

## LET'S GO HAVE SOME FUN WITH THE FAMILY

Do you remember the days when sailing was a family affair? Do you remember when it was OK to camp out on the boat during Block Island Race Week? Do you remember when getting two races in on a single day was a very big deal? Do you remember when spouses and kids were a normal part of the crew? Do you remember when it was OK to ask the crew to chip in for housing or, heaven forbid, buy their own drink bracelets.... When the subject of growing our sport comes up in conversation (and it frequently does), I always think back to when I, along with a dozen teenage friends, fell in love with big-boat sailing. We all loved being on water, but we also loved the social scene when the sailing day was over. Not one of us would ever miss an event.

Family, and more specifically our children, play a larger than ever before role in our day-to-day activities. These days as I stand on the lawn or under the tent at just about any regatta, I can't help but notice that we seem have forgotten to bring the family along to share in our sport.

Like it or not, Corinthian sailing is a social event. The post-sailing party may very well be just as important as the races themselves. While the Farr 40 World Championships are attended by mostly pro sailors wishing for as many races as possible, the Corinthian sailors that we fill our boats with every weekend just might NOT want that third race at three-thirty in the afternoon on Saturday. Our sport is an amateur sport attended by people who work very hard all week long. Far too often, I am seeing moms and dads rushing straight from the dock to the parking lot because their "time away from home" has been depleted. They miss out on the sea stories and the post-race rum drinks that are such a big part of the reason they agreed to go sailing in the first place. After all, this is their day off!

What if we could tell our families that we would be back at the dock around three o'clock for a barbeque at the club? (Ok -give or take a half hour or so.) What if Grandma and Grandpa brought the kids down to enjoy the post-race festivities? I have a feeling that those same grandparents may have taught the folks out on the racecourse how to sail in the first place! Bare with me on this, but what if we had face painting, bobbing for apples and bouncy castles at a Fall regatta? Sure, I'm exaggerating a little to make a point, but why not make the regatta party an event for the whole family to enjoy? Why not create an environment that encourages the whole family to be part of a sailing day without spending the whole day out on the water? I suspect Mom and/or Dad would not be rushing to the parking lot to get home if the kids were building model sailboats for a gutter race that afternoon.

For sailing to prosper, our families need to be part of the equation one way or another. I have had far too many conversations recently where being away from the family was the reason that a boat was on the market or just not sailing at all. I am certain we can fix this and build our crew base at the same time, although I do think

it's safe to say that the free keg of beer and the "big sandwich" model needs a little updating.

Last Fall I had the opportunity to sail in the Whitebread race. The race is a one-day event in the North Fork of Long Island. The course is a circumnavigation of Shelter Island. Logistically, it may just be the most difficult regatta to attend in our region. No matter where you tie up, it's a long motor to the start line and then home. It's late in the season, so the kids are back in school etc., etc. The 2013 event was sailed in 25 to 30 knots of breeze and with the exception of Gardiners Bay, the whole day was spent sailing fast in flat water. You can check out my Facebook page, which has a video of our spinnaker run to see just how much fun it really was! I mention this regatta because when I arrived at the party (which was almost impossible to find), I discovered an entire boatyard and a tent packed with over 600 people. The event had 116 boats. (Remember this is on the North Fork of Long Island in September.) Along with the salt-covered sailors, there were countless kids of all ages sporting the latest Whitebread Regatta shirts and hats - every single one of them aspiring to one day be in the race themselves. There were also grandparents and friends of the crews both young and old. Even local businesses embraced the event - there was local wine, local beer and amazing food from local restaurants, not to mention a band complete with a dance floor. I didn't know sailors could actually dance until that day! So, in the middle of nowhere (OK - Cutchogue N.Y.), on a chilly day in September, I found myself in a family sailing event with 600 people celebrating our sport and already planning for next year's race.

I can say for certain that the Whitebread Race is an event that you should put on your schedule for 2014. Make a weekend out of it and bring the family. The energy is contagious and you can even go pumpkin picking on the way home... I did!

I probably should also mention that the event MADE MONEY for PBSA.

Some clubs are already reaching out to families on a smaller scale. The Indian Harbor and Riverside weeknight series and barbeque come to mind. American Yacht Club's Friday night racing series is all about family time as well.

Most of us fell in love with sailing at young age, and whether it was Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Grandma, or in my case an uncle, someone in the family probably got us into this sport. When I walk around a regatta party these days, I'm not seeing many young faces in the crowd. That is something we need to change quickly if our sport is to prosper. Let's go have some fun with the family in 2014!

Tom Castiglione.