

Rules for the 2024 Lake Erie Walleye Trail

Memberships

All LEWT Anglers must be a member of the Big Water Walleye Championships prior to fishing any LEWT Event.

Open Division - **Only the boat Captain** must be a member. Open divisions are set up to promote tournament fishing and allow a family atmosphere.

PRO-AM - Any angler considered an amateur needs to be a LEWT/BWWC Member.

Payment Plans

All payment plans entered into by contract with Paypal are binding. Any failure to complete the payment plan as agreed to will lead to disqualification from future LEWT events and forfeiture of any entry fees previously paid for the year.

**Early Bird Teams Only will be eligible to pay via check. Checks must be received by February 15th in order to retain your boat number earned in the previous year.

“LEWT’s FAT 5”

Now anglers can fish for a season long big fish side pot. Entry will be \$100/per boat for the season. This will be a 100% payout with sponsorship bonus TBD.

Fat 5 Rules

- All LEWT Rules apply
- Only one fish may be weighed for Big Fish/Fat 5 at each event
- You may always upgrade your “Fat 5 Bag” during any LEWT Event (2 angler LEWT division only)
- LEWT 2 day events will always have two opportunities (1 each day) to enter a fish. Only one fish weight will be recorded for any 2 day event.
- The LEWT Championship will count as one of your fish, 4 regular season events + Championship.
- Payout will be top 1st, 2nd, and 3rd teams annually, paid out at championship.

1. Rules and Rules Changes

These rules will remain unchanged unless otherwise notified prior to a tournament. Different tournament sites will also have site specific rules. Interpretation of the rules will be at the discretion of the Tournament Director (TD). The rules and the interpretations of the TD will be final, and are not open to protest. Rule meetings will be held online the Thursday before all tournament events at 6pm.

1A. The LEWT is holding a tournament in conjunction with the Masters Walleye Circuit in 2024. In order to do so, some of our rules will be temporarily altered or suspended so that anglers can participate in both events. The Tournament Director will be communicating the changes to you prior to the event. All LEWT anglers should be prepared to attend the MWC team meeting held the evening before the first day of the tournament.

- NO CANADIAN WATERS IN 2024
- NO FISHING/BOATING ON A BLOW DATE ON LAKE ERIE

2. Sportsmanship

Entrants must conduct themselves in a true sportsman-like manner, NO EXCEPTIONS. You are expected to act with the highest degree of courtesy, honesty, and ethical behavior at all times. Remember, you not only represent yourselves, but all tournament anglers and competitive fishermen. Any unsportsmanlike behavior will lead to penalties and possible disqualification from any and all LEWT tournaments. Any team receiving a citation for a violation in their boat from any law enforcement agency on the day of the tournament will be disqualified for that tournament. **Anyone receiving a citation, or having any contact with Law Enforcement, is required to notify the TD immediately.**

3. Safety

Safety must be observed at all times. All contestants must wear Coast Guard approved PFDs while the boat is moving above trolling speed. Each contestant is to follow all state and federal regulations. No alcoholic beverages or illegal substances may be consumed by, or in possession of, anyone participating in any tournament activity. Pay attention to the weather, and the conditions around you; know your limitations, and the limitations of your vessel. The LEWT will not be able to recall the field once we have launched the tournament day. **Remember, you are responsible for your own safety!** In case of severe weather, you should seek shelter, and notify the TD after the danger has passed.

4. Boats and equipment

All boat compartments and wells will be inspected prior to the start of that day of fishing. All boats must conform to all state and USCG standards. Your boat must have all required USCG safety equipment on board as stated in rule #4, and also a working VHF radio (Handheld is ok). No items, including bait and tackle, may be passed between boats after the tournament has started. Only registered contestants or tournament officials are allowed to be on the boat during tournament hours. All boats must have liability insurance.

- Boats must be registered with the LEWT upon tournament registration. All anglers must identify their vessel(s) they have the ability to fish from. In the event of a broken or damaged tournament vessel. Anglers will need to contact the tournament director. A back up vessel may be used after being approved by the tournament director.

4.A Fuel

Any angler wishing to refuel their vessel must do so at a publicly accessible fuel station. No Fuel cans should be carried on your vessel for the purposes of refueling during tournament hours. No contact should be made or fishing items(lures, bait, etc...) should be purchased during a fuel stop.

4.B 21. Spectator Observers

At any time the TD reserves the right to place an observer in any boat in an effort to maintain the integrity of the circuit. The Top 5 TOY teams are subject to mandatory observers or videographers in any event.

Videographers or any promotional media assigned by the TD on any team boat are considered observers and will make every effort to not disrupt the anglers. They cannot assist in fishing/netting in any way.

