



2013 MCSA Team Championship – Clear Lake YC, Iowa

The Clear Lake Yacht Club has won the Third Annual MCSA Team Racing Championship, and I'm sure that all of the CLYC's team members will attest that this Team Racing Championship was its toughest test. The CLYC team members, Todd Tesar, Stu Oltrogge, and Jeff Nicholas, survived being pushed over the line, being prevented from rounding several marks, and being generally interfered with to secure their third consecutive championship. This is a truly impressive accomplishment!

Before I provide highlights of the team racing, I want to thank the Regatta chairmen, Eric Protzman and Jeff Nicholas. As an off-lake sailor, from the Lake Harriet Yacht Club in Minnesota, I can say without any reservations that the CLYC hosts are professionals in both regatta organization and execution. Their pre-regatta communications, registration, housing, parties, judging, and of course racing, are top notch, and their hospitality really makes me look forward to sailing there ever year. As an aside, we are going to have a great time next year at the 4th Annual MCSA Team Racing Championship and the 42nd Annual MCSA National Championship both scheduled to be hosted by CLYC. Now on to the racing.

This year's Team Racing Championship attracted new competitors to the regatta. We had four teams competing: Upper Minnetonka Yacht Club, Clear Lake Yacht

Club, Lake Harriet Yacht Club, and a combined White Bear Yacht Club and Clear Yacht Club team. While some of us were new to team racing, by the end of the regatta we all had improved both our team racing skills and our overall sailing abilities.

In the week leading up to the regatta, the wind looked perfect (8-10 mph on Saturday and 5-8 mph on Sunday), but by Friday night the Saturday forecast was calling for gusts into the 30s. And as we woke on Saturday morning the wind was already clocking in at 10-15 mph. So the PRO, Mark Tesar, did a great job having the course set early and gently encouraging the sailors to get on the water before the wind built. The races were designed to be short, approximately 10-15 minutes per race, and sailed on a modified trapezoid course that allowed us to sail two simultaneous races with a downwind finish. This regatta, like all team racing regattas, are sailed with several round robin sets to allow each team to sail an even number of races.

The first race of the day pitted Lake Harriet versus Clear Lake, and it proved to be somewhat loud at the start. While Tesar and Nicholas tried to control Lake Harriet's team with their voices and boat positions, Oltrogge slipped away from Lake Harriet's tight cover and used his superior acceleration and speed at the start to obtain an early lead. In the end, Clear Lake pulled away at the first windward mark, and coasted to an easy victory.

In the CLYC versus UMYC, Dave and Duffy Abrahamson of UMYC were extremely fast, and were in a battle with Tesar and Oltrogge. Meanwhile, Nicholas was mixing it up with Keith Morical and Noel Neumann. At the downwind finish, Oltrogge was in first, followed closely behind Abrahamson and then Tesar. Oltrogge made the tactical decision to finish the race and trust his teammates to finish in a winning combination. That proved to be the correct decision because Tesar, while behind Abrahamson, was on a starboard tack and to leeward of Abrahamson, which limited Abrahamson's ability to prevent Tesar from finishing. This is exactly what happened. As a result, Clear Lake ended up in 1st, 3rd, and 5th, a winning combination.

By 11:00, the wind had increased to the edge of abandonment, and in the last race of the first round robin set, Lake Harriet was set to sail against White Bear/Clear Lake. With the winds in the high teens, the pre-start team racing tactics were limited, but Clear Lake's Eric Protzman and I were still intent on battling until the starting gun. Unfortunately, Lake Harriet suffered a capsize at the start, but the team was still in position on the first downwind leg to put themselves in a winning combination. To do that, Lake Harriet's Andy Crowe forced White Bear's Charlie Helms away from the leeward mark to move me into second place, but with the wind gusting in the mid-20s he unfortunately capsized in the process. On the final windward leg, Protzman provided a tight cover on me to allow Helms to sail away in first place and Protzman, second, followed by Rick Bukowski cruised in for their team to take the win. By the end of this race, we had sustained winds above 20 mph, and the PRO correctly abandoned racing.

