

Scott Ferguson wins New England Masters, on form for Worlds

by Joe Berkeley

Thirty-one Laser sailors faced off with shifty winds, variable waves, strong tides, and that most fearsome force of nature, a bride on her wedding day. Due to a scheduling SNAFU, a bride's big day was happening the same day as the New England Championships at Wianno Yacht Club.

Lesser committees wouldn't know what to do. But Kevin Cain, a long-time member of Wianno, is a man who has the utmost respect for the institution of holy matrimony. Along with his co-chair Stewart Roach, they came up with a plan that made everyone as happy as possible, given the circumstances. Cars were moved, sailors were encouraged to not drink the booze or eat the food from the wedding and Scott Pakenham resisted the urge to ask the bride for the first dance.

As far as the racing was concerned, Scott Ferguson was on fire, winning the regatta with a 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, Did Not Compete Because He Sailed In to Put His Boat Away As The Regatta Was In The Bag. On day one, the conditions were sporty with winds at 10-20 miles per hour from 175-180, and later 200 degrees. The 6' 2" tall, 185 pound Ferguson said, "I felt like I was getting off the line and hiking super hard which gets you launched. Downwind the waves were fantastic."

Ferguson has been sailing an A Cat in his spare time and he says the boats are a joy to sail. He still loves the Laser because of "the big fleets." Ferguson believes the best way to stay fit for sailing is to go sailing. He augments his on the water time with bicycle rides every other day for 45 minutes in the big chain ring.

Peter Shope, who finished second overall, said, "When Ferg shows up, it raises the level of competition." Race committee Neal Fowler agreed. He said, "At the gun, the top guys were full hiked and Scott Ferguson looked like he was sheeting harder, and hiking harder, as his sail looked like it had more twist." Fowler also thought it was interesting to note that all of the top boats on Saturday had their centerboards almost all the way down for S-turning when sailing downwind.

For the first time since April, Marc Jacobi stepped foot in a Laser and sailed himself to a third overall. How? Location, location, location. Jacobi got good starts, which simplified the racing, then dialed into the oscillating breeze. He won the second race of the series, and never finished worse than ninth, despite the fact that he is not in top shape. He said, "On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being perfect shape, I'd give myself about a 2 right now." In the good breeze on Saturday, downwind, he talked about "saving the by the lee for the lulls, and sailing up to dead downwind in the puffs." According to Marc, that keeps you in the puffs longer. On Sunday, with a soft

breeze and lumpy waves, Jacobi eased his vang upwind and used the sheet to control the sail, careful not to ease too much lest the sail turn to mush.

As always, the iron man of fleet 413, Peter Seidenberg, sailed a great regatta, beating younger, heavier competitors in the big breeze on Saturday, and sailing smart on Sunday. He said, "It was a good day. The sailing was great and it was good competition. I paid a lot of attention to the current and sailed on the upstream side of the current." The current was flowing left to right, so Peter made it a point to stay to the left as much as possible.

Peter Vessella won the last race of the series as well as his division. Sailing Mighty Mouse, Lawrence McGrath of Riverside Yacht Club had a strong showing on Sunday. The 165 pounder stays in shape by playing tennis two to three times a week. A 4.5 tennis player, McGrath struggles to gain weight. A financial man in the energy sector with a specialty in renewables, McGrath has plenty of energy, as he was seen full on hiking on the way out to the starting line.

Chris Gordon of Nantucket found the conditions to be to his liking on Saturday. The 6' 4", 275 sailor enjoyed the upwind legs on Saturday. Phil King joked that, "Gordon plays for the Patriots on Sunday."

Will Donaldson brushed the cobwebs off his Laser and went home with some hardware in his division. It's a bit difficult to say exactly where he finished as the software for scoring wasn't able to eliminate each person's throw out race. Asked for a comment after sailing on Saturday, Donaldson stated, "My knee hurts."

James Jacob was all set to go sailing when his phone rang and he was informed his daughter was going to go look at Tufts University. As James is a Jumbo, he decided to leave the regatta to be there for the tour.

Lucie Cook sailing Red Sled recovered from a broken top section and rallied for the second day of sailing in a borrowed radial.

Of all of the people at the regatta, and the wedding for that matter, the happiest was without a doubt Phil King. Marc Jacobi won the raffle for the Dynamic Dolly wheels. As he has already won a Dynamic Dolly at a regatta, he refused to take it and Peter Seidenberg pulled another ticket from the box. Phil King won and it appeared to be the happiest day of his life. His Seitech wheels had been rebuilt a couple of times and they were beyond tired. Speaking from experience, nothing freshens up your old dolly like new Dynamic Dolly wheels which are Seitech compatible and available at Sturgis Boatworks.

Regatta trophies were glasses and spirits from Dirty Water Distillery. Their rum is world class and they were kind to sponsor the event. Learn more at dirtywaterdistillery.com

Joe Berkeley is a freelance writer who finished around 14th at the Laser New England's. His work is at joeberkeley.com.

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