5. Severe weather

In the event of severe weather, the tournament hours may be suspended, delayed, extended, shortened, or have alternate boundaries put in place. A tournament may be rescheduled or canceled at the discretion of the Tournament Director. All Saturday tournaments will have a blow day scheduled on Sunday unless otherwise noted. Two day tournaments will start on Friday, with Sunday available as a blow day should one day be lost to weather. In the event that severe weather makes returning to the weigh-in site unsafe, get to a safe dock and call the TD and check in, so that we know you are off the water and safe.

6.A Communication

You must have a working VHF marine band radio. The official tournament channel will be channel 80. You may monitor any channel while fishing, but may not transmit by radio, cell phone* or any other electronic equipment, except in case of emergency. You may not arrange for someone to transmit information over the radio such as location or fishing program in the open for your benefit. **You may not come into contact with another vessel, nor have any communication with anyone else during a tournament,** unless otherwise noted in the rules as permitted. Transmitting or receiving any type of information via any communication device is prohibited. **You may not use a cell phone, or any other electronic device to track the location of other boats or competitors during tournament hours.** *Cell phone use parameters: Cell phones are for emergency use only. The number for the TD is located on the back of all boat cards and any emergency should be relayed to the TD. Make arrangements not to have business or other non-emergency calls during tournament hours if possible, we understand people have work and family to attend to. If the TD finds that you have transmitted or received information to better your day or catch more fish you would be in violation of the rules, you will be disqualified.

6.B Kayak Division

Kayak Division anglers will be allowed to communicate openly with other anglers. Kayak Safety is the most important factor and fishing with partners or being able to communicate openly is a safety factor. **Communication with any LEWT Division Anglers (2 man teams) is a violation of the rules and would disqualify both the Kayak Angler and LEWT Division angler.**

6-C Social Media

Using Social Media to gain information to better your day of fishing is to be considered a violation of the rules. An angler who uses information obtained via social media (I.E. Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, or any other social platform) throughout the tournament day, during tournament hours is a violation. Posting on social media during tournament hours is to be considered communication. Social media should not be used during tournament hours. Any angler who admits to, or otherwise is found to have used social media to better their day of fishing will be disqualified.

7. Fishing

Water open to fishing will be the **contiguous waters of Lake Erie (anywhere your boat can take you from our launch location.)** All local game and fish regulations must be adhered to while pre-fishing and fishing on tournament day. Contestants will be limited to one lure or presentation per rod.

Competitors must not come in contact with other boats during tournament fishing hours until your fish have been weighed, or your boat board has been turned in to tournament officials. Contact means physical touching or passing of equipment. The only exception to this is in an emergency situation. If your boat becomes disabled, you must contact the TD for options on weighing your catch, safety first always. **In the event of a total boat failure please contact the TD and make arrangements to get safely off the water and back to port.**

- **After speaking with the TD you MAY be allowed to return to port on another anglers boat if you have the ability to keep fish separate in a fish bag.**
- **Fish must never be combined between teams.**
- **Any angler not able to return to the launch location, under power or with another angler's assistance, will not be eligible to weigh their day's catch.**
- **One angler from the disabled team must stay with their catch at all times and maintain responsibility for their catch.**
- **All LEWT time restrictions will still apply.**

8. Dead Fish

There is no dead fish penalty and you **MAY KEEP YOUR LEGAL LIMIT**. However, vessels with a live well should use them. Live wells should be functioning so as not to cause undue degradation of fish. Fish not kept in a live well must be put on ice immediately so as not to appear old. Any participant culling a dead fish will be disqualified from the tournament. Improperly cared for fish may be taken from the weigh basket and not weighed at the judgment of the TD. Bringing a fish short of legal size to the scale will disqualify the team from weighing any fish that day. The LEWT reserves the right to refuse entry to any fish that appears to be "old", discolored, or otherwise inconsistent with a freshly caught walleye; the tournament director or weigh-master will have the final say.

9. Check-in/ Weigh-in

Teams must be past the official check in site before the end of tournament hours to weigh fish. Any team arriving one minute or more late will not be allowed to weigh in. It is the angler's responsibility to verify the check-in boat has confirmed your boat number as you pass. Check in site will be announced at each tournament. The employee or person designated as the boat check has the final say if a boater was late. The TD will not overturn the decision made by the check in boat.

Winners will be determined by the weight of their five largest fish. Big Fish winner will be determined by the weight of the single largest walleye. Only one fish per team is eligible for Big Fish. Teams must weigh their fish in as soon as possible after arriving past the check in point. Any delay in doing so will result in a half weight penalty being assessed for the total weight, and Big Fish weight.

Tie Breakers are as follows:

Tournament overall Bag – Big Fish Weight

- If either team did not weigh for Big Fish, then a coin will be flipped for place determination and prize money will be split evenly.

