

# *THE 2026 WINTER CLASSIC*

**Who :** All those that participated in prior Winter Classic events plus those invited this year

**What :** 2 days of speckled trout fishing.

**Where :** Weigh in at Ralph and Kacoos restaurant on the causeway. Weigh in by water or land

**When :** January 24th and 25th 2026. Must be checked in prior to 3pm Saturday and prior to 3pm on Sunday(check in with weigh-master each day)

**How:** Register at Fishing Chaos. [REGISTER HERE](#)

**Cost:** Each team will be required to pay a minimum of \$225/team. With an optional *Lunker* pot \$25/team a second optional *Average Joe* pot \$25/team and a third optional *CPR Redfish* pot \$25/team (not a redfish tournament but many anglers catch redfish so why not)

**Payouts:** Will be determined by number of participants \*see rule 21

**Goal:** 5 speckled trout per day. 2 trout each day are allowed to be over the 22" max slot limit (AMRD allows one over per person). While, the other 3 each day must be within 15"-22". (All fish must exceed 15" minimum but none are required to be over 22")

**No Fishing periods:** Fri. January 23, 2026 6:00pm through Sat. January 24, 2026 6:00am  
Sat. January 24, 2026 3:00pm through Sun. January 25, 2026 6:00am

**Note:** All times references in the rules are GPS central standard time

**NEW! Captains Meeting:** We will have a captains meeting this year at Ralph and Kacoos Thursday January 22nd at 6:00pm. At least one angler from each team will need to attend.

**NEW!!!** At least one person from each team must bring his or her Alabama Driver License which contains the V for vessel endorsement. If you do not possess an Alabama Driver License with a V for vessel endorsement then a proof of completion of an Alabama approved Boater Safety course is required. [Click Here](#) for online course.

# The 2025 Winter Classic Rules

**1. Invitational only tournament designed to challenge participants to bring out the best in an anglers fishing abilities for 2 days.** Invitational means that the participants of the prior Winter Classic tournaments were invited by the tournament directors or by the previous tournament contestants. With each prior participating team inviting one additional team that they know and trust will compete with the other participants with the same integrity as original teams. All invited teams are then the responsibility of the inviter. If at any point a team feels that a team or angler they have invited is not upholding the same level of integrity as the other teams and anglers then the inviter must remove them from the tournament and notify the tournament directors as soon as possible. Tournament directors reserve the right to allow or disallow any team member or complete team.

2. If at any time before, during or after any of The Winter Classic tournaments a team or team member is questioned or caught cheating in a contest the team will be subject to be disqualified from The Winter Classic to include all future events. This will be voted on by the 2025 "The Winter Classic" team members, majority vote decides the outcome. **CHEATING IN THIS OR ANY OTHER FISHING TOURNAMENT IS CONSIDERED BY THE LAW TO BE FRAUDULENT AND THOSE INVOLVED COULD FACE FINES AND JAIL TIME.**

**3. Competitors in The Winter Classic tournament are expected to follow high standards of sportsmanship, courtesy, safety and conservation.** Any infraction of these fundamental sporting principles may be deemed cause for disqualification. Maximum courtesy must be practiced at all times, especially with regard to boating and angling in the vicinity of non-competitors who may be on tournament waters. Any act of a competitor, which reflects unfavorably upon The Winter Classics effort to promote fisheries conservation, clean waters, and courtesy, shall be reason for disqualification. Evidence of chemical substance addiction or abuse, conviction of a felony or other crimes involving moral turpitude or other conduct reflecting unfavorably upon The Winter Classics efforts to promote safety, sportsmanship and compliance with tournament rules shall be grounds for rejecting any invitation for participation and for disqualification. Any act deemed by the Tournament Directors that gives a team or angler an unfair advantage not specifically covered under this set of rules shall be grounds for disqualification. Any violation by an angler deemed intentional or preconceived by the Tournament Director to gain an unfair advantage, would be grounds for permanent disqualification and criminal charges will be filed with local authorities for committing fraud.

**4. This is a two day tournament.** **\*\*(substitution rule)** If you cannot fish both tournament days then you better fish your ass off the day you can. Tournament start times will be the same both Saturday and Sunday 6:00am gps/cellular network central standard time and weigh in will begin at 3pm both Saturday and Sunday. No lines in the water until 6:00am each day and no fishing between 6:00 pm Friday and 6:00 am Saturday and again 3:00pm Saturday and 6:00am Sunday.

