

CBYRA Race Week – Sunday, September 6, 2009

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Blame it on the full moon!

Abnormally strong currents continue to play a huge factor in the 43rd annual Annapolis Race Week and the current full moon is almost certainly the cause. An ebb tide rushing at almost two knots has forced race committee personnel and competitors alike to make adjustments while adding a unique element of strategy.

"The current was humongous again today. It is certainly having an affect, but that's sailboat racing. As usual, the sailors have taken the current into account and adjusted," said Bobby Frey, on-water chairman of Annapolis Race Week.

The current has challenged the race committees by making it tough to accurately set marks. Some marks have dragged, forcing drop boats to move quickly to rest them. However, Fleet 1 principal race officer Taran Teague said there has been one positive by-product of the current.

"The current is pushing boats off the line so we've had very few boats over early," said Teague, whose race committee has recorded just two on-course-side penalties in six classes that have all completed at least five races.

Helmsmen and tacticians have altered their thinking by not starting at the favored end of the line and over-standing marks.

"I don't think we've tried to start at the favored end once. With the current running as hard as it is, we didn't want to get into a tussle with other boats. We'd rather stay away from the favored end and come off the line clean," said Guillaume Seynhaeve, who is calling tactics for his father aboard J/105 leader Mopelia. "That's been the key to our success so far. We've stayed in clean air and stayed out of trouble."

Denis Seynhaeve steered Mopelia to a pair of bullets in three races yesterday to overtake Day 1 leader Inigo in the 19-boat fleet, largest at Annapolis Race Week. With one day remaining in the three-day regatta, it's basically a two-boat race with Mopelia holding a narrow one-point lead over skipper Jim Konigsberg and the Inigo team.

"To be honest, I just want to stay the heck away from Inigo. We want to sail our own race tomorrow and not worry about them," said Guillaume Seynhaeve, noting that his father is selling the boat at season's end. "We'd like to go out on a winning note."

Skippers aboard 11 of the 12 boats competing for the Farr 30 North American Championship are wondering what Turbo Duck is doing to go so fast. The father-son team of Bodo and Nick von der Wense won two of three races on Sunday to take a comfortable eight-point lead over second-place Moxie, skippered by Jim Allsopp.

Bodo is driving while Nick is calling tactics aboard Turbo Duck, which has won four of six races so far and finished no worse than fourth. Former Rolex Yachtsman of the Year Jeff Linton (Tampa, Fla.) is trimming the main while Chris Morgan is pulling the spinnaker and main sheets. Scott Walter (bow), Nan Walker (pit) and Severn School sailor Mike Saldi complete a crew that is basically the same as the one that sailed in the 2008 Farr 30 World Championships.

"We still have the boat set up the way we did for worlds and the sails we bought for that event are still fresh since the boat has only done two regattas since then," said Nick von der Wense, who has not crewed for his father since the 2008 worlds. "I definitely think there is some equity built up from having sailed so much with this group."

Competitors said Turbo Duck has been starting conservatively then launching off the line, building a healthy lead on the first beat in all four races that it won. "I think the left side has been favored in almost every race and we've had four really good starts," Bodo von der Wense said. "We have the boat speed and we have the boat-handling. We're certainly in a good position right now."

Catalina 27 class is contesting its national championship as part of Annapolis Race Week and the title is going down to the wire. Pasadena resident John Anderson remained atop the leader board after sailing Swell to a first and a third on Sunday. However, a fourth that resulted from a 20 percent penalty has hurt Swell, which is just one point ahead of bowmovement, the Norfolk entry skippered by Martin Casey.

Casey opened the regatta with a seventh in the 12-boat fleet, but has rebounded to win three of the last four races to put the pressure on Anderson. "It is our regatta to lose, but we definitely need to keep a close eye on bowmovement. Those guys are top-notch. They are really sailing well," Anderson said. "We'll have to see how things develop tomorrow. Hopefully, we can put up a good result in the first race and give ourselves some breathing room."

A Parent Tripp continues to tear it up in PHRF B, winning all six races held so far to take a commanding 13-point lead over runner-up Still a Gorilla. Co-owners Brett Harrison and John Yeigh clearly have the Tripp 26 dialed in to be so dominant in a 13-boat class consisting of some outstanding designs.

Annapolis Race Week has attracted a typically strong fleet of 170 boats in 19 classes. Wairere, a Thompson 30 skippered by Pete Hunter of Kill Devil Hills, N.C., is the only other boat to post straight bullets. Simon Minoprio and Mike Buckley are sharing tactical duties on Wairere, which is well on its way to repeating as race week champ in PHRF A1.

J/80 is making its debut as a one-design class at the 2009 Annapolis Race Week and the competition has been keen. Arnold resident Brian Robinson and his team aboard Angry Chameleon have led since the outset thanks to three bullets in five races, but it has not been easy.

"The racing has been very close, very exciting. There are a lot of good boats and teams out here," Robinson said.

Angry Chameleon was the only J/80 that competed at Annapolis Race Week in 2005. Four years later, the class has eight boats on the line thanks largely to the promotion of U.S. Class president Kristen Robinson, owner of Angry Chameleon.

"It's great to have our own start at a major regatta like this. All the teams are loving it," said Brian Robinson, giving kudos to first-year owner Kenneth Mangano for posting a second and a third yesterday to earn his first trophies.

In Fleet 1, Kevin McNeil and the Nightshift team had a strong outing with a 1-2-1 line on Sunday and seized the Farr 40 lead away from Yellow Jacket while Keith Mayes continued his strong showing in the Beneteau 36.7 class with a trio of bullets. Peter Scheidt and the family team on Maggie had a 1-2-1 line and now leads the J/35 class by seven points.