

2016 MCSA Midwinter Championship

Lake Eustis Sailing Club, FL

Report by Eric Hood

The Regatta – Our traditional first major regatta of the season at Lake Eustis Sailing Club in Eustis, Florida gave us a little bit of everything this year. For sure and certainly related to the three-day length of the regatta we saw all wind conditions. Probably 50% heavy, 30% medium and 20% light/medium. The regatta gave all lots of fun moments and certainly some heartbreaks with the loss of one of our sailors John Houck during racing. From a weather perspective it was outstanding and certainly lived up to all we would want from a Florida Midwinter Championship. Low 80s, great breeze and championship sailing.

The Setting and Conditions - S.E. was the dominant wind direction but we had a few right rotations to the south and slightly S.W. during the three days. Race 1 which was abandoned while in progress on leg 2/3 was a barn burner. Starting in nice 17-19 mph winds it morphed quickly into upper 20s. PRO Bob Arms did a great job ending the race before it really got out of control with N over H abandon flags. Water was not warm but certainly was swimmable for those who chose to get aggressive in the big breeze downwind moments. Full range of wind speed during the three days plus practice day was 6-26mph. It was FUN !!!!!

The Results – Go to www.mcscow.org to see full results.

Here are some highlights:

Race Winners – Brian McMurray (White Lake, MI), Scott Tillema (Missouri Yacht Club, Lotawana- MO), Jeremy Pape (Lake Lanier Sailing Club, Georgia), Robert Seidelmann (New Jersey), Brian McMurray (White Lake, MI).

Top Ten at A Glance- (60 teams sailing)

Jeremy Pape (Lake Lanier, GA) 28pts, Robert Seidelmann (New Jersey) 45pts, Thomas Harken (Charleston, SC) 45pts, David Moring (Lake Eustis, FL) 45pts, Brian McMurray (White Lake, MI) 53pts, Scott Tillema (Lake Lotawana, MO), David Helmick (Lake Eustis, FL) 78 pts, Eric Hood (Lake Eustis, FL) 78pts, Dan Fink (Mukwonago, WI) 80 pts, Kevin Neal (Lake Geneva, WI) 82 pts.

The Learning's

It felt like three regattas in a sense this year. You had day one where it was just ripping, day two windy but not out of control and ending with a dying breeze by race 6 (technically our 5th race) and then on Saturday for race 7 (technically our 6th race) it was pretty nice with 7-12mph breezes and a few big shots.

UPWIND – We had very steady wind directions through the first three windy races. You simply had to use the old rule of “am I going the right way” or put another way “correct direction rules over velocity”. You had to start within 1/3rd of best position on line to make it to the top in good shape. No big shifts, very windy, pure boat speed, clear air and sail the long tack asap. There was no need to chase after bigger breeze because it was solid everywhere. For the second three races with the long starting lines and breeze shifting a bit more (usually 10-15 but sometimes as much as 25 degrees) you did not need to get caught off on the wrong side of things at the start. Mid-line starting worked out pretty good for most of the folks who found themselves in the top group at the first mark. Four of the six races were easy to read, two were really challenging and you had to stay focused with the changes or you would get shot out quickly.

DOWNWIND – First three races were all boat control and then for those who had boat control they would jump into the big blasts coming down the lake and make some serious gains. Last three races with a little less wind you really had to work hard to stay in bigger breeze, avoid the light spots, keep clear air and make sure you were on the headed gybe.

BOAT SPEED – This event was not so much about upwind boat speed as it was shifting gears and working the waves. The fast boats clearly were getting up and over the waves with boat speed, a little traveler down, lots of vang and some hard hiking when the big wave sets came. Also, you could see the fast boats really working hard in the flat spots creeping the boat to windward every chance. Keeping water out of the boat was big too. Checking your backbone, bailers open a lot. Downwind the fast boats were working their vangs a lot to really keep the boat moving.

STARTING – PRO Bob Arms and team gave us great starting lines. I think one start had a little 10-degree righty that made things quite favored for one start to the right but all in all GREAT lines. Quite a few general recalls which actually was great. We got lots of big fleets starting practice. Key on the start was staying out of trouble, not talking to boat next to you and focusing on getting up to speed quickly and winning your lane in those first 60-90 seconds. Line lengths were great so you did not have to get crazy finding a spot. As always you are racing two boats at the start and that is it, the one of top of you and the one below you.

The Community

We had a great time! Hospitality was off the charts as usual with June Howells and a cast of many making it great in the club house. Scott Tillema led the charge at the ramp which was nice for getting boats in and out. PRO Bob Arms had a great crew of a dozen or so running all of our races.

Obviously the week was a tough one with losing our buddy John Houck. As Jeremy Pape shared at the awards that when you think about it if going downwind in a scow on a screaming run is the last thing you do in life well that is not bad. John loved sailing, he loved LESC and his close sailing friends. We hope and pray that the life celebrations with family, friends, his wife Jane are rich this coming week.

Zenda University

We had a great couple of days with our class of 2016. All graduated. 15 races about 30 starts in fantastic breezes 7-14mph earlier in the week. Watch for "Interview with the Champ" from Bob Wynkoop soon on the web and in our "Touch of Class" magazine.

Upcoming Regattas

Masters in June, ILYA Champs and Nationals in August. Sail ahead. You do not want to miss these big three events. Check www.mcscow.org for local and regional spring regattas coming soon.