**5. Rod and reel only, artificial bait only.** Artificial bait is described as a single man made device used to attract and or catch one fish at a time. Multiple lures per line will be allowed. Tandem rigs will be allowed but no more than two lures are allowed per line. All fish entered may only be caught using the lure as a device to catch the fish and not to purposely snag any fish. All fish must be caught within the active hours of the tournament. The use of live or dead chum is not allowed by any participant of The Winter Classic nor fishing around another boat engaged in live or dead bait chumming \*see rule 6. Competitors may not catch fish or weigh in fish that have been caged or confined in an area prior to the tournament.

**6. PERMITTED FISHING LOCATIONS:** Competitors may fish anywhere on tournament waters accessible to the public by boat, except areas designated as “off limits” or “no fishing” by private ownership or local, state and federal officials. Competitors may not fish within 50 yards of a competitor’s boat, which was in a location first, and anchored. (An anchored boat is a boat held in a stable position by a line attached to a weight, push pole, Power Pole, etc. with the trolling motor in the up position). If a boat is determined to be adrift and not held in position then avoid the perceived drift pattern while maintaining a 50 yard halo. If the boat does not have a trolling motor the definition of anchored still applies. Fishing within 100 yards of a boat that is chumming with live or dead bait is NOT allowed. Teams may not fish within 100 yards of an area known to be chummed during tournament hours. If during competition a non-competitor approaches within 100 yards and begins to chum, then you must remain more than 100 yards from the non-competitor.

**7. Cellular or radio communication for the purpose of fishing information during tournament hours will NOT be allowed.** All other cell usage ok but preferred to keep on standby for emergency use only. In the event of an emergency please call necessary emergency response personnel prior to notifying tournament directors or other tournament anglers. Please attempt to notify tournament directors so all are aware of the situation. Your safety is the priority.

**8. Boats and equipment should be maintained in a manner that can provide safe fishing in the areas you plan to travel and fish in.** Boats and motors shall be equipped with all necessary safety equipment required by state and federal law enforcement. Although it is not required to keep fish alive for tournament weigh in purposes it is rewarded to weigh in live fish and It is strongly recommended to have the means to keep your catch alive and in good condition throughout the fishing day and tournament weigh in process.

## **9. Safety Check, Dock Departure Times, and Boat Status**

### **Part A: Safety Check & Dock Departure Authorization**

All registered tournament anglers must complete the **Safety Check** using the **Fishing Chaos app** before leaving the dock. The Safety Status button will become available at **4:59 a.m.** each morning of the tournament on the tournament homepage.

Each team will be assigned a **specific dock departure time**, which represents the **earliest time** they are permitted to leave the dock area of their choosing. Anglers are **not required** to leave at their exact assigned time; however, they **may not leave prior to it**. Teams may depart at any time **after** their assigned time, provided doing so does not interfere with other tournament anglers.

Prior to departing the dock, anglers must:

1. Select “**Safety Check**” in the Fishing Chaos app
2. Select “**In the Water**”

Once both steps are completed and the assigned dock departure time has been reached, anglers may depart and proceed to their fishing area.

This procedure is intended to verify that anglers remain at the dock until they are permitted to leave and to reduce congestion at boat ramps and docks by allowing for safe, staggered departures.

Fishing areas are unrestricted within permitted fishing locations (*see Rule 6*).

All anglers are subject to a **polygraph examination** to verify compliance with dock departure times, safety check procedures, and all related tournament rules. Refusal to submit to a polygraph or failure to pass may result in disqualification.

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## **Part B: Weigh-In Safety Status**

Upon arrival at the weigh-in location, anglers must update their status in the Fishing Chaos app by:

1. Selecting “**Safety Status**”
2. Selecting “**Out of the Water**”

Failure to properly complete Safety Check, boat status updates, or comply with verification procedures may result in penalties or disqualification.

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**10. Anglers must remain in the boat at all times while actively fishing.** No wade fishing or boat swapping (unless the primary vessel fails and anglers must swap boats to continue fishing) tournament directors or weighmaster must be notified of any boat swapping.

**11. No fish shall be allowed on a team's boat prior to beginning each day of the tournament.** All fish weighed in each day must be caught during tournament hours the day they are being weighed.

