

CBYRA Annapolis Race Week – Preview

By BILL WAGNER

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Two classes will contest major championships while two others will make their one-design debut as part of the 43rd annual Annapolis Race Week, organized by the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association.

A strong fleet of 12 boats are entered in the Farr 30 North American Championship, being held in conjunction with Annapolis Race Week for the first time. "In this economy, we are very pleased with the turnout," said Tink Chambers of Staggs Yachts, which manages the Farr 30 class.

Turbo Duck, an Annapolis-based boat sailed by the father-son team of Bodo and Nick von der Wense, captured the North American circuit title in 2008 and is one of the favorites. Turbo Duck placed third at last year's North American Championship.

"I think it's amazing that we will have 12 boats on the line. That's a very good turnout. It's great to see the class making a comeback," Bodo von der Wense said.

Rhumb Punch, a Solomons-based boat sailed by the husband-wife team of John and Linda Edwards, also figures to be in contention after capturing class honors at Acura Key West 2009. Adrenalin, owned by Jeff Maludy of Toledo, Ohio, is another strong program.

Catalina 27 class will conduct its national championship with a deep, competitive 12-boat fleet. Pasadena resident John Anderson sailed Swell to victory at last year's Annapolis Race Week and hopes to defend that title.

"I think it's going to be very competitive and I wouldn't be surprised to see four or five different boats win races," Anderson said.

Waldorf resident Rich Wallio captured the Catalina 27 National Championship in 2003 the last time it was held as part of Annapolis Race Week. Wallio will team with skipper Curtis Sarratt to sail Chaos this year. Other top contenders include bowmovement (Martin Casey, Norfolk, Va.) and Snagglepuss (Peter Zahn, Severna Park).

Farr 40 class will make its one-design debut at Annapolis Race Week with a solid five-boat fleet. Annapolis resident Kevin McNeil credited on-the-water regatta chairman Bobby Frey for suggesting the Farr 40s break out of the PHRF A0 fleet.

"Bobby Frey recognized that we have a growing fleet of Farr 40s on the Chesapeake Bay and wanted to give us a start. In his wisdom and leadership, Bobby knew that having a one-design start at race week could only help the local class," McNeil said.

Rod Jabin, who steered Ramrod to victory at the Chesapeake Farr 40 Regatta hosted by Storm Trysail Club and the Annapolis National Offshore One-Design Series, is sailing in Europe and will not compete this weekend. That throws the class wide open and McNeil said all five boats could win.

Yellow Jacket, skippered by Larry Bulman, placed second at Block Island Race Week this summer and is always a factor. Sundance, owned by Gary Beer, will have Annapolis professional John Bertrand calling tactics. Seawolf, a Naval Academy entry skippered by varsity offshore team member Austin Van Olst, will have Jahn Tihansky aboard.

"It's bound to be a very competitive regatta. I think this group of boats will mix it up quite a bit," said McNeil, who was runner-up at the Chesapeake Farr 40 Regatta in May.

J/80 class also makes its one-design debut at Annapolis Race Week with eight boats slated to duke it out. Arnold resident Kristen Robinson is the current U.S. Class president and has spurred local interest in the J/80.

"Our local fleet is growing and I give Kristen a lot of credit for being the catalyst," said Jeff Jordan of J/World Annapolis. "We've had 15 boats on the line every week for Thursday night racing. People are discovering that it's a fun, easy boat to sail."

Jordan will skipper the J/World entry Emotional Rescue with a team comprised of three students. Brian and Kristen Robinson have enjoyed significant success aboard Angry Chameleon while Chris Johnson and his Dragonfly team also figure to be in contention.

Last year's introduction of a PHRF Sport Boat class last year was a success and a fleet of five boats will try to wrest the title away from Brian Jones and the Problem Child team. The Blue Collar 27-footer made its competitive debut at the 2008 Annapolis Race Week and performed impressively, getting the gun in every race and winning all but one race on corrected time.

"I think the Sport Boat class is gaining in popularity and we have some ideas for how to increase the participation in future years," said Frey, hinting that similar designs that currently live in PHRF A2 or A3 might be pushed to where they truly belong.

This marks the third year of special racing for the PHRF Non-Spinnaker class at Annapolis Race Week. Skippers have reacted favorably to the format of sailing strictly distance races around government marks with officials from the Gibson Island Yacht Squadron monitoring the conditions.

"The non-spinnaker boats prefer this type of racing. These boats are better suited to sailing distance courses as opposed to going around the buoys," Frey said. "We'll have the Gibson Island folks trail the fleet and they will customize the course based on the breeze, shortening if necessary."

Other class champions returning to defend their titles at Annapolis Race Week are Team Aegis (Jim Kershaw, Beneteau 36.7), Zephyr (David Hoyt, Cal 25), Tenacious (Scott and Carl Gitchell, J/105), Bebop (Bob Rutsch/Mike Costello, J/30), Medicine Man (Charles Kohlerman III and IV, J/35), Wild Child (Henry Filter, Melges 24), Anema & Core (Ennio Staffini, PHRF A0), Wairere (Pete Hunter, PHRF A1), Windward (Randy and Dot Watson, PHRF A3) and A Parent Tripp (Brett Harrison/John Yeigh, PHRF B).

Annapolis Race Week will be held Saturday through Monday on three different courses around the Chesapeake Bay. Post-regatta parties will be held at the Annapolis Yacht Club annex with Gosling's pouring Dark-N-Stormy drinks and Adam's Ribs serving up great food. The Orlando Phillips Band (Saturday) and Matthew Frey (Sunday, Monday) will provide musical entertainment.

Tim Wilkes and his team will be on the water taking still photographs while also producing a video that will be shown nightly during the tent party. Harken will once again conduct its "Grinder Challenge" at 7 p.m. each evening.

Frey will direct a typically-strong on-water team that will be led by veteran principal race officers Taran Teague (Annapolis Yacht Club, Fleet 1), Ed Michels (Eastport Yacht Club, Fleet 2) and Fred Dersch (Naval Academy Sailing Squadron, Fleet 3).

Course splits are as follows: Fleet 1 (Farr 40, PHRF A0, A1, A2 and A3, J/35, Beneteau 36.7). Fleet 2 (Farr 30, PHRF Sport Boat, J/105, Melges 24, J/80). Fleet 3 (PHRF B and C-D, Catalina 27, J/30, Cal 25, J/24).

CBYRA has stepped up the caliber of awards with skippers of the first, second and third place finishers receiving half-model hulls mounted on a wooden board. "We wanted to make the trophies unique and different. Most skippers have lots of silver, but not many have a half-model," Frey said.

At press time, a healthy fleet of 170 boats had entered the 43rd annual Annapolis Race Week, just five fewer than last year. Frey said the impressive turnout speaks well of the regatta's reputation for delivering on and off the course.

"One thing we've noticed this season is that the traditionally well-attended regattas are holding their numbers despite the economy," he said. "We've made Annapolis Race Week a Key West-level event at an Annapolis price. From a race management standpoint and social standpoint, it is a great value."

Skippers participating in Annapolis Race Week are reminded to turn in nominations for the Shawn Hadley "Foredeck With a Winning Spirit" Memorial Trophy. This marks the second year the special perpetual award will be presented in honor of Hadley, a popular bowman on the Alberg 30 Fast Company and other Annapolis boats.

CBYRA once again offers a hearty thank you to all the major sponsors of Annapolis Race Week: Goslings, Jaguar Land Rover Annapolis, Michelob from Katcef Brothers of Annapolis, Annapolis Performance Sailing, Fawcett Boat Supplies, North Sails, J-World and J-Port, North Point Yacht Sales.