



(left to right) Rick Shousha, Andre Marcotte, Bob Wynkoop, Devon Howe, Will Hendershot, Julie Craig, Chris Craig, Steve Dix. Missing are John Kimball and Alain Vranderrick.

## **Quebec Open: the first International MC regatta in Montreal**

by Will Hendershot

Club de Voile Deux-Montagnes is located on the Lac des Deux-Montagnes (Lake of Two Mountains for the Anglos). The club, located about 20 miles west of downtown Montreal, is housed in an historic stone building that was once the home of an order of nuns. This is the largest French language yacht club in the Montreal area with docking for 200 sailboats. This is exclusively a sailboat club with the only motorboats being the RC boat and the Zodiacs for the junior squadron. The Lake is a wide stretch of the Ottawa River. The lake bay in front of the club allows us to set courses that are 1.5 miles long without too much trouble and with virtually no influence from the river current. Early September is a time of transition between summer and fall weather. This year the

change from summer to fall came like someone flipped a switch Saturday night. Our normal format for regattas is to set all W2 courses and begin Saturday with 3 races back-to-back-to-back followed by extended relaxation on the club lawn with cold beer afterwards. Not quite as civilized as the standard MC Scow regatta schedule with a big lunch break, but then again we don't have to put on wet gear and re-rig for afternoon races.

The weather forecast for Saturday was definitely nasty. Heavy rain and winds gusting over 30 knots were forecasted and we woke to thunderstorms passing to the north of the club. The radar image showed a massive front but with a sizable hole that seemed like it would allow us to get in a race or two before the worst of the weather hit.

Race 1. A 10:30 start in a moderate 10-12 easterly. Bob Wynkoop nailed the pin end start and couldn't make a wrong move in this race. The left side seemed to have steadier wind and a nice lift going out to the corner but with a progressive header on the way back into the weather mark. None the less, it was a better bet than the right side which seemed to have a bit less pressure. Wynkoop led Alan Vranderrick, Chris Craig, Steve Dix and Will Hendershot around the top mark but by the leeward mark it was Wynkoop stretching a nice lead followed by Hendershot and Craig. The left worked well on the next beat and after a battle for second on the run, the race finished with Wynkoop way out in front, then Craig, Hendershot, Marcotte and Kimball.

Race 2. The wind kept veering steadily from east to south south west, which delayed the start as the line was set and re-set. We finally got off in a 12-15 knot breeze. Will Hendershot wanted the right side, figuring the shift might continue and expecting smaller waves closer to shore. Despite weighing only 60% of the big guys, he led Craig and Wynkoop at the windward mark and opened out a 100 meter lead by the leeward mark. Almost everyone went hard right up the beat but, despite the increasing wind strength, Hendershot managed to hang on to a healthy lead and rounded ahead of Craig. Nobody else made it around the windward mark as the big wind forecasted came in like a concrete wall collapsing on the fleet. An estimated 35 knot gale for those still upright made the idea of running to the finish line and away from the club, a very bad idea. It didn't matter; even with the vang off and the sheet loosened it was a hopeless situation. Although we didn't know it yet, the RC had already abandoned the race as boat after boat flipped within 30 seconds of one another. In all 7 of 8 went down with only Alan Vranderrick (265 pounds) managing to sail in without capsizing. Two others also managed to sail (luff) in after righting their boats. Everyone else had to be towed; two boats swamped. The Shark keel boats, the only other fleet racing in this open one-design regatta, provided essential emergency assistance to right the capsized MCs and tow them back to port. We would have been in trouble without them! For better or worse, it's not possible to completely turn turtle in the bay since the water is only about 7 feet deep, however that also meant some of us had to figure out how to wash 15 pounds of gray mud out of the boom ends while leaving all our masthead wind indicators still stuck in the lake bottom. I'm sure we will hear lots of stories about this one.

That was enough fun for one day. The weather deteriorated further with heavy rain and lots of wind. Free beer at the club was a better idea, followed by a lovely supper at the Willow Place Inn, just down the road in Hudson, providing spectacular water views and wonderful French Quebec ambiance.

