



71st Lightning Winter Championship

St Petersburg Yacht Club

St Petersburg, Florida

Daily Race Recaps by Doug Wake

Race Day 1: 3-24-2018

51 teams descended upon St Petersburg Sailing Center this morning for the start of this year's ILCA Winter Championship, but were greeted with light breeze, warm sun, and an AP over 4 to start the day. Nick Turney of Turney Sailing Services seized this opportunity to run an on-land tuning and sail trim clinic for sailors, while others took the time to catch up with their Lightning Class family.

By 4:00, the fleet was able to get on the water and sailed out to the course. The conditions were classic St Pete sea breeze, with large oscillations between SSW and SW and velocity around 7-11 knots.

Due to the late start, the fleet was only able to get in one race. The Argentine trio of Javier Conte, Julio Alsogaray, and Paula Salerno had a strong start at the pin and sparred with David Starck up the first beat. These two teams and others were benefactors of a 10 degree left shift on the first beat, and were able to tack, cross, and lead at the mark. Conte found a notable lead by the leeward mark and would not relinquish this for the rest of the race. Lightning newcomer and former ICSA All-American Steve Kirkpatrick, sailing with 2016 North American Champion Neal Fowler, found his way to second in a boat new to him. Boat builder Tom Allen placed third, with Starck and Mark Allen rounding out the top 5.

Racing tomorrow looks promising with 8-12 knots predicted for the entire day.

Race Day 2: 3-25-2018

Day 2 of the Lightning Winter Championship started out slightly cooler and breezier than the first. The fleet was able to sail 3 races with gradually higher wind velocity in each on a race course of classic Tampa Bay seabreeze and chop.

After a light day yesterday, the Race Committee elected to schedule today's start for 11:30. The fleet was able to get off on time, though some teams were jumpy, and a number of general recalls ensued. Todd Wake and his team of wife Kristine and son Doug won the first race after sparring with Steve Kirkpatrick all the way around the course. With his finish, however, Kirkpatrick claimed the regatta lead after this race.

The second race of the day saw slightly more breeze, 2 general recalls, and the first black flag start of the day. Marvin Beckmann had a strong start at the pin end, tacked to cross, and did not relinquish his lead for the rest of the race. Beckmann and his team of Jimmy Barnash and Becca Jordan continued this style, winning the pin and the third race of the day. This took them to second in the regatta. It was the Argentine trio of Conte, Alsogaray, and Salerno who proved to be most consistent, scoring a 5,5,2 on the day. Though they did not find their way to winning any races, they held onto their lead from day 1, and managed to extend their lead to a formidable 18 points.

This will all change, tomorrow, with a throwout potentially coming into play after race 6, and a deep fleet with the potential to shift positions at any time.

Race Day 3: 3-26-2018

For the first time in this year's edition of the Lightning Winter Championship, teams hit the water for a 10:00 start and found steady breeze at 10-12 knots from the East-northeast.

Class newcomer and US Coast Guard Academy sailing director Doug Clark with his veteran crew of Will Jeffers and Sam Parisi sailed a spectacular first beat to round the windward mark in first. After a right shift, though, David Starck, Todd Wake, and Tanner Probst gybed quickly around the offset and rode a line of pressure down the course, as the right side overtook the leaders who had carried out around the offset mark. Starck led around the leeward mark and maintained this lead for the rest of the race. Wake finished second, followed by Tanner Probst and Ched Proctor.

Going into the final race with a throwout coming into play, David Starck had closed the gap to match Javier Conte's net score. The final race would determine who would win the regatta, and Starck and Conte found their ways to the top of the fleet. After splitting widely on the first beat, the two teams converged from opposite corners of the course to be 1,2 at the windward mark, with Conte holding a slight advantage.

Through the rest of the race, the breeze tapered to 1-2 knots. Conte and team managed to hold off the 2013 ILCA world champions, and in doing so, claimed his fourth ILCA championship. Starck and team finished the regatta in second, only 1 point back of Conte and team. Steve Kirkpatrick was a model of consistency and finished in a close third. Ched Proctor finished seventh overall, but managed to claim the Winter Masters' division championship.

Tomorrow, and tonight for some, teams hit the road to head to Coral Reef Yacht Club and the second regatta of this year's Southern Circuit, the ILCA Midwinter Championship. Racing begins on Wednesday and runs through Friday, at which time a Midwinter and Southern Circuit champion will be named.

Thank you to the ILCA Southern Circuit's principal sponsors:

