

2012 Cage Match Regatta
LFSC
June 2nd & 3rd

The Forecast of 20 to 30 mph winds with gusts to 40 caused us to lose about 6 boats, but 17 showed up to see if any races would be sailed. David Nickels the former head of Nickels Boat Works ran the races. He did a masterful job. Without his skill we would have never completed five races. He managed to get us out on the water the only times it was not blowing 25 +, he even managed to sneak in three races Sunday morning with a 9:00 am start. As soon as the last race ended around noon on Sunday the wind picked up to a hard 25 with gusts to 32. The Race Committee for this regatta is simply some of the best you can get.

Lake Fenton is a different Lake than most. It has large homes and big trees lining the edges, so depending on the direction the wind can surprise you as some places it can take 25 to 50 yards for the wind to hit the water after clearing the trees. It also sails very different depending on the velocity and direction. Defending Champion Richard Blake commented on how different the Lake sailed this year compared to his three previous trips here. The first times he had come the wind blew up and down the leg allowing for long windward leeward, which put the premium on speed. This year it blew across the leg making Tactics much more important than speed. Because the low pressure had settled above the UP of Michigan the wind was waiting to swing from the west to northwest, which did not occur until after noon on Sunday. This condition makes Fenton really shifty, combined with the huge puffs, it became like a boxing match as sailors had to sail towards the pressure and shifts while enduring 20 degree shifts that also brought increase in wind speeds to 16 to 20 mph hammering the boat after just appearing on the water and forcing the sailor to change gears very quickly or go swimming. It was very surprising that very few boats went over. The other interesting thing about a West breeze on Fenton is it brings out our "famous Fenton figure eight course." This gives you two different up wind legs on the same course with two booming reaches to go from the one weather leg to the other.

In the morning the Committee recorded some puffs around 25 mph, but the wind soon calmed down some and settled in a very challenging 8 to 20 mph shifty course. Chris Hawk, from Keuka NY, tacked into a decent hole near the pin end and worked left. The boats below him found a lane and tacked back right. Chris continued left and found a huge lefty to get him around the first mark with about a 30 second lead. The second leg of this course was a very tight reach, which for even the locals was a surprise because usually this leg on this course is a beam reach to almost downwind. This made passing on this leg very difficult. Chris was soon chased down by Pete Comfort (Torch Lake, MI), but managed to hold to a narrow victory. Stuart Strother (Chautauqua, NY), was third followed Mike Keenan from Hoover, OH and local Chris Craig. Race two was a battle back and forth. Chris Hawk again won the pin and led to the top mark and appeared to have a chance to put a headlock on the regatta. Clark Wade (Hoover, OH) managed to make a very

daring move to get inside Hawk and Comfort to take the lead. Upwind Hawk worked to far left and the big right came through which kept Clark in front as he

stayed inside of Comfort and Craig to the right and those three rounded in that order. Comfort worked left on the second weather leg to gain the lead from Clark. On the last beat Craig found a big righty but Comfort was in good shape and cruised to a hard fought win. Clark held on to third followed by Stuart Strother and Chris Hawk.

The big air finally came in after lunch and the breeze blew 20 to 30 the rest of the day, with a huge 40 mph rips coming through that forced people to scramble to secure their boats to their trailers and lifts. So the plan was to sail three starting at 9:00 am and beat the predicted 30 mph breeze on Sunday.

Pete Comfort had the lead with 3 pts followed by Chris Hawk with six points. Chris Craig and Stuart Strother where next with 7 points with followed by Clark Wade with 9 points.

Day two dawned with the wind blowing 8 to 12 mph out of the west and building. Race one Craig was able to tack to port out of the middle and gain the early edge. He rode it a little too far left however and Pete Comfort and Clark Wade banged off the right side to cross in front of Craig who ducked and went back right near the top. The right continued to pay dividends and Craig rounded with a nice gap. Pete received a nice 20 mph blast on the reach to come white water flying up to Craig's stern who scrambled to stop the freight train. Up wind Craig worked the left of the second beat and reopened his gap. Comfort again proved that he was the fastest boat on the reaches and rode another blaster up to Craig's stern. The two battled high and low with the slower Craig trying to hold off Pete. He rounded with Pete on his stern and protected the right. Pete was forced a little left and flopped back inside Craig and a now charging Chris Hawk. Craig took a big righty and was the first to start left crossing well in front. Hawk stayed left and the wind continued right and he was able to take Comfort on starboard. Craig tried to cross back to the right only to be forced to duck both Hawk and Comfort. The right banged again and it looked like Craig would win the race when a huge blast hit about five boats lengths from the finish and Craig almost bit it. The loss of boat lengths cost Craig, Hawk, who was to cross about a boat length in front of the starboard Craig, who was a boat length in front of Comfort. Richard Blake (Hoover, OH) who spent day one trying some new heavy air tuning, retuned his rig and rallied from a bad start to take fourth. Stuart Strother took fifth. The regatta appeared to be a three boat match now with Comfort leading with six points; Hawk was next with 8 points with Chris next with 9 points.

The next start found Craig with a good hole in the middle of the line, but Hawk lee bowed him with just seconds to go before the start. Craig tacked to port and cleared the fleet while Hawk could not get out. Craig used his local knowledge to gain an early edge off the right. Hawk meanwhile worked back right behind the lead group to take the lead at the top. Hawk was determined not to let anyone left of him near the Island in the Lake get ahead of him on the second beat; which had really been favored most of the regatta. The right came in huge. Stuart sailed right at the pressure and reached the righty first. He worked it towards the next pressure

off the left and nailed the next lefty, he was really in phase now and he built a big lead which he carried to a very nice win. Pete took control of the regatta by finishing second.

Richard Blake continued to find his groove with a third followed by Chris Hawk in fourth and Clark Wade in sixth. Pete would have to sink to lose this one. The last race was a wild one, with the breeze now 10 gusting to 18 from the west. Chris Hawk took Richard over the line on the pin end, while Craig was forced to dip start at the boat end. Hawk and Craig met one two at the first mark followed by Clark Wade. On the reach Craig found a very high blast to reach in front of Hawk and take the lead. On the Island beat, Craig started out left followed by Hawk and Wade. They had better pressure and lifted right throwing Craig below who dropped to sixth by the end of the leg. Comfort now came blasting back working right in behind Hawk. The wind continued to build to 15 to 20. Hawk held on to win over Comfort, but lost the war by two points despite winning three races. Comfort became the third sailor to win both the Fenton C Scow regatta and the Fenton MC regatta. Stuart in only his second full MC regatta rallied to finish third overall, followed by Chris Craig and Clark Wade.

The sailors were treated to the famous Fenton Hospitality and ever boat either had his mast stepped down for them or helped in the process. All the bottom covers were assisted on before any Fenton boat was put away. Richard Blake commented on what a nice touch Fenton adds every year by doing this. Everyone received some sort of award thanks to some greatly appreciated help from Melges Boats. In addition Brian Nickels of Fiberglass Specialists donated a Light bar fitted just for MC's that was given out in a drawing to just the sailors from off the lake. James Bingham from Hoover, Ohio won the light bar and also took the eighth place trophy spot. Chris Craig was the top Master, with Mike Keenan being the top Grand Master. The kitchen crew was great, and Doug Wyrwicki cooked some great NY Strips Saturday night. This event is a must see event, come check out what Fenton Hospitality is all about. Pete Comfort commented, "Great job to you and the club hosting the regatta. You all did a great job. From the moment I pulled in till I left I was helped by you all and well taken care of. I look forward to coming back"

Chris Craig