honestly and fairly at all times.
 - Comply with all Tournament Rules and the decisions of Tournament Officials.
 - Respect fellow competitors, officials, spectators, sponsors, landowners, and members of the public.
 - Conduct themselves in a manner that promotes the sport of bass fishing.
 - Protect and conserve fish and the natural environment.
 - Report any suspected rule violations or unethical conduct to the Tournament Director.
-

3. Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is strictly prohibited:

3.1 Fish-Related Violations

- Introducing fish into the livewell that were not legally caught during tournament hours.
- Receiving fish from another competitor or any other person.
- Placing fish in another competitor's livewell.
- Tampering with, altering, or exchanging fish.
- Presenting fish that were caught outside the official tournament hours.

- Deliberately injuring, mutilating, or manipulating fish to gain a competitive advantage.
 - Using any device or method intended to increase the weight of a fish.
-

3.2 Receiving Outside Information or Assistance

Competitors are prohibited from receiving or attempting to receive fishing information, guidance, assistance, or strategic advice during official competition hours from any person who is not a registered and actively participating in the tournament, whether by electronic communication, telephone, radio, messaging applications, social media, or any other means.

Including but not limited to:

- Receive information regarding the location of fish from any outside person during tournament hours.
- Receive outside assistance that provides a competitive advantage.
- Communicate with any outside person for the purpose of locating fish.

Emergency assistance and mechanical breakdown assistance remain permitted in accordance with the Tournament Rules.

3.3 Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Abusive or threatening behaviour.
 - Harassment or intimidation.
 - Deliberately interfering with another competitor.
 - Reckless or dangerous boating.
 - Deliberate damage to property.
 - Disrespect towards Tournament Officials.
 - Bringing the tournament or its sponsors into disrepute through words or actions.
-

4. Alcohol and Illegal Substances

Competitors shall not:

- Consume alcohol while competing during official tournament hours.
- Compete while under the influence of alcohol.
- Use or possess illegal drugs or prohibited substances.

Tournament Officials reserve the right to remove any competitor who appears to be impaired or whose conduct compromises the safety of others.

5. Integrity Investigations

Tournament Officials may investigate any alleged rule violation, including:

- Interviews with competitors or witnesses.
- Inspection of boats, livewells, equipment, tackle, and fish.
- Review of photographs, video footage, GPS records, electronic devices, or other evidence.
- Any other reasonable investigation deemed necessary.

Competitors are required to cooperate fully with any investigation.

6. Burden of Proof

The Tournament Director is not required to prove intentional cheating beyond reasonable doubt.

Where sufficient evidence exists that a rule has been breached or that the integrity of the competition has been compromised, appropriate penalties may be imposed.

All decisions relating to alleged rule breaches shall be made on the balance of probabilities, taking into consideration all available evidence, witness statements, electronic data, photographs, video recordings, and any other relevant information. The Tournament Director is entitled to draw reasonable inferences from the evidence presented.

7. Penalties

Depending on the seriousness of the offence, penalties may include:

- Official warning.
- Weight deduction.

- Loss of one or more fish.
 - Loss of the day's catch.
 - Disqualification from the tournament.
 - Disqualification from the Triple Crown Team Challenge.
 - Forfeiture of prizes, trophies, and awards.
 - Suspension from future Vaal River Bass Classic events.
 - Permanent exclusion from future tournaments.
-

8. Team Responsibility

Each team is jointly responsible for complying with these Rules.

Where a rule violation involves one team member, the entire team may be held responsible and subjected to the applicable penalty.

9. Decisions

The Tournament Director and Tournament Committee shall have the sole authority to interpret these Rules and determine the appropriate penalty.

Their decision shall be final and binding.

10. Spirit of the Rules

Not every circumstance can be specifically addressed within these Rules.

Competitors are expected to compete in both the **letter and the spirit** of the Tournament Rules. Any conduct that seeks to gain an unfair advantage through a loophole, technicality, or omission may be considered a breach of these Rules and dealt with accordingly by the Tournament Director.

APPENDIX C

OFFICIAL PENALTY MATRIX

OFFICIAL PENALTY MATRIX

Offence	Penalty	Rule
Fishing During Off-Limits	Disqualification	Rule 11
Fishing Before Official Start	Disqualification	Rule 13
Natural Bait	Disqualification	Rule 15
Outside Assistance	Disqualification	Rule 16
Unsafe Boat Operation	Disqualification	Rule 17
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Weight Penalty / DQ	Rule 19
Wading	Disqualification	Rule 20
More than Five Fish	Disqualification	Rule 24
Short Fish	Fish not weighed	Rule 24
Dead Fish	1kg deduction	Rule 27
Late Check-in	As per Rule 28	Rule 28
Fish Transfer	Disqualification	Appendix B
Fish Tampering	DQ & Possible Lifetime Ban	Appendix B
Failure To Wear Life Jacket	Disqualification	Rule 18
Failure To Attach Kill Switch	Disqualification	Rule 18
Alcohol and Illegal Substances during competition hours	Disqualification	Appendix B
Abuse of Officials	DQ & Possible Suspension	Rule 31
Fraud	DQ & Possible Lifetime Ban, Forfeiture Of Prizes & Permanent Exclusion	Appendix B
Refusal of Polygraph	Disqualification	Rule 32

APPENDIX D

COMPETITOR CHECKLIST

COMPETITOR CHECKLIST

Before Leaving Home

- ✓ Boat Registration
 - ✓ Certificate of Competency
 - ✓ Certificate of Fitness
 - ✓ Life Jackets
 - ✓ Kill Switch
 - ✓ Fire Extinguisher
 - ✓ Bilge Pump Operational
 - ✓ Livewell Operational
 - ✓ Measuring Board
 - ✓ Landing Net
 - ✓ Trolling Motor Batteries Charged
 - ✓ Battery chargers
 - ✓ Outboard Fuel
 - ✓ Boat Keys
 - ✓ Entry Confirmation
 - ✓ Fishing Licence (if required)
 - ✓ Emergency Contact Details
 - ✓ First Aid Kit
 - ✓ Cell Phone Charger
 - ✓ Rain Gear
-

THANK YOU

Thank you for supporting the inaugural **Vaal River Bass Classic**.

By entering this tournament, you are helping to build what we believe will become one of South Africa's premier bass fishing events.

We thank our competitors, sponsors, volunteers, officials and supporters for their commitment to fair competition, sportsmanship and conservation.

We wish you safe boating, memorable fishing and every success on the water.

FISH WITH INTEGRITY. COMPETE WITH PASSION.

LEAVE A LEGACY.