

## 2016 Cowtown Regatta

2016 marked the 20th edition of the Cow Town Classic, taking place at Hoover Sailing Club in Westerville, OH on April 30th and May 1st. This has been a popular spring regatta and a great way to start off the MC season in the midwest. 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 weather forecast definitely turned a few away this year, calling for cool temperatures, light air and plenty of rain. Those who were not to be dissuaded made it to Hoover from Indianapolis and even Wisconsin, and a fleet of 18 sailors lined up to vie for the Cow Town title.

Things started with an informal on-the-water coaching opportunity for the Hoover MC fleet and visiting sailors. A group of 8 lined up for a bunch of practice starts and short course races with some boat handling tips provided by Matt Fisher, Richard Blake and Ted Keller.

Saturday saw cloudy skies with a threat of rain starting after noon. Winds were East at 4 to 5 mph, maybe 7 and the top end. East is a challenging direction on Hoover as it is the skinnier width of the lake, with the breeze dropping down over tall trees along the shoreline. It has a tendency to change direction from NE to SE and back again, pulsing in increments. So for a few minutes the right side would pay big (glorious minutes if you were on the right!) and then dry up as the wind would switch to the left. It was a balancing act as the boat or boats who were leveraged hard when their side came in saw dramatic gains that often led to race wins, but if you were leveraged hard when the wind switched to the other side you were quickly midfleet or worse. Staying conservative and patient was the key, finding the pressure on one side and maximizing it, while almost immediately looking to the other side of the course for signs that the switch was coming. With all the traffic and tight fleet racing, it was so tempting to 'send it' to the side you were on and hope the wind would cooperate. But in the end, finding the pressure and pointing the bow closer to the mark ruled the day.

The Race Committee, led by PRO Steve Lavender, showed some impressive patience of their own. As the rain started to fall and dampen down the breeze things were looking bleak and there was talk of calling it a day. The RC decided to wait and see if the afternoon improved and as a result were able to get two more races in in steadier and a bit stronger breeze. That sound decision making allowed us to complete all six races by the end of the weekend.

The weather may be cold or damp, the breeze may not be consistent, but the one thing that can be counted on each year at this regatta is the prime rib dinner Saturday night. Hoover's Ted Thomas and team delivered again and the sailors enjoyed great food, drink and comradery, sharing stories of the day.

### **Race winners day 1:**

Mark White; Hoover

Steve Callison; Hoover

Ted Keller; Torch/Hoover

Andy McDonald; Indianapolis

Sunday proved to be a little better than forecasted. It was warmer, with some glimpses of the sun and 5-8 mph breeze out of the SW. This direction allows more use of the length of the lake and a longer course allowed the fleet to stretch its legs. There were still plenty of shifts to be found, but they were visible and had a bit more rhythm to them compared to the on/off switch of Saturday. By the last race of the series, the breeze had begun to drop and the last half of the race turned into a light air affair. Upwind the fleet was still tight together and it was really noticeable how much further a boat's bad air extends behind it in the light stuff. You really had to work to find a clear lane and avoid any wind shadow effect, then find whatever pressure you could.

Matt Fisher from Hoover won the day with a 1-1 on Sunday. Mega Master Steve Sun from Hoover had his best race of the regatta finishing strong with a 6th place.

Thanks to Steve Lavender, Mark Andrew and their Race Committee team, to Doug Kiser "fleet captain for life" and all the Hoover volunteers for making this great event happen.

**FINAL RESULTS (After 6 races):**

- 1.) Ted Keller; Torch/Hoover
- 2.) Richard Blake; Hoover
- 3.) Matt Fisher; Hoover
- 4.) Andy McDonald; Indianapolis
- 5.) Mark White; Hoover
- 6.) Steve Callison; Hoover

Top Master: Richard Blake

Top Grand Master: Mark White

Top Mega Master: Steve Sun

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 2017 for the Cow Town Classic.