

Rules for the 2021 Lake Erie Walleye Trail

1. Rules and rule changes These rules will remain unchanged unless otherwise notified prior to a tournament. Different tournament sites will 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.

1A. The LEWT is holding a tournament in conjunction with the Masters Walleye Circuit in 2021. 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 Lorain tournament.

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. Severe weather

In the event of severe weather, the tournament hours may be suspended, delayed, extended, cut short, or 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.

4. 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, 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.

5. 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. 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.

6. Communication

Marine radios and cell phones. 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 for 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. When an emergency call is received by any tournament angler, that angler must immediately call the TD notifying him of that call. The number for the TD is located on the back of all boat cards. The bottom line is... everyone is aware of the tournament dates. Make arrangements not to have business or other non-emergency calls during tournament hours. If the TD finds that you have transmitted or received information in violation of the rules, you will be disqualified, period.

7. Fishing

Water open to fishing will be the **contiguous waters of Lake Erie**. All Ohio game and fish regulations must be adhered to while pre-fishing and fishing on tournament day. 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. Fish must never be combined between teams. Only SIX rods may be upright and visible while fishing. Putting rods in holders while running to another spot is acceptable. Contestants will be limited to ONE LURE PER ROD. (inline weights, with a hook, like the Rednek inline weights will be allowed).

8. Dead fish

There is no dead fish penalty. 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.

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 anglers 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 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.

10. Protest

The TD or any contestant has the right to protest another team or contestant. The protest must be made to the TD before prize distribution begins, and accompanied by a \$200.00 fee. If the protest is upheld, the fee will be returned. If it is not, no refund will be given.

- ◆ A protest can be made for contestants observed violating any tournament rules and Ohio Fishing Rules and Regulations.
- ◆ 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.

11. Spirit of the rule

All rules have “loop holes”. It is the intention of the Tournament Director to provide a fair and sportsman like 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.

12. Participation and eligibility

LEWT Fields will be considered full at 60 boats of two person teams. The TD may choose where applicable fields can be capped at 80 boats. (Example – joint tournament with the MWC could be opened up to 80 boats.

- ◆ 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 guardian 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.

13. Entry Fees

Entry Fees for any LEWT Event will need to be completed the Monday prior to a scheduled event at 12 Midnight. All Entries will be closed Tuesday 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 + PayPal fees. Early Bird entries will be taken starting 10AM January 8th through January 31st, 2021 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 all 5 events. (Anglers that return with a new partner are considered new teams.) The balance of the boat numbers will be assigned by order of entry. Starting February 1, single tournament entries will be accepted until all fields are full. No entries will be accepted after midnight on the Monday prior to a tournament. A fee will be charged to cover PayPal processing fees.

****New for 2021 Early Bird Teams Only will be eligible to pay via check. Checks must be received by February 1st in order to retain your boat number earned in previous year.**

14. 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 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, 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 tournament registration cut-off. **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. All refunds will have a \$20 writing fee withheld.

15. Payback

Payback for the first three (one day) tournaments will be at least 85% of total entry fees, and will pay back to 15% of a full field of *60 teams. Plaques will be given to the top three teams.

The optional big fish pot is \$20 per team and will pay back 100%. 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%.

- ◆ **NOTE: Beginning with the 2020 season, 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, and sent to the address you gave us on the membership form.**

16. Team of the Year Points

Points will be awarded based on place of finish. For ALL events 200 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 in the first three events 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 out of the first 7 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 teams standing. Disqualified participants 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.

17. Substitutes

Substitutes may be used, but they may not be an original member of another team, and 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 – Each TOY team is eligible to substitute one team member one time for the year. 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 #16. Any team using a sub for the second time and any time thereafter will not receive qualifying team points for that event. See Rule #18

18. Integrity of the circuit

The TD reserves the right to conduct random onsite/offsite polygraph 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. The teams selected to participate will be based on final place for the day and announced prior to send-off. (I.E. Tournament Director will announce at send-off that the team placing in 3rd place today will receive a polygraph. This will eliminate any idea that a team has been targeted.) Refusal to comply with a polygraph, or equipment inspection request will result in that team being ineligible for cash payouts and disqualified. 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.

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. Any additional spots that the LEWT receives will be distributed subjectively and will not go down the points list. 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. Other than winning the team of the year, there are no guarantees for which teams will get NTC invitations from the LEWT.