Big Fish Tie Breaker – Tournament overall bag weight - 2nd Tie Breaker coin flip

10. Participation and Eligibility

LEWT Fields will be considered full at 80 boats of two person teams. The TD may choose where applicable fields will not be capped at 80 boats. Example – the joint tournament with the MWC could be opened up to all boats wanting to participate.

- All participants 18 or older must be current members of the BWWC, with the exception that a minor fishing with his/her parent or guardian will not be required to pay for BWWC membership.
- **The minimum age to fish in the LEWT is 13 unless accompanied by a parent, guardian, or family member.** A special waiver is required to be signed by parents or legal guardians before any minor participant will be accepted. Additionally, all minors **must provide proof** that they have successfully completed a NASBLA (National Association of State Boating Law Administrators) approved Safe Boating course such as the Ohio Division of Watercrafts OBEC (Ohio Boating Education Course). The BWWC, LEWT or TD has the right to refuse entry, or declare expulsion, to individuals from the tournament circuit for any reason.

11. Entry Fees

Entry Fees for any LEWT Event will need to be completed the Wednesday prior to a scheduled event at 12 Midnight. All Entries will be closed Thursday 12:01 am unless a different deadline has been announced by the TD. Entry fees for all LEWT tournaments are \$300 per team per event + fees. The 2 Day Championship is \$400. Early Bird entries will be taken starting 6pm January 31st through February 15th, 2024 and is for teams signing up to fish 4 events – plus the Championship (5 Tournaments). Boat numbers for all Early Bird teams will stay the same for the season, and will be assigned based on finishing position in the previous year's Team of the Year points, for **returning teams** that fished at least 5 events. (Returning Early Bird members will receive their earned starting position from the previous year's TOY standings. Teams that split with new partners will remain in the same starting position with returning team captains receiving the lower boat number.) The

balance of the boat numbers will be assigned by order of entry. Starting February 15th, single tournament entries will be accepted until all fields are full. No entries will be accepted after midnight on the Wednesday prior to a tournament. A fee will be charged to cover credit card processing fees.

12. Refunds

Refunds will not be given if a tournament takes place on a scheduled “blow day”. If the entire tournament weekend has to be rescheduled due to weather, a team that is unable to fish on the make-up date may request a refund or transfer to a future event. For events that are not rescheduled for weather, there will be **no refunds**. At the discretion of the TD, Early Bird teams will not be eligible for refunds, and will need to reschedule to a later event or use a substitution. Early Bird Teams requesting to be rescheduled will need to be done (2) days prior to scheduled tournament day. **If a life threatening emergency situation, or death in the family arises and causes the Early Bird team to miss a tournament, they will be automatically rescheduled to the next event unless they request otherwise.** If other events are missed, there will be no additional refunds given to Early Bird teams. If a single entry team needs a refund for any reason other than an emergency, they need to submit via Email to the TD no less than 2 days prior to the registration cut-off date (FRIDAY BEFORE REGISTRATION CUT-OFF).

All teams who register for a tournament that has been canceled will receive a refund less a \$25 Fee or be given the option to reschedule.

12.A KAYAK Division

Kayak Division ONLY will be allowed to cancel registration the night before any event for safety reasons if the forecasted NOAA Wave Forecast is greater than 1-2 ft. wave height. You must do so in writing via email to BigWaterWalleyeChampionships@gmail.com cc LEWTRosters@gmail.com.

All refunds will have a \$25 writing fee withheld.

13. Substitutes

Submit roster changes to LEWTRosters@gmail.com or use the “Substitute Form” online.

Substitutes may be used at any time, but they may not be an original member of another team. One of the original team members must be present to receive Team of the Year points. A substitution will only be allowed once per team per season to be eligible for Team of the Year points. If both team members cannot fish it is suggested to select another tournament date to participate.

- Substitutions – TOY Anglers can sub at anytime however, each TOY team is eligible to substitute one team member **one time** for the year and receive TOY Points. A sub can be used for any reason and must be done no later than 24 hours before tournament day. TOY points will be calculated as stated in Rule #15. Any team using a sub for the second time and any time thereafter will not receive qualifying team points for that event.
- Any EB Team needing to use additional sub's will be allowed to fish, but only one event will count for team points. **(Highest Finish)**

- The TD will use discretion over any unusual circumstance that may arise causing a team to use a sub. (Example - The issues we have had with COVID-19 may require special consideration) Every effort will be made so that you can fish and abide by tournament rules regarding substitutions.

14. Payback

Payback for the LEWT Tournaments will be at least 85% of total entry fees less awards, and will pay back to 15% of a full field of *80 teams. Plaques will be given to the top 15% of the field.

Polygraph fees will be taken out of each total entry purse.

