2026 SCHU'S OPEN SHOOTOUT
OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES

1. Dates and Times

   a. The Open Shootout is a 1-day event on Friday, May 8. A blow date is planned for Saturday, May 9.

   b. Registration will be held on Thursday, May 7 from 5:00 – 6:30 PM at Schu's Grill & Bar (downstairs).

   c. Captain's Meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 7 at Schu's Grill & Bar (downstairs). A member from each team is required to attend in person.

   d. The awards ceremony will follow the weigh-in (3:00 PM estimated) on Friday, May 8 at the West Basin Marina. Live stream access on YouTube Channel SWMI STEELHEADERS or www.facebook.com/southwestmichigansteelheaders.

   e. The fishing period is Friday, May 8 …

      - Shotgun start @ 6:30:00 AM / Stop @ 1:30:00 PM (EDT applies)
      - NO RUN TIME ALLOWED (see Section 8)

2. Eligibility

   a. This is an Open Division shootout. All teams, whether pro or amateur, are eligible and will compete in one division.

   b. All Open Division captains must be members of a Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association affiliated club. Proof of membership is required at registration. All non-members may join the Southwest Michigan Steelheaders club for $45 annual dues.

   c. All boats must be equipped with a VHF marine radio in working order with channel FM-78.

   d. All boats must have a working GPS chart plotter with the capability to record a single uninterrupted track for the complete fishing period.

   e. The Tournament Committee has the right to decline entry or terminate the entry of any person or team due to unsportsmanlike conduct detrimental to the tournament, sponsors, participants and supporting groups.

3. Entry Fees

   a. Entry fee is $700 per boat. There is an additional Big Fish contest entry of $100 which is optional. All entries must be received NO LATER than 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 7. Payment of entry fee constitutes agreement of all tournament rules and waiver of liability on entry form. Additional fees may be added for credit card processing.

   b. How to enter the tournament:

      - Register online @ www.swmisteelheaders.com (credit card payment only).
      - Mail your entry to SW MI Steelheaders, PO Box 575, St. Joseph, MI 49085. Must be received by Monday, May 4.
      - Deliver your entry form and payment to Tackle Haven or Fishin Hole by 5:00 PM on Thursday, May 7.
      - Come to the registration on Thursday, May 7 (5-6:30 PM) at Schu's Grill & Bar and register and pay there.

c. There are no provisions for the return of entry fees unless a written request is received by the Tournament Director at least 7 days prior to the kickoff of the tournament. If the tournament is cancelled due to weather conditions all entries minus 10% maximum will be refunded.

4. Scoring

   a. Weigh your best 7 fish in possession. No more than 4 Lake Trout may be weighed.

   b. Winners will be determined by a total accumulation of points based on 10 points per legal fish weighed, plus 1 point per pound total weight (nearest hundredth pound).

   c. The team accumulating the highest number of points will be the winner, followed by the team with the next highest accumulation, and so on. All ties will be split evenly.

   d. The following species shall be eligible: Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Atlantic Salmon, Pink Salmon, Lake Trout, Brown Trout and Steelhead Trout.

5. Prizes

   a. The Tournament Committee will finalize and announce the payout schedule prior to the start of the tournament. At least 100% of the entry fees will be paid out. Any proceeds will go to the Southwest Michigan Steelheaders Club.

   b. All prize checks will be distributed at the awards ceremony or mailed to the address on the entry form within one week of the end of the event.

   c. A completed IRS Form W-9 must be received by the tournament committee prior to the disbursement of any prize equal or greater to $2000 in value. Only one check will be written to the captain of each winning boat or designated legal entity.

6. Big Fish Contest Rules - Participation is optional but you must enter the main event to participate. Entry fee is $100. Only 1 fish may be entered per team. First place will receive 70% of the pot and 2nd place 30% of the pot. Prizes will be determined by weight. All ties will be split evenly.

7. Fishing Rules

   a. All boats must depart and return to the Port of St. Joseph, MI. No fishing inside the pier heads designated by a line between the North and South pier heads.

   b. You must fish within and not pass beyond the boundary limits set forth in Section 9 at any time during the fishing periods.

   c. All Michigan DNR state laws and regulations apply.

   d. The maximum number of rods fishing at any time is 9. Fishing means "line in the water". One slider per rod will be allowed; however, sliders may not exceed 72 inches. Maximum 2 baits per rod.

8. Start and Finish

   a. The tournament committee will use FM-78 to start and end each fishing period. No lines may enter the water until the start is announced. You must stay inside a ½ mile radius from the pier heads until the announcement of the start of the fishing period.

   b. Your boat must pass between the Committee Boat and the pier heads by the end of the fishing period ... NO EXCEPTIONS! The committee boat shall be stationed approximately ½ mile due west of the pier head.

