

2015 Blue Chip Report

By: Ted Keller

The Blue Chip is a tradition in Scow Country. The E, C, and MC fleets host 'champion of champions' regattas in September where you must qualify in order to attend based on your sailing performance through the year. The MC Blue Chip is hosted by Spring Lake Yacht Club each year.

The lake is known for its shifty conditions and the tight race track makes for some very exciting racing. The fleet stays compressed and one is never really out of a race; putting a couple of shifts together can get you right back up to the front group. The lake and the formidable group of talented sailors make for a real test to see who will be crowned Blue Chip champion each year.

2015 marked the 30th edition of the MC Blue Chip. The forecast for Saturday looked to be very windy with a chance of thunderstorms and the fleet wondered if they'd get off the dock. While a few may have been deterred, 21 teams assembled for the championship test. Sailors came from Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Georgia, and even California.

Saturday saw winds that were 18 to low-20s through the day, with several lines rolling through that had gusts into the high 20s. Steve Schiller and his RC team monitored the conditions closely and were able to get two heavy air races in. In two other attempts races were abandoned and the fleet sent in when gusts got up to the high 20's and at one point 30 mph. Race winners were Brett Hatton of Spring Lake, and Matt Fisher of Hoover Sailing Club.

Saturday's Blue Chip dinner at the Arboreal Inn is another big part of the tradition. This night saw a celebration of the founders and leaders of the event through its 30 years, as well as an honoring of all the crews and families that were sailing together in the day's heavy air. Husbands and wives, fathers and sons or daughters, multigenerational sailing families, it's what scow sailing is all about.

Sunday saw a completely different look as the wind was from the opposite direction and much lighter. The start time was moved up to 9:30 am in an effort to get as many races in as possible. The fleet was definitely mixed up from the first two races, every boat finding itself poked out and in the very front group at some point. Great racing as the fleet worked hard to see the breeze coming down the lake and line up the next puff on the water. Race winners were Ted Keller of Torch Lake and Hoover, and Chad Hough currently from San Diego Yacht Club. Chad is a past champion from years previous who decided to use his lifetime qualification to get back to Spring Lake for more of the Blue Chip experience.

The wind took a big shift to the west as the thermal arrived and the racecourse was reset for one final race. Going in to the last heat, three sailors were tied for the overall lead: Brett Hatton, Ted Keller, and Jamie Kimball. All the chips were on the table. It was very tight racing with the fleet all bunched up together in wolf pack fashion. The last race was all Wisconsin with Mitch Moylan from Lake Beulah taking the gun and Kevin Neal from Lake Geneva close behind in second. Jamie Kimball finished in third to secure the regatta victory and the Blue Chip crown.

Congratulations to all the sailors who participated as you had to be a winner to get there. MC sailors, head out to the nationally sanctioned class regattas or regional events near you and secure your blue chip points for next year. Once you've done so, you will receive your invitation to the MC Blue Chip. Join us in September 2016 at Spring Lake, where the great tradition of this event will continue.