

Upper Keys Sailing Club was the host for our Midwinter Championship for the third consecutive year. The timing could not have been more perfect. A couple of days after a weak front moved through, the area saw temperatures rise through the weekend. It has been a long, hard winter for everyone on the eastern seaboard and nobody was disappointed.

Day one was a little on the cool side (68 for the high) and the forecast for wind 5-10. The wind never got above 7 or 8. There were some pretty significant shifts but the order of the day, and the regatta for that matter, was pressure. There were a lot of big holes on the course and no way to avoid all of them. The Allen's seem to thrive in this stuff and reeled off two bullets to start the day. The chase was on! Cheryl and I managed to win the last two races on Friday to stay close. Unfortunately for us, the Allen's were right behind us in both races.

Day one ended with the Allen's two points ahead of us, Joe and Mandy were next with Jay and Tiffany one point back of them. The regatta basically became a race between boats; the Allens vs. the Potters, Joe and Mandy were head to head with Jay and Tiffany, and there was a battle between the parent child teams of Charlie and Anne, Jeff and Samantha and Bob and Nate Damon. The juniors were all battling for position.

After the racing we were treated to a pasta dinner at the club and the race was on to see who could rack up the largest bar tab.

We woke to sunshine and light winds on day two. By the time we started racing at 11 a.m., the winds were about 5 to 6. Day two of a three day regatta is supposed to be moving day. After the third race of the day, there had been a couple of lead changes and the top four were within five points of one another. The Allen's reeled off three bullets to close out their day and the order of the top four was identical to the night before. The point differentials were also almost unchanged. In fact, there were virtually no changes in the standings anywhere in the fleet. We could have taken the day off and gone fishing and just saved everything for the last day.

Even after 6 races we were able to get back to the beach by about 4:00 which brings me to the race committee. They do an outstanding job! I don't think that we waited more than 10 minutes between races the entire weekend. We had a couple of recalls due primarily to wind shifts but the line was fixed in a couple of minutes and we were off again. Chip Short has been our PRO every year since we have been going to UKSC. He was there every morning running races, he cooked the rib dinner on Saturday night, and was generally involved in all aspects of the regatta, along with his wife Barb. The Club members are so gracious and many gave up their entire weekend to help put on a wonderful regatta. It's not often you find that kind of hospitality and I know everyone who was there appreciated it.

Saturday highlights include:

watching Nate Damon come out of the right corner, cross the fleet and round the weather mark battling for position at the leeward mark with Coe Magruder, the "Run Aground Band" from UKSC.

Back to the bar wars. I am sure the two Vann teams had the lead going into Saturday night, but quickly lost that lead to Kevin and Birgit when their extended family showed up. We were even able to get Mark Allen to drink a beer.

Sunday morning--wind, finally! Racing started on time at 10 a.m. The breeze was out of the southeast at 8-12 which was more than we had all weekend. The plan was to try and get off three races before noon and it didn't look like we would have any trouble doing that. There were still some pretty good shifts but pressure was still the key, especially downwind. We won the first race and moved into a tie for first after the Allen's finished fifth. Jay and Joe started swapping back and forth at this point. Joe and Mandy came into the day with a one point lead over Jay and Tiffany and ended up behind them by a point after the first race of the day. It really was as they say coming down to the wire. We managed to win the second race to the Allen's third to take a two point lead over the Allen's. Joe finished second to Jay's fourth and wrested third away from Jay once again by a point.

Our goal in the last race was to either just beat the Allen's or force them to finish fifth or worse. At this point we were both tossing a five. We were at the pin with 20 to go and realized the Allen's were at the boat at port tack so we jybed out and started a few seconds late on port tack in the middle above the Allen's. Everything was going according to plan with us in fifth and the Allen's in sixth until the last downwind leg when we caught Chris and Joe and ended up between them at the leeward mark rounding with the Allen's right behind us. After rounding the mark we were pinned on port tack with Chris above us and Joe below us. The Allen's tacked immediately after rounding the mark and we actually had to slow the boat down to let Chris go by so that we could tack. We were now coming across the bottom of the race course on starboard tack with a very short leg to the finish, just hoping we don't get headed. As it turned out the right side was favored and we actually got lifted slightly coming into the port tack layline and ended up with a fairly comfortable two boat length cushion over the Allen's. We were fifth, Allen's were sixth. Jay won the last race to take third place back from Joe. Charlie Fayal finished as the top junior, Jim Holder won mid-fleet and the parent/child award went to Jeff and Sam Magruder. Kevin and Birgit would have won the first husband/wife had we not eliminated that award for cost reasons.

One again, our thanks go out to Upper Keys Sailing Club and Chip and Barb Short in particular.

See you in Connecticut,

John Potter