### Race 3

Sunday dawned shaping up to be a much nicer day than Saturday. A cold front had flown through leaving us with cool, clear skies and a wind forecast of 12-15 from the west. Since we only had one race on the scoreboard, we planned on three more back-to-back. The sunny skies and moderate wind at the dock encouraged a number of skippers to opt for their lighter air sails. Chris Craig pulled out his brand new 1996 Big Boy while Devon Howe opted for his Moorhouse radial. Local fleet builder and lightweight Will Hendershot figured he would be overpowered anyway and stayed with his flatter sail. That turned out to be a great decision. The first race got going at about 10 am in 10-12 knot winds. The race committee was having a bit of fun keeping the start line pretty damn short for the fleets of eight. Wynkoop again hit the pin end while Hendershot got jammed with a third row start (hard to do with only 8 boats) bailing out to the right immediately. Two minutes later he flipped back to starboard and could see most of the fleet through his window following a big wind veer right. Craig came out of the left side doing a nice job following the shifts to round the first mark with a nice lead. The Lake of Two Mountains "*Monstre*" (monster) hangs out near the windward shore and has fun throwing wind shifts rapid fire at the sailors trying to get to the windward mark. This can make the difference between breaking away with a big lead and losing hugely in a heartbeat. In this case, Craig did a better job of negotiating with *le Monstre* and went off down the run with a comfortable lead on Hendershot. Despite getting closer to Craig a few times using all his best efforts, Will never could never quite catch up to him. The finishing order was Craig and Hendershot followed by Howe squeaking past Wynkoop by just a foot or so.

### Race 4

The wind was now up a couple of more knots, still holding from the same direction. We got off in good order and again the right side paid as the wind up the course continued to veer. Howe hit the right determinedly while Hendershot played it safer by going middle right. Wynkoop and Craig were the only ones that set left coming out of the pin. This was a race where keeping one eye on the compass and tacking with the 10 degree shifts made a big difference. Wynkoop bet all his chips going alone all the way out left and caught a magnificent 5 minute lefty that shot him to the lead only to then see it evaporate when a 50 degree right shift blew in 150 meters from the mark. Howe shot around first with his own personal gust from the right (thanks to the monster). Hendershot made it around in second while Wynkoop was bankrupt in sixth turning behind Craig Marcotte and Dix. By this point, the wind was ranging from about 12 to 15 with an occasional gust up near 20. In purely poetic justice, Alain Vranderrick, the only skipper to avoid capsized Saturday, decided to wash his sail in his 30 degree shift. He was up in a flash surely hoping no one had seen it. By the finish Hendershot managed to catch up to within a boat length of Howe, but Devon hung on for his first win ever in a MC regatta. Behind the leaders was a hard fought battle going for the next three spots.

At the line the call was Craig third, Marcotte fourth and Wynkoop fifth by mere centimeters; all still under review, I'm sure.

#### Race 5

This was to be the last race of the regatta. Bob Wynkoop (10 points), Devon Howe (11 points) Chris Craig (6 points) and Will Hendershot (7 points) all had a solid chance of winning the regatta. The wind had gradually strengthened, veered to the North and was now cycling between 10 to 18 knots in ten minute intervals. The veer farther north meant the wind now had a longer fetch from up the river. Wynkoop crammed the boat end at the start and soon had the lead as a small right lift developed. The big air intervals seemed coordinated to blast in for the beats and ease for the runs. The building waves and heavier wind meant it was important to keep the bow down and the boat flat (lots of vang and Cunningham for the lighter sailors). For something different there were no major shifts, though the wind kept oscillating 10-15 degrees, so tacking well on the headers led to success. Wynkoop did a good job up the first beat and rounded comfortably ahead of Hendershot who was well clear of the following pack of Marcotte, Vranderick, and Howe. On the next upwind leg Bob lost his footing along with his tiller, sheet, and composure in an ungraceful tack in monster waves so that Hendershot almost tagged him on the next port-starboard cross. However Wynkoop recovered nicely and got around the last mark with a 75 meter lead that took him home for the gun, followed by a closing Hendershot, Howe, Vranderick and Marcotte. Poor Chris Craig found his Waterloo and was back in sixth.

#### Final results

In the end only 3 points separated the top 3 boats. Hendershot (9 points) won the first International MC Regatta through consistency but without winning any of the four completed races. Wynkoop was second with 11 and Craig was third with 12. Everyone went home with a smile, sore muscles and a bit more experience sailing a MC in a breeze. Everyone got a little practice righting a capsized scow, too.

Thanks go to Rick Shousha who decided to resurrect the Quebec Open One-Design Regatta that had been dormant for 8 years. He promises to do it again on the weekend after Labour Day for the next 10 years. That's quite a commitment but with some support and encouragement, I think he will do it. This year he also ran the races as our PRO. Despite the shifting winds and stormy conditions, we all thought he did a great job.

We are still trying to find a weekend that fits the schedule of the Keuka MC sailors; this is no easy task since many of them also sail on E Scows. In any case, we should have MC Scows at the Quebec Open for many years to come.