The optional Big Fish pot is \$20 per team and will pay back 100% less Awards. Plaques will also be awarded for the Big Fish winner each tournament day. The optional side pot is \$100 per team and will pay back 100%.

- Championship is \$50 Big Fish and \$100 Side Pot Each Day.

- **NOTE: All tournament winnings and payouts will be mailed via USPS. We will no longer be handing out checks at LEWT events. Your winnings will be mailed to you within 48 hours after finalization, and sent to the address you gave us on the membership form.**

15. Team of the Year Points

Points will be awarded based on place of finish. For ALL events, points will be awarded to the team that finishes first, and will drop by two point increments for each place after first. Teams competing, but not weighing a fish will receive two points less than the last team weighing a fish. The last event of the year will be considered the Championship, and that event will be worth 300 points for first, and will drop by three point increments for each team after first. Teams competing, but not weighing, a fish both days will receive three points less than the last team weighing a fish. Points Champion will be based on points earned in each team's best 4 events and the Championship. Points for the TOY standing will be calculated for a total of the teams best 4 Tournaments + the Championship (5 Events). You may always fish more events in an effort to increase your team's standing. Disqualified participants for rule violations (NOT LATE ANGLERS) will earn zero points for the tournament they were disqualified in. A team winning TOY will be declared the Big Water Walleye Championships Ohio State Champion. Only Early Bird teams will be eligible for the TOY Bonus annually. Single entries will gain TOY points and be eligible for the championship, but not eligible for the cash sponsorship bonus.

TOY POINTS SCALE

1-80 Boats - 200 Point Scale

81-100 Boats - 210 Point Scale

101+ Boats - 220 Point Scale

(Example 200 Points for 1st place, -2 for each descending place 198 2nd, 196 3rd...)

Championship Event - 300 Point Scale

(Example 300 Points for 1st place, -3 for each descending place 297 2nd, 294 3rd...)

OPEN DIVISION - NO TOY POINTS

16. Protest

The TD has the right to protest any team or contestant at any time for any reason. Any contestant can protest any team or contestant at any time with cause. This can be done in person to the tournament director at zero cost to the angler filing the protest.

A protest can also be made online confidentially, this protest must be made within 24 hours after the weigh-in. The protest must be made **ONLINE** via protest link and accompanied by a \$500.00 fee. If the protest is upheld, the fee will be returned. If it is not, no refund will be given.

Angler Protest

- * A protest can be made for contestants observed violating any tournament rules and Ohio Fishing Rules and Regulations.
- * A protest can be made by the tournament director at any time for any reason.
- * A protest can be made for contestants observed violating any Ohio Fishing Regulations within (3) days leading up to the start of an event. (I.E. If you are observed over rodding during pre-fishing and that violation was reported, you could be asked about your conduct on the water for the three days leading up to a LEWT event during a polygraph.)
 - NO POLYGRAPH WILL BE GIVEN ON HEARSAY OR GOSSIP
 - By agreeing to the rules you are agreeing to the results of any polygraph examination you may be given.

17. Integrity of the circuit

The TD reserves the right to conduct random onsite/offsite Polygraph/VSA exams, or equipment inspections, including cell phones of any participating team member in order to make sure the integrity of the event is being upheld.

Refusal to comply with a polygraph or equipment inspection request will result in that team being ineligible for cash payouts and disqualified. A deceptive test will also disqualify a contestant/team and will result in that team being ineligible for cash payouts. At the discretion of the Tournament Director, those persons will be ineligible for future participation in LEWT events.

****By acknowledging you have read and understand the rules at registration, you agree to the results of the Polygraph Test.**

18. Spirit of the Rule

All rules have "loop holes". It is the intention of the Tournament Director to provide a fair and sportsmanlike tournament. All questions or problems are to be referred to the Tournament Director. The TD has sole jurisdiction in determining the application of the rules.

19. Waiver and Hold Harmless

All contestants in signing, or electronically signing, the tournament registration form agree to release and forever hold harmless the WBSA and the LEWT, any and all promoters, Tournament Directors,

officials, agents, agencies, and organizations assisting the WBSA and LEWT tournament operation. Furthermore, all contestants agree to waive all responsibility for death, injuries, damage, liability, theft, fire or loss of any kind to entrants. By signing the tournament registration form, you are in fact signing a waiver form. Entries must be signed in order to participate.

20. NTC Qualification

Since we do not know from year to year how many spots will be available for the NTC, they will be distributed in the following manner: First available spot will go to the Team of the Year from the prior year's point's standings. Spots will be allocated down the TOY points list as eligible. Anglers must enter the LEWT as their club affiliation with the Walleye Federation. If a team has a qualifying spot from another club, and are not the LEWT Points champion, they should accept that spot if they want to be guaranteed a spot at the NTC.