Wild winds made the '88 Winter Circuit a test of stamina...

SURF'S UP CIRCUIT!

Craig Lewcock, Bob Foster, and Gonzalo Diaz contributed to this article.

Craig Lewcock and crew Tom Fisher of San Diego, CA, stayed strong throughout the 1988 Surf's Up Circuit to capture the Zambrano Trophy, the prestigious honor which goes to the low point leader at the end of the Circuit.

The Winter Circuit is a four-regatta event which starts in Clearwater, FL, at the class Midwinter, goes to Miami for the Don Q Rum Key Regatta, and then to Nassau, Bahamas, for the Bacardi Cup and the Guimblin Memorial.

Lewcock and Fisher also won the Kelly Trophy, which honors the low point team during the Bahamian leg of the Circuit. The Concord Trophy, awarded to the best Bahamian in the last two events, was won by Jimmy Lowe and Graham Lawrence.

The 1988 Circuit was physically the toughest one in recent years. A continuous system of cold fronts brought strong winds and below-average temperatures for the two weeks of racing. The turnout was strong this year, which might have been due to the ideal weather of the '87 Circuit experienced. However, this year's Circuit proved right away to look nothing like the picture the travel agent had painted.

The Midwinters...

Sixty-two boats came to Clearwater for the Midwinter Championship which dates back to the 1950s. The fleet included Olympic hopefuls, America's Cup competitors, State Class champions, 1988 Rolex Yachtsman of the Year, and the Collegiate All-Americans. Also included in the fleet were many of our class officers. Top of the list was SCIRA Commander Jerry Thompson, with Norwegian National Secretary Birger Jensen, District Governor Wyatt Wheeler, and Paul Gillis and countless U.S. best captains in attendance.

It is important to note that despite the competitiveness of this group, the spirit and camaraderie of the sailors was not lost. It was truly as strong as ever.

Ed and Meredith Adams took first place after finishing second several times in the past. Dave Chapin was second and Morgan Resser was third.

The weather was warm but windy to the point that the last four races were sailed in the Bay and less than half of the 62 boats sailed all of the regatta. A practice race was held in the Gulf on Saturday with winds of 10 to 15 knots and the winds increased each day during the regatta.

The first official race on Sunday was sailed in the Gulf with winds at 20 knots but decreasing to 15 knots as the race progressed. During the first leg the windward mark was obscured by fog and about a third of the competitors were on the left side of the course. Adams had the lead at the first mark, followed by John Keene, Alex Smigelski, Fred Abel, and Bobbie Gust. By the second weather mark Chapin had moved into the lead followed by Dan Bixby, Abel, and Adams. At the finish it was Chapin and Bixby followed by Keith Dodes, Adams, and Smigelski.

The second race was started immediately in winds that gradually diminished from 15 to 10 knots and seas of two to three feet. At the finish the lead was held by Dodes, followed by Dave Pritchard, Susan Taylor and Resser. By the second weather mark it was Dodes, Lewcock, Pritchard, Resser, and Steve Callahan. At the finish it was still Dodes, Lewcock, and Pritchard, but Bixby moved up to fourth place by Resser.

Monday morning the winds were blowing 25 knots in the Gulf from the southeast and the waves were three feet and crossing. The race committee decided to sail in the Bay where winds were about 20 knots. The weather leg was protected by a few large convection clouds on the north shore and very rapid wind shifts had to be dealt with. It also soon became obvious that the left side of the course had a persistent lift.

The third race was sailed by 50 boats with Adams leading at the first mark just ahead of Lewcock, Ben Mitnick, Chapin, Peter Comettino, and Resser. The second weather mark, it was Chapin, Lewcock, and Adams. They held those positions in the finish followed by Smigelski and Comettino.

The fourth race was sailed back-to-back in the same winds. Resser led at the first mark ahead of Adams, Smigelski, Gates, and Bryan Fishback. At the second weather mark Adams had taken the lead followed by Smigelski and Resser. Adams held the lead to the finish to win his second race of the day. Resser was second followed by Fishback, Doug Clark, and Lewcock. Chapin broke a tally in this race for his three wins.

