

2014 Cowtown Classic

The Cowtown Classic is the annual MC Championship put on by Hoover Sailing Club in Westerville, OH. This year had forecast of big winds and cool temperatures for the weekend. Despite this, there were 28 sailors from 5 different states in attendance.

Hoover is a reservoir on the northeast corner of Columbus, OH. The sailing club is active with multiple one design fleets, and MC fleet 54. The MC group has really been growing over the past several years, led by fleet stalwarts Mark White, Jay Huling, Richard Blake, and 'fleet captain for life' Doug Kiser. The regatta is known for its competitive small lake sailing, beer and comradery, plus the famous prime rib dinner on Saturday night.

Saturday saw SW winds that allowed for a nice windward leeward course that stretched diagonally across the lake. Winds were predicted to be 10-15 mph in the morning and then expected to shift west and build to 15-25 in the early afternoon. With that in mind, the Race Committee, ably led by Mark Andrew of the Hoover Thistle fleet, chose to run three races back to back in the morning. The breeze built to 15 with higher gusts by the first start. Big puffs would roll down the lake, alternating from the south and west corners, but there was a rhythm to them, and the dark water could be seen to set up for the next breeze line. But Hoover being the shifty lake that it is always threw a few wild cards into the mix.

When asked how many pushups he can do, Chuck Norris answers "all of them." One newcomer on the scene was Scott "Chuck" Norris. Scott is a trimmer on Melges 32's and Melges 24's sailing on prime time teams such as Star and Argo. He has also won world championships in the Etchells and J 24 fleet. Scott recently bought an MC and got right in to the mix at the front of the fleet, winning two of the first three races. Matt Fisher of Hoover, and world renowned Lightning sailor, won the second race. Surge Vanderhorst, former member of Hoover and MC alumni, was back in the fold and also challenging the front group.

Just as the boats finished the last race of the morning and headed for the club, the wind shifted to the west and cranked up with gusts near 30 mph. We had a handful of boats go over, and some cold sailors headed in to the club to get warmed up and eat lunch.

The wind did not let up and the racing was done for the day. Start time was moved up to 9 am on Sunday to try and get three additional races in.

Results at the end of day 1:

"Chuck" Norris

Ted Keller

Surge Vanderhorst

Chris Craig

Matt Fisher

Up next were the social scene, prime rib dinner, and sunset that make Hoover such a special place.

Sunday morning's forecast was almost identical only with winds out of the west. This is the short width of the lake and adds a bit more variance to the wind shifts. Puffs didn't roll down the lake as much as they dropped down over the tree tops and it took more work and a bit of luck to stay in phase.

Race 4 had a group of 4 extend from the pack, led by Clark Wade of Hoover, who went on to the win. Norris had an

equipment issue to work through on the last downwind and Keller was able to close the gap to 3 points between 1st and 2nd. For the last two races, the breeze again built to 15 mph plus and "Chuck" gave a roundhouse kick to the fleet, winning the last two races to finish off the regatta. Even with the unsettled wind shifts, Scott seemed to always have it decoded, set up for the next blast, bow pointed at the mark. He really put on a clinic. And won the regatta handily.

Final results after 6 races:

"Chuck" Norris

Ted Keller Torch/Hoover

Matt Fisher Hoover

Surge Vanderhorst

Chris Craig Lake Fenton

Eric Hall Chautauqua NY

Top Master was John Hans of Eagle Lake, MI.

Top Grand Master was Jack Sanderson also of Eagle Lake.

With an active and energized local fleet and a great group of visiting sailors making the trip, Hoover Sailing Club really puts on a not-to-be-missed regatta. Mark your calendars for the first weekend of May 2015 for the Cowtown Classic.

Ted Keller