

SJRYC Windward Sheet Volume 2018 Number 2, 02 June 2018

Spring Weather and Race Cancellations

Late Spring weather on Lake Michigan can be quite unsettled and this past week has been a good example of this tendency. On Wednesday we watched the forecast for Thunderstorms and saw a large storm front making its way up through Illinois. It was scheduled to hit the lake just at race time, indicating 90 - 100% chances for lightning strikes starting at 7PM.

We watched that forecast every hour through the day and noted it was unchanged. By 5PM we saw evidence of T-Storms in the area with high gusty winds and heavy rain showers. Normally we wait as long as possible before canceling a race hoping the forecast will be proven wrong. But last Wednesday the weather maps were so clear on the path and speed of the storms that Jim Scholz made to call to cancel the race just after 5:15PM. Any of you at your boat heard this broadcast on VHF Channel 69. We also got an email off to the fleet for those not yet at the harbors.

On Friday, we had another weather pattern to worry about, and that was excessively high winds and waves for the race to South Haven. We saw live wind speed reports from the Michigan South buoy showing 20+ knots of Northerly breeze throughout most of the day, with Sailflow projections of 23+ knots true for most of the projected race time. In addition, NOAA projected wave heights of 5 - 6 feet and more.

But when Jim Scholz arrived early to look at the lake, he saw conditions much less extreme than the projections, so he decided we'd be able to start and run the race. It was an excellent call and we sent an email out to the Spinnaker skippers about 5PM on Friday letting them know that the RC Team planned to start the race as scheduled.

Spinnaker Series Race to South Haven.

As told by Bill Born onboard the Farr-Mumm 36 Sailing Yacht Distraction...

Jim Scholz and the race boat team gave us a good, clean start and we set out in 13 - 14 knots true wind out of the NNW, giving us the possibility of sailing the entire race on one tack. Seas were confused, with 2 - 3 footers regularly and some bigger 6 and even 7 footers coming at irregular intervals from odd directions. We started with a full Main and #3, and although the faster rated Farr 395's pulled ahead of us we were able to outpoint the fleet and stay closer to the finish line than anyone else.

Jack drove about half way and then I took over. Some of the steep waves were difficult to steer through, and we'd fall way down into the troughs after driving up over the top. There were whitecaps and water blowing off the tops of the waves. Unlike the forecast, however, the wind speed did not significantly increase.

It was odd that in spite of the significant amount of wind speed, at times the direction changed constantly, ten degrees higher than average, then ten degrees lower. We could see Welly ahead coming into the wind (compared to us), then falling back down. The

same thing happened to us which made finding a path through the waves that much harder.

We estimated the wind at 14 - 16 knots true, but as we were getting close to the Palisades Nuclear Plant, things got lighter so we decided to tack out, get the #1 up, and look for better air as we set ourselves up for the finish line. We held the tack only for about 2 minutes, found fresher air, tacked, and made the finish without changing course again. We carried our full main all the way but made it as flat as a board most of the time. The wind was predicted to clock Eastward, which happened after we finished, but held N/NW for us to finish.

As predicted by their ratings, the three Farr-designed race boats, Welly, us and Imagine, broke away from the rest of the fleet. Imagine finished first, but couldn't save their time on us. Third place was a very well-sailed Silk, which finished ahead of both the other Farr 395, Wellenreiter, and the other C&C 110, Sea Raider as well. Elixir finished in sixth place.

This race always bring surprises. Last year it was a race that felt dead with no air at the start and then developed into a wonderful breeze. This year it was a race that was supposed to have very strong winds clocking Eastward, but instead was run in fresh breezes that stayed N/NW. In spite of the rough seas it was a great night to be on the lake and was one of the fastest passages to South Haven I can remember. Was it a challenging race? Absolutely--but that's what we love on Distraction.

Many thanks to Bill Born for that great report, and congratulations to Bill, Jack, and Bill's wife, Stephanie for their victory, making for a crew of exactly three souls onboard.

We will have a report on the South Haven Invitational next week.

This week is another busy week in our schedule with a regular race Wednesday night and our annual Rhumblin Regatta invitational race on Saturday. All boats are welcome in this race which brings boats from other harbors to our Club. Please register online or come to check-in at 9:30 AM Saturday morning in the SJRYC bar on the first floor and look for me sitting in the South East corner. If you are one of our new Jammers, we will have both JaM and Spinn sections, and the Rhumblin is a great way to learn by sailing on what will be a different race course from the usual Wednesday night races. Email Louie or me if you have questions, and if you need the direct link to the sign up page please let us know.

Until then, we'll see you next Wednesday out on the water.

Best regards, Jim Schragger

The Windward Sheet, established by Ken Zimmerman, follows the SJRYC Sail Race fleet and is published at irregular intervals throughout the racing season.