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9. Boundaries

    a. The boundary is a 30-mile radius from the St. Joseph pier head, and you must stay in Michigan waters.

    b. You must record a continuous track line of your boat on your chart plotter from the start of the fishing period to the finish. You must save this track line for at least 24 hours after the close of the fishing period. Chart plotters may be reviewed at any time and for any reason by an independent designate of the tournament committee to ensure the boundary rule has not been violated.

10. Weigh-in

    a. At the close of each fishing period or once the fish limit has been attained, all boats must go directly to West Basin Marina for weigh-in. No stops may be made prior to dropping off at the weigh-in unless you slip at West Basin in which case you may dock and then proceed directly to weigh-in.

    b. You can only weigh 7 fish. Your cooler must only have 7 fish inside at the weigh-in point. If you have more than 7 fish in your cooler at the weigh-in point, you will be disqualified … NO EXCEPTIONS!

    c. No water or loose ice in the coolers at weigh-in.

    d. All fish may be tested for time in possession. The tournament committee may retain any fish for any reason.

    e. Fish donation is optional if there are agencies or individuals available at weigh-in to receive your fish. Fish may not be left at the weigh station if no one is available to receive them. Disposition of fish must follow state and local laws.

11. Communications - Open communication is allowed. All participants should monitor FM-78 at all times. Important tournament information will be broadcast on FM-78. Please restrict communication on FM-78 to vital tournament communication only, no idle chatter will be allowed on FM-78. Participants who miss these announcements for any reason will still be held accountable.

12. Observer System - The tournament committee will provide and compensate trained observers. Observers will be assigned to the top five boats participating from the 2023 tournament. The tournament committee reserves the right to assign additional observers on any boat for any reason to maintain the integrity of the event.

13. Boat Identification - The tournament committee will furnish a colored flag and boat identification number at registration. The flag shall be flown on the tournament boat's radio antenna in full view from all directions and the ID number shall be prominently displayed on the PORT side from the start of the fishing period until weigh-in is completed.

14. Boat Inspections - The Tournament Committee may board any vessel at any time to inspect and enforce tournament rules.

15. Protests

    a. A 5 person Rules Committee appointed by the Tournament Committee prior to the start of the tournament will resolve disputes. Their decision will be final and binding. A sixth member will be appointed as an alternate in the event of a conflict of interest by another member.

    b. Protests must be presented to the Tournament Committee by the protesting captain in writing within 1 hour of the end of the official fishing period with $100. If the protest is upheld, you will get $100 back, otherwise the tournament will retain the $100.

16. Cancellations

a. The contest is considered official if a minimum of three (3) hours is fished.

b. The Tournament Committee may cancel the tournament, when in their opinion conditions could be dangerous to people or property. The Committee will announce their determination of a delayed start or cancellation 45 minutes before each fishing period.

c. After the fishing period has begun, an announcement will be made on FM-78 if cancellation or postponement is imminent. A minimum of 15 minutes notice will be given prior to the early termination of a fishing period. Once the fishing period is terminated, you will have 1 hour to enter the pier head, or you will be disqualified.

d. If a fishing period is shortened, all boats must proceed as described in Sections 8 and 10.

e. Once a fishing period is declared closed by the Tournament Committee no more fish may be boated.

f. If the tournament is cancelled before it starts or cancelled and considered incomplete, the alternate date is planned for Saturday, May 10.

17. Polygraph Testing - By entering this tournament, all captains, crew, and observers agree to subject themselves to a polygraph examination performed by an examiner provided by the tournament committee. All participants may be tested for any reason at any time (up to 30 days after the tournament is completed) at the sole discretion of the tournament committee. In addition, all participants agree to abide by the results of the polygraph examination. Failure to submit to a polygraph examination will result in disqualification from the tournament. The official results, including the distribution of all prize money, may be delayed up to 30 days after the tournament, pending the results of a polygraph examination.

18. Disqualification and Penalties

    a. Disqualification for any reason will result in the forfeiture of all entry fees and cash prizes.

    b. Failure to comply with any of the rules listed in this document will result in disqualification from the tournament.

    c. Any violation of DNR regulations will result in disqualification from the tournament.

    d. Running gunnel to gunnel or passing any item from boat to boat will result in disqualification. However, a tournament boat may stop and assist a vessel in distress if the tournament committee gives prior authorization via marine radio on FM-78.

    e. If a tournament boat breaks down after the start of the fishing period and requires assistance from another vessel, that boat that broke down will be disqualified from the tournament.

19. Liability

    a. All reasonable precautions will be taken by the Tournament Committee to protect people and property during the tournament. Neither the Tournament Committee, Rules Committee, officers and directors of the Southwest Michigan Steelheaders, volunteers, nor sponsors can or will be responsible for the safety of people, for accident, theft, damage by fire, vandalism, or any other cause for loss to a contestant's property.

    b. Participants understand and agree to hold harmless the aforementioned groups and individuals from liability or damage that may be incurred from participation in the Tournament.

20. Rule Changes - The Tournament Committee reserves the right to change any of these rules and post changes up to 45 minutes prior to the start of the tournament. These rules shall supersede any prior rules for this event.