Unfortunately the wind continued to build, with gusts up to 36 mph, and we were not able to sail the rest of the day. The silver lining was that the abandonment allowed the teams to enjoy the beautiful Clear Lake area, bike riding, exploring the downtown shops, and enjoying an afternoon of college football.

Clear Lake hosted a great party on Saturday night. The steaks Jeff Nicholas prepared were excellent, the beer and wine was plentiful, and everyone became fast friends. As was the case in each of the past Team Racing Championships, conversations throughout the party consisted of breaking down the day's races and discussing strategies and rules for Sunday. It was clear that all the participants were hooked on team racing.

Fortunately the wind was beautiful on Sunday morning, about 8-10 mph out of the North. This allowed the PRO to run two full round robin rotations before 12:00. As the races progressed through the morning, I could tell that the strategy discussions from the previous night made everyone better team racers.

In the Clear Lake versus Lake Harriet race of the day, Lake Harriet was intent on avenging its convincing defeat the previous day. Lake Harriet pre-race strategy was to do a "rabbit start" with Lake Harriet's Jim Marquardt interfering with Nicholas, I would go after Oltrogge, and Crowe have the best start possible. This was somewhat successful, as Harriet was in Second, Fourth, and Fifth at the first windward mark. Lake Harriet, understanding that Clear Lake had superior boat speed, decided to slow the race down. At the first leeward mark, Lake Harriet set up a mark trap for Clear Lake, and turned a Second, Fourth, and Fifth position (a losing combination), into a Second, Third, and Fifth position (a winning combination), At the finish, Marquardt was able to squeak into second. Harriet ended up in Second, Third, and Fifth to win the race. Very satisfying.

In the Upper Minnetonka race vs White Bear/CLYC UMYC's Noel Neuman was able to force White Bear/CLYC's Eric Protzman and Charlie Helms over the line early, freeing UMYC's other two to get a 1,2 finish and the win.

And during the UMYC battle against defending champions CLYC, UMYC's Noel Neuman broke away during the pre-start maneuvering from CLYC's Nicholas' trap, and slipped below CLYC's Oltrogge who was luffing at the starting line. Nicholas attempted to luff UMYC's Neuman, but Neuman was pinned between two CLYC boats and the windward boat was up against the committee boat. Team racing is tight! Neuman was able to slip into clear air, and UMYC obtained a 1,2 and the win.

As a result, the final standings of the MCSA Team Racing Championship were:

1. Clear Lake Yacht Club
2. Upper Minnetonka Yacht Club (6 Wins, 3 Losses)
3. Lake Harriet Yacht Club (3 Wins, 6 Losses)

4. White Bear Lake/Clear Lake Yacht Club (1 Win, 8 Losses)

If you are interested in seeing video highlights from the regatta, videos have been posted on youtube.com at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgB21SzqhlI6opN066tRsndcFa8NyWVN>.

Of course, again my hats off to the PRO, Mark Tesar, and the other race officers, Dan Allen, John Vratsinas (CLYC Commodore) and Grover and Polina Windsor. These race officers were extremely organized, set true courses and starting lines, were quick with adjusting the course, and had very few delays in between races. Thank you and excellent work.

Overall everyone had a blast and pledged to return to do more team racing in the future.

My concluding thought on the MCSA Team Racing Championship is that every MC sailor should try out team racing. If you do, you will undoubtedly have a new perspective of racing your MC, you make new friends, and you will become a better sailor.

To provide more MC team racing opportunities, several team racing enthusiasts are organizing "demo days" around the 2013 MCSA Midwinters and National Championship regattas at Clear Lake, IA. More information will be distributed leading up to those events. It is my hope that if you attend those regattas, you join us for some fantastic sailboat racing.

Finally, thanks again to the Clear Lake Yacht Club for creating a venue for team racing in the MC fleet, it is such a pleasure to sail with you every year.

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