

## **2008 Western Nationals Held at Coos Bay Yacht Club in Oregon**

The 2008 SJ21 Western Nationals held at the Coos Bay Yacht Club were held in near ideal conditions late in the week following the July 4 holiday weekend. Thirty-one boats from the western USA, supplemented by sailors from Calgary, Alberta and the East Coast, came together for three days of competitive sailing under sunny skies and in fairly strong winds.

Many boats arrived on the Wednesday evening or Thursday morning in order to get launched and to test equipment, rigging, and conditions prior to the late afternoon “tune-up” race. These “early comers” were greeted with rather uncharacteristically strong winds that had been building during the week on the coast, pulled in by exceptionally warm weather in the interior valleys. Winds were blowing well into the 20 and low 30 mph range with some gusts into the 40’s – all under clear blue skies! Most boats and crews warily tested the conditions, but some skippers began questioning whether they were ready to sail a full regatta in such winds. However, the winds peaked during the middle of the day and eased off somewhat by the 4:30 “tune-up.”

By Friday’s first day of official competition, the winds had moderated to the mid-twenties, certainly sufficient for rigorous sailing! The results that accompany this story do not fully convey the aggressive competition that took place on the water; however, in the end it is fair to say that the most able skippers and crews in the fastest boats came out on top. The all-sails competition, comprised entirely of Fresno (Ca) Fleet 3 sailors, was won by perennial winners Ruth, Scott, and Brian Barcus from Tollhouse, California. Their boat – Mean, Green, and Ugly – was unbeaten in the Thursday tune-up race as well as in all of the five regatta races. Finishing second in all the races was defending champion, Jerry Hansen, also sailing with a family crew of son Kirk and grandson Brian Brown. The other Fresno boat to capture a top place in the spinnaker class was that of Jorgen Clausen who secured second spot in the last race of the three on the first day. All of the all-sails skippers and crews knew each other well; they just needed to accommodate the very different conditions from the more predictable winds of their Huntington (Ca) Lake.

The working sails category had 25 boats, making for a crowded starting line with lots of action! Though the winning boat of the Regatta was quite dominant, there was heated competition throughout the five races. While defending champion (and exceptional western US sailor), Rob Anderson, unfortunately did not sail this year, the racing included five former Western Nationals winners as well as many other very experienced and competitive skippers and crews. Boats competing represented, in addition to those from our fleet #43, boats and crews from Fleet 1 (Seattle), Fleet 3(Fresno), Fleet 5 (newly organized - Canyon Ferry, Montana), Fleet 24 (Eugene, Or), Fleet 28 (Calgary), Fleet 34 (Va-NC), and Fleet 52 (Clarkston, Wa).

Special mention is appropriate for several sailors who participated in the working sails racing. Former CBYC junior and Hobart College sailor, Oscar Barney, traveled back to Oregon for a week from his home in Tuebingen, Germany to skipper with his father,

John, as crew; former SJ21 National Measurer, William (Bill) McClure, traveled west from Troy, Virginia to skipper a chartered boat with his brother, George from Eugene, Oregon crewing for him; Mark Weinheimer, sailmaker from Oriental, NC (and husband of LuAnn Parins, Eastern Commodore), traveled west to see a friend off on for the Singlehanded Transpac, a solo sail from San Francisco to Hawaii, and made a 9 hour diversion north along the coast to crew on “Wooglin” sailed by Western Commodore, Chris Popich and his wife, (also) Chris.

Complete results and photos of the racing are attached, but suffice it to say that 2004 Western Nationals champion, Tom Mills and his crew, Jim Patterson, sailed much of the regatta in, or near, the front. Certainly local lake knowledge did not hurt these two Geary 18 sailors who “migrated” over to a SJ21, but Tom’s sailing acumen and well-tuned boat, “Toady Juan,” are widely-respected. The second spot went to a very sleek blue boat from the new Fleet 5 of Canyon Ferry Lake on the Missouri River near Helena, Montana. Brothers Bob and Jeff Abelin and friend, Derek Sondereggor from Colorado manned the boat and pushed the tempo in four of five races with 2 seconds and 2 thirds. Third spot was captured by the son/father Barney combination with a pair of runner-up finishes in the first two races cementing their role as contenders. Fourth place overall went to another pair of “crossover” sailors from the local aggressive Geary fleet with Sean Randle and wife, Jessica, finishing strong with a pair of bullets in the last two races. The fifth place trophy recipient was three-time former Western National winner, Tom Kyle, sailing with his brother, Bob, in Tom’s spiffy yellow boat, Pilot Car. Within these results was considerable changing of positions of boats, made possible by the hour-long races sailed in strong winds on a lake that has characteristic “sweet spots” and “holes” caused by the surrounding hills that influence the winds off the ocean.

The weekend was not all racing. A hamburger cookout on the first evening in the clubhouse kicked off the event just after the tune-up race. A BBQ chicken dinner on Friday night was followed by the Association meeting chaired by W Commodore Popich. The final evening featured the traditional salmon BBQ prepared with fresh Pacific salmon by the “usual suspects” headed by David Morgan. The program on Saturday evening featured trophy presentations, a door prize drawing, and a presentation on issues with our aging but beloved boats by former National Measurer, Bill McClure.

It was decided during the Regatta that the Western Nationals will be hosted in 2009 by Fleet 1 during July in the Seattle area.