

Eagle Lake Open - 2013

By Ted Keller

May 11-12 saw the inaugural Eagle Lake Open MC Regatta.

Eagle Lake Sailing Club is located in the Southwest corner of Michigan, just over the state line from Elkhart, IN. They have an active MC fleet that has been growing and improving together. The next development step to follow is "they gotta regatta."

A fleet of 18 MCs showed up, ready to brave the predicted weather conditions and take on the competition. The forecast was pretty sketchy with cool temperatures, breezy, and rain likely.

PRO, and ELSC Commodore, Brian Reedstrom got the racing off Saturday morning.

Winds were from the West and puffy as the group sailed out to the start. Shifts would range from NW to SW on regular intervals. Starting lines were square and gave enough room for the fleet to line up and launch. The priority for the sailors was getting to that first shift. Courses were W5 with a leeward gate.

Race 1 saw the wind shift hard to the SW in the last few seconds before the gun. The breeze settled down into 5-7 mph range, at times even lighter. There was a very tempting lift that could pull you up under the South shore and then leave you marooned. Boats who stayed farther right and out in the lake seemed to have the better pressure. Highlight moment was Urs Geiger from Lake Fenton sailing a great first leg to lead the fleet up to the top.

For Race 2 the course moved to match the SW breeze and the fleet got off on a squared-up course with plenty of tactical opportunities. Wind was now in the 8-12 range. Another great starting line and nice long legs that made for about a 40 minute race. Highlight moment was Mike Keenan from Hoover working up from the back to get to 8th.

The group broke for a quick lunch and, watching the weather window, aimed to get two more races off in the afternoon.

Race 3 set up on the very same SW course, winds now 10-14. Some rust was coming off for those beginning the season and the group began to charge the starting line more assertively, resulting in the only general recall. The fleet reset and got off the line clean, and the improved starts made for some tight action on the first leg. Highlight moment was Chris Craig who sniffed a nice shift out of the right shore and led the fleet up the first leg.

Some weather window remained, best we could tell. And the fleet would do one more race, this time a W7 to really work those spring muscles out. Wind had moved back to its original West, though the shifts still ranged from SW to NW, and the breeze began to build some more. Tough to recall exactly what lap as we were on leg 16 thru 22 of the day, but about half way thru this one Mother Nature decided our "window" was closing. First came the rain. Upwind in a heavy downpour that was bouncing off the deck like a Forrest Gump scene. Then the rain let up and the breeze started to build. A steady 15 with higher puffs. The first two boats got around the windward mark and headed downwind, when the wind shifted to the NW and decided to CRANK. We are talking a 30+ blast that took out all the boats that were in the vicinity of the top mark, in bowling pin fashion. There was a NASCAR pile up between three boats. When you go into Turn 3

nose to tail and the first car spins out, what do you do?? Well, you either spin out yourself, or hit them - or both. And that's what happened on our track as well. There were splashdowns and some crunching fiberglass, but fortunately no one was hurt. The middle of the fleet was scattered by the monster wind. The two in the front escaped and a few others kept sailing through the minefield and headed toward the finish. In the end, there were 5 boats that finished race 4. And the group limped for the dock. A great team effort to get all the boats out of the water as the wind really started to scream.

Dinner at the club Saturday night was spectacular, ably led by John Hans and his team of volunteers. We warmed by a wonderful crackling fire and shared stories of where we were when "it hit." One thing can make those sore muscles feel better at day's end - Prime Rib.

What was Fast Today - Hitting the shifts was really important - looking for the dark water as it came down the course, getting to it, and then getting on the lifted tack were the difference makers. Quick, clean tacks were also helpful in the shifty conditions. Then setting up downwind to intercept the puffs and ride them as long as possible by sailing deep.

Sunday the group arrived to find 38 degree temps and a strong breeze already starting to build. By race time it was back to big gusts that were exceeding the limit and racing was abandoned for the day. Results from the four races on Day 1 would stand:

- 1Ted Keller - Torch/Hoover
- 2Bill Farabaugh - Eagle Lake
- 3Mike Keenan - Hoover
- 4John Hans - Eagle Lake
- 5Urs Geiger - Lake Fenton

Top Woman - Lisa Heming - Eagle Lake
Top Master - Chris Craig -Lake Fenton
Top Grand Master - B.J. Hague - Indian Lake

Big thanks top all the Eagle Lake Sailing Club volunteers, especially Brian Reedstrom and his wife Jill for running the races. Their daughter Cambrae for running the crash boat along with Amanda Hosaflook; they got a work out Saturday afternoon.

Mark your calendars for May of 2014 for the next Eagle Lake Open Regatta.
It is guaranteed fun on and off the water.