

The 31st Annual MC Blue Chip Championship had plenty of past champions, but it was the first time competitors from NY to MN that really made this a unique sailing event at the Spring Lake Yacht Club. Located less than a mile from the shores of Lake Michigan, Spring Lake will certainly test your boat handling skills, ability to read the wind and sail in close proximity to the entire fleet.

Day one: The SE breeze of 6 – 7 knots allowed for a long narrow sailing course making for tight racing as the fleet executed its way around shoreline points and coves that provided plenty of opportunities for gaining or losing boats on every leg. Race #1 - Andy McDonald took an early lead but got caught too close to shore on the first downwind leg while Ted Keller got free ½ up the 2nd weather leg and held off past champions Jamie Kimball, Pete Comfort and Cam McNeil for a hard fought win. Race #2 the wind shifted slightly to the South at 5 – 6 knots and the course was set-up at the widest part of the lake allowing the fleet to separate. With the oscillating breeze it was important to stay in the pressure and tack immediately on the big shifts. The top 6 boats sailed within 50 yards of each other for nearly 3 legs with the lead changing hands several times. Pete Comfort got to the favored (right) side of the course the final leg and left Ted Keller and Jamie Kimball fighting it out for a close 2nd. First timer Devon Howe stayed close to the lead eventually settling for a well-deserved 4th place finish. The unusually warm weather and shift of the wind to the SSW gave provided a whole different race course to the West of the club. Winds were about 5 knots which rewarded sailors with patience and willing to go close to the shoreline and catch the subtle lifts. Race #3, local Scott Harestad tacked to port off the starting line and was rewarded with an early lead followed closely by 5-time champion Ted Keller. The top 3 was another repeat with Ted Keller (1), Peter Comfort (2), Jamie Kimball (3); but the real story was Dan Fink and Allison Price coming back from 9th and 10th place at the final mark to finish in 4th and 6th respectively.

Day One Top 5 were:

Ted Keller – 1, 2, 1, Pete Comfort – 3,1,2, Jamie Kimball – 2,3,3, Cam McNeil 4,7,5, Scott Harestad 6,5,9

Day two: After an excellent evening with a Sunset dinner overlooking the Grand Haven Lighthouse, Musical Fountains and Lake Michigan everyone had their game faces on for the back to back to back races. The winds were a perfect 6 – 8 knots from the SSW setting up a great morning of tight racing. Race #4 the course was the same as Race #1, so again there is a narrow passage heading up the weather leg and the lead seemed to change hands on just about every tack. Pete Comfort (1), Cam McNeil (2) and Todd Bosgraaf (3) seemed to hit their groove and pulled away from the fleet with precise tacking on every shift up the right side of the course; Grand Master and mystery guest Rob Terry led the tight 2nd pack with an impressive 5th place. Race #5 - The fleet split sides at the start as the wind shifted slightly to the South, Jamie Kimball (1) and Joe Rotunda (2) took advantage of their past experience at Spring Lake and easily outclassed the fleet ahead of a hard charging Dan Fink and Cam McNeil. Race #6; this one had a little of everything, as the top 10 were trading places on every leg of the race. Ted Keller eventually rebounded from his difficult morning races followed closely by Andy McDonald and a hard charging Casey Christensen and Joe Rotunda.

Looking back at the scores you can see just how difficult it is to win this regatta. The top 4 sailors after day #1 also had finishes of 6, 6, 7, 10 and 14 on Day #2. I encourage all MC sailors to attend your local regattas and earn the opportunity to sail in this prestigious sailing event against the best in the country. The venue and comradery are second to none, the food always plentiful and the competition unparalleled.