

The Lake Harriet Die Hard regatta has its 2016 champion - Clear Lake's Mark Tesar.

It was very very close, down to the 8th and final race, with Tesar, Ryan Grosch (Lake Harriet), and Stu Oltrogge (Clear Lake) ending up 2 points apart. Take a look at the scores. Given a 32-boat fleet on a small shifty lake, Mark, Ryan and Stu were all impressively consistent. Dan Guidinger (White Bear Lake), returning to the MC fleet after a 15-year hiatus, had an excellent series as well, coming in a solid 4th. The next 4 places (5th through 8th) had a 4-point spread between them, with Henry Chestnutt (Lake Harriet) leading that group. There was tight competition at all levels in this fleet.

There was also a great party - Lake Harriet neighborhood style - at Wendy and Chuck Ott's house, where we filled the backyard, garage, and driveway with stories of all of the near misses, beautiful starts, and cosy buoy roundings that this regatta served up. Wendy deserves huge credit for being the lead co-chair, hosting the party, prepping the committee boat, and, and, and... Lake Harriet is so lucky to have a volunteer as committed and kind as Wendy Ott!

Back to sailing - I've seen Mark Tesar come to our lake for every regatta we've hosted since he started in the MC 15 years ago. His home lake (Clear Lake, Iowa) is a place of consistent, steady, and strong wind. Ours is near opposite. This weekend we had what I call "bucking bronco conditions," where the puffs bring 20 mph whitecaps, last for a minute, and leave you in a 10 mph lull. I asked Mark what it took for him to be so consistent, and he summed it up beautifully:

*Sailing on Lake Harriet can be a challenge with the variable conditions you can find during the race, but that is also part of the charm of Lake Harriet and why I love sailing there. The things I tried to focus on are things that everyone always tries to focus on; getting a good start in clean air, sailing on the favored (lifted) tack, and trying to sail towards to the dark water (puffs). However, when I did not get a good start, I tried to stay calm and get to a side of the course where I could get clear air. This did not always mean sailing a long tack into the corner of the lake, but just a short tack to get free of the other boats. Once in clear air, this allowed me to really focus on sailing the boat fast and sail the favored tack.*

*During this weekend, the puffs were hitting really hard, so you really had to be looking up the lake and ready for them when they hit. I sail singlehanded, so this meant getting the vang on before they hit and then getting the sheet ready to ease with the puff. I really try not to jam the boat into the wind on the big puffs, but let the sail out, hike harder, trim the sail, and then head the boat up if I can while maintaining my speed and angle of heel. The other thing that was a challenge this weekend was the wind seemed to flutter back and forth when the puffs hit, so identifying the direction was very difficult. That is another good reason to not jam the boat up, but let the sail out and accelerate the boat when the puff hits and then worry about pointing after the boat is moving. Going downwind was more of the same, watch the puffs and get in front of them and sail the closest heading to the leeward mark. On the first race, I gybed for the wrong reason around the offset and missed a huge puff that really hurt me. That was a mistake I tried to not make again the rest of the regatta.*

*It was a really fun regatta with several good sailors and great sailing conditions. With the short races, you had to be on your toes the whole time and with the dramatic shifts, if you were not paying attention, several boats could sail around you at any moment. Also, part of the charm of Lake Harriet and why I'll go back.*

Congratulations to Mark Tesar, and consider a trip to Minneapolis next fall!

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