**12. Weigh in times 3:00pm Saturday and 3:00pm Sunday.** All participants must be present and checked in with the weighmaster and Fishing Chaos Safety Status check prior to posted weigh in time. Late penalty of 1# per minute for anyone not checked in prior to 3pm. Official weigh in time will be by cellular/gps central standard time. Prior to weigh in the teams were randomly selected as to the order in which they will weigh in. The weighmaster will call for #1 team at 3:00pm and promptly begin weighing fish. On Sunday teams will check in with the weighmaster prior to 3:00pm and by 3:00pm the team in last place from Saturday will weigh in first and each team higher ranked than they will weigh in ascending order. The last team to weigh in on Sunday will be the team that was leading on Saturday.

**13. Weight of the lunker will be determined first or last** so make sure you specify to the weighmaster which fish is the lunker that you are choosing to weigh. It is recommended that you mark the largest with some sort of culling tag that can be removed once fish is on the scale prior to the official weight being called. Then add or remove the remaining 4 fish and remove any culling tags before official weight is called. Weighmaster will verify that all fish reach the minimum size length. Official length will be determined by measuring the fish from longest point of nose to longest tip of a pinched tail. **The overall length must touch the 15" mark on the official measuring board.** Two fish per day will be allowed to be entered into the team creel that exceed 22". **While any fish that its pinched tail does not cross over the 22" line it will be classified as a slot speckled trout and will not count against the two day maximum over slot speckled trout rule.** All fish that do not measure will be disqualified and no fish may be substituted. The 5 fish you bring to the scale will be the fish you weigh. All teams are responsible for choosing their own 5 fish, the weigh master will not weigh or measure any fish to help a team to decide which fish to weigh in. **You may only weigh in once each day. All 22" fish over the 2 per team max per day will be disqualified. All fish under 15" will be disqualified. Any fish with a mutilated or suspected modified tail can be disqualified by the weighmaster and if it has been determined that a tail was purposely modified then the team will be disqualified from the tournament and will be banned from all future events.**

**14. A live fish will be determined by the official Rules Chairman/Judge/weighmaster. A live fish must be able to exhibit ALL of the following fish behaviors: Fin movement, gill movement and or mouth movement, and the body of the fish must be flexible.** Once fish have been measured where applicable and weighed then the live fish in good condition will be tagged by Dauphin Island Sea lab students/staff.

**15. Tournament scoring will be a combination of official total creel weights and live fish bonus which is .25#.** Scoring will be determined to the hundredth of a pound. Example

Day one total 12.50# 4 fish determined by judge that they are alive for a total of 1.00# bonus gives the teams 13.50# total Day two total is 15.75# with 3 fish determined by judge that they are alive for a total of .75# bonus and a day two total of 16.50# and a two day total of 30.00#

16. Extra fish are allowed if a team wishes to keep extra fish each day but are not allowed to remain in the boat from Saturday to Sunday. **A FISH CAUGHT ON SATURDAY IS NOT ALLOWED TO BE WEIGHED ON SUNDAY.** No culling of dead fish will be allowed and all state enforced bag and size limits must be followed at all times.

### **Optional categories-**

**Lunker:** The lunker category is an optional buy in and only those who buy in will participate in this category. This is a contest that will be for the team who catches the heaviest speckled trout during tournament hours of the winter classic. Teams may weigh in a Lunker each day. All lunkers determined by the weighmaster to be alive will receive a .25# bonus to its final score/weight. (For example: an angler weighs a 4.39# live speckled trout the final score/weight will be 4.64#.) see rule 17 for tie breakers

**Average Joe:** The Average Joe category was added to The Winter Classic for 2021. The Average Joe is an optional buy in and only those who buy in will participate in this contest. The Average Joe category is decided by the average of all teams who participate in The Winter Classic and the participating team closest to the average wins the Average Joe pot. All Final entries will be added together and divided by the number of teams who entered fish into The Winter Classic and the overall average weight will be determined and the winner will be decided. (Example: Based on 2020 Winter Classic results the average weight of the 12 teams who weighed in was 17.26#. The 7th place team TKO had a final weight/score of 19.51 and assuming they are in the Average Joe category they would win the pot. If the 7th place team did not enter the Average Joe category then the winner would be determined by the team in the optional category closest to the average weight.) The average will be based on official weights. The average does not include teams with a total weight of zero.

**CPR Redfish max 32”:** Many anglers who fish for large speckled trout often encounter large redfish. Although this is not a redfish tournament we have a way to compete through the use of Catch Photo and Release through the Fishing Chaos App. This is an optional category and only one ticket per team is required to participate. During tournament hours only participating teams can Catch Photo and release any redfish under 32”. The winner will ultimately be the one that is the largest submitted without exceeding 32”. (Many measuring boards are 32” long so that is where the 32” max comes from). See Rule 22 for full CPR Redfish rules.

