

2018 Cowtown Classic, Hoover Sailing Club, May 5-6

The sailors put it all on the line and left it all on the water at the 2018 Cowtown Classic at Hoover Sailing Club. The first weekend in May brings the annual MC regatta to Hoover, a reservoir on the northeast corner of Columbus, OH. The sailing club is active with multiple one design fleets, and MC Fleet 54. Sailors from Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin made the trip to join the strong fleet of Hoover MC sailors to total 21 boats vying for the Cowtown title.

The forecast was for light air both Saturday and Sunday, with some periods of no air, and the group was wondering how many races they realistically could get in. The Race Committee, led by PRO Steve Lavender of the Hoover Thistle fleet made it clear that they would get races in. There could be some delays waiting for breeze, but the fleet should be ready to go, because if there was breeze, they'd be racing.

Racing started Saturday in a light SE breeze. Courses were W 1 1/2 for the most part. Where the breeze seemed to be up, an extra lap was added to the course board. In a fleet of 21 boats on the short track race course, a premium was put on getting off the line clean and staying in a lane of clear air. The first windward mark often had some traffic congestion with several boats arriving at the same time. Navigating your way through the traffic with clear air and good boatspeed was also a high priority. Staying in the pressure was also of top importance since in light air the difference of two miles an hour of breeze can mean twice the boatspeed. It was also important to have patience and keep your head on straight, because with the unstable, often random shifts and the ups and downs in the wind velocity, the setbacks would come. Everyone got a turn to get the lead, then lose the lead, or pass bunches of boats and then lose bunches of boats on what often seemed to be the roll of the dice.

Andy McDonald of Indianapolis Sailing Club came out of the gates fast and was most consistent through the morning session with a 1-1-5. Ted Keller started to put a string together in race 3 and was consistent through the afternoon with a 2-2-3. Other Race winners on Day 1 were Steve Callison and Matt Fisher both from Hoover, and Dan 'Squad Car' Fink from Little Muskego, WI. The wind shut off in the afternoon with five races on the scorecard.

Saturday night was 'cook your own steak' dinner around the grill and relaxing in the clubhouse. The Hoover fleet delivered again and the sailors enjoyed great food, drink and comradery. The story telling was a highlight as everyone had a 'lottery ticket' tale of getting to the front or a 'hero to zero' tale of helplessly watching boats sail by. Clinks of glasses followed by "I know how that feels." Sunday morning saw breeze out of the North at 5-6 mph and the fleet was ready for more. Would we get in two more races? maybe three? There'd be a Sunday Showdown between Andy McDonald and Ted Keller who were a couple of points apart in the lead. Race 6 got started with Ted Keller jumping out to a lead followed by Hoover's Richard Blake. As they turned back upwind for lap 2 the breeze began to drop once again. Ted and Richard worked the pressure on the left while boats on the right had a new breeze to sail them up into the lead. Andy McDonald was in this passing lane and right back in the mix. Ted and Andy watched each other closely downwind and split gates at the bottom of the course. Andy found some pressure and a nice right rotation on his side of the course and patiently worked his way into the lead, making his third race win in the 6 races.

The fleet then reassembled to see about another heat. But the wind shut off entirely and racing was called for the day. Andy McDonald is your 2018 Cowtown Champion. Congratulations Andy!

There was a lot of fun had by this group both on the water and on shore. Every time the fleet was waiting for wind, the frisbees came out and flew from boat to boat, even an inflatable alligator patrolled the fleet and boarded a few boats. It reminded me of a junior regatta. That was the maximum amount of racing that could be squeezed out of a light air weekend. Thanks to Steve Lavender and his Race Committee team, to fleet captain Jim Bingham, and all the Hoover volunteers for making this great event happen.

Final results after 5 races:

- 1) Andy McDonald Indianapolis
- 2) Ted Keller Hoover / Torch
- 3) Matt Fisher Hoover
- 4) Dan Fink Little Muskego, WI
- 5) Steve Callison Hoover

Top Grand Master: Matt Fisher

Top Mega Master: Mike Keenan

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 2019 for the Cowtown Classic. Those finishing in the top 5, or top of their age division, have earned a half or full point for their 2018 Blue Chip qualification.