17. **In the event of a tie.** If there is a tie at the end of day two then the winner will be decided by which team weighed in the largest fish over the two day tournament. If the tie is not broken then the winner will be determined by which team had the most fish to be determined alive by the judge over the two day tournament. If the tie is not broken then there will be a fish off and each team will be given 1 hour to go catch and return with the largest legal speckled trout. In the

event of a tie for the LUNKER trout. If there is a tie for the largest fish for the weekend then the tie breaker will go to the live speckled trout which includes a live fish bonus. If a tie is not broken then the winner will be decided by a single coin toss. The weigh master will present a coin and instruct which side is heads or tails. The anglers will do a best of three rock paper scissors to decide who will call heads or tails. In the event of a tie for the Average Joe the team with the most live speckled trout will be determined as the winner. If a tie is not broken then the winner will be decided by a single coin toss. The weighmaster will present a coin and instruct which side is heads or tails. The anglers will do a best of three rock paper scissors to decide who will call heads or tails. If there is a tie in the CPR Redfish then the tie goes to the first angler to enter the fish.

**18. All anglers must follow all state and federal laws such as but not limited to maintaining active fishing licenses and permits, following all size and bag limits, navigating with proper kill switches, lights and floatation devices.**

**19. The Winter Classic and those associated are not responsible for any damages of any kind that may occur during the hours of the fishing contest.** You as an angler and boat operator are responsible for your own actions. Safe boat handling and navigation practices can only be managed by the person behind the wheel. If it is determined a tournament angler is operating in an unsafe manner then the angler/team are subject to disqualification.

**20. Registration must be received by Fishing Chaos or Ugly Fishing LLC by January 22nd at 6:59pm.**

**21. The Winter Classic Payout:** Payout for 10 boats or less will be paid 1st place and 2nd place. Payout 10 or more boats 1st place, 2nd Place, 3rd place. Payout will be determined by total monies left after expenses and awards. Any sponsorship money left after expenses will go into the total payout. **Lunker Payout:** All teams that enter the Lunker category pay \$25. The team with the largest speckled trout who enter the Lunker category will win the entire pot less tournament expenses. **Average Joe Payout:** All teams that enter the Average Joe Category pay in \$25. The team with the closest weight to the average who enter the Average Joe category will win the entire pot less tournament expenses. **CPR Redfish payout:** All teams that enter this category pay in \$25. The team with the longest redfish without exceeding 32" will win the entire pot less tournament expenses.

**22. Optional CPR Redfish category:**

**Photo requirements**

- a. Each photo must be of a fish on a measuring board with a right edge such as the Hawg Trough by Hagans or Ketch Products.
- b. Fish must lie centered on the measuring board with its mouth touching the "fence" (a.k.a. "bump"; upright end of the board), left eye upward and right eye against the measuring board.
- c. Both ends of the fish must be visible in photos (not cropped off in photo or covered by fingers or hand)
- d. No straps, clips or other restraining devices may be used to secure fish to measuring board.

- e. Hook/lure may remain attached in photo but line must be relaxed and not used as a restraint.
- f. All attempts to close the mouth should be made.
- g. Length is determined by the longest point at which the tip of the tail touches the measuring board, or if the tip of the tail extends off the measuring board, the farthest point at which the tail touches the measuring board. If that point is between two quarter-inch marks, measurement is rounded down to the lower quarter inch. Maximum length allowed will be 32".
- h. The tail must be fully in contact with the measuring board. If any portion of the tail is lifted off the measuring board, the photo will be denied.
- i. Photo must be taken with a smart phone that can be used to upload the digital photographs through the Fishing Chaos app.
- j. CPR Code will be distributed digitally prior to tournament start time.
- k. CPR ID Card with the CPR ID Code must be in the photo, legible, and positioned above, below, or beside (not on) the fish. Identifier can be written on a hand of the angler.

**\*\*Substitutions -** If by chance a registered angler cannot fish and it is decided that he or she cannot fish before 5:00 am January 25th then the remaining member is allowed to substitute with a new angler for the weekend. However, once the tournament begins then the remaining angler will have to fish solo and no substitutions will be allowed. If a team member is required to leave the fishing competition during the tournament time then he or she must remain out for the remainder of that competition day but will be allowed to participate in the weigh in process. If a competitor must leave the competition on Saturday he or she will be allowed to re-enter the competition on Sunday.

Please register through  
[Click here to Register](#)

Questions email: [classictournamentsllc.com](mailto:classictournamentsllc.com)