With two races left to go and the prospect of a throw-out, less than two boats separated Adams, Chapin, Lewcock, and Dodson for the lead.

Tuesday morning came with the same northwest wind but it was now up to 25 knots. Again the Bay was chosen with the number of starters now down to 34.

The fifth race was started after one general recall and Smigelski led at the first mark followed by Adams and Resser. The next time up the beat, Dodson had taken the lead followed by Pritchard, Resser, Smigelski, and Adams. At the finish Adams had regained the lead with Smigelski in second, then Pritchard, Resser, and Chapin.

The last race followed with gusts over 35 knots, Adams again led at the first mark with Allison Jolly in second, then Comettino, Chapin, and Resser. By the second upwind rounding it was Chapin, Adams, and Resser. They held those positions in the finish to give Adams his first Surf's Up Winter Championship.

The race committee headed by Carol Brown did an excellent job with good starting lines and courses considering the limitations of the Bay. There were no protests and only one general recall. The competition was very tight with the top 20 boats capable of winning most regattas.

The awards banquet was held at the Clearwater Yacht Club and included top honors to the top seven skippers and crews. Sam Moller won the Bluestriker Trophy, Bob Foster was awarded the Levinson Sportmanship Trophy, and Paul Gillis won the Seavy Trophy for Fleet 46.

Much credit must go to Ed Hunter and Joan Levinsen for organizing a record-setting regatta.

The Don Q...

The next stop on the Circuit was the Don Q Rum Key Regatta in Miami on March 19-20, giving the racers a couple of days to work their way down to hopefully warmer weather.

The temperature got abit warmer but the winds stayed strong, only letting up some for Sunday's last race. A field of 57 boats entered in this event, with the racing held on the challenging Biscayne Bay, due to the strong breeze and shallow water depths a brutal chop kicked up, forcing Snipe crews to endure a daunting salt water wash while racing.

The windless day was Saturday, where the wind velocity somehow stayed winds...
the 25 knot maximum for the two scheduled races. When the founding fathers of the Snipe Class were deciding upon appropriate sailing conditions, they missed the advantageous wind squalls which the fleet continually followed on this stormy day.

Ed and Marilyn Adams answered the bell to this right best of all, giving them the win in the regatta. They did it with very little scrambling, showing confident tactics which kept them in good position early in each race. Runner-up in the regatta was the Lewcock/Fisher duo, whose consistency kept them well ahead of the pack but just off the heels of the Adams family.

The last race of the series was much different than the previous four, offering a lighter (2-11 knot) and much shifty breeze. This race gave a shuffle to the remaining top five boats, with Tom Lillian taking greatest advantage of the new conditions to move from fifth to third in the overall standings. Norwegian Birger Jansen sank to 28th in this race, which caused for the switching of his position with Lillian.

The highlights of this regatta are generally the great race committee (the 12th consecutive year for chairman Jim Weber), a refreshing Saturday afternoon.

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the reliability of the barman/owner Menny Trainer. To do so requires a good deal of planning and coordination. On Tuesday, Paul Collins of the RC and his cousin, Russell, sailed his boat, and Rich Raymond and many other CGSC members were on hand to help make the event a success.

On to Nassau...

For many sailors it was now time to head north and begin the northbound drive toward the chilly northeast. For others it was time to get to Nassau for the second half of the Circuit.

The racing doesn’t start until Wednesday, and many take a Monday or Tuesday to arrive in Nassau. Somewhere between the beautiful waters, clear skies, and potential Yellow Bird cocktails is the appeal toward a more relaxed state.

The race schedule calls for a 10:00 a.m. start and a 5:00 p.m. finish. After the first race the sailors come in to the sailing club for lunch and poolside conversation. The amount of time between races is always a problem. More time and the race would be ready to leave their lounge chairs for the interesting race. Less time and the races would never get the chance to relax and get comfortable. As it is, the RC’s harbor gun might as well be a bomb threat. It is an unknown.

The wind, however, gave little impression of doing anything other than bouncing hard. In fact, the conditions were probably the toughest yet. The spectator boat quickly found out that the rough weather was the 50 yard limit of yacht racing. For them it was like sitting at the bar and waiting for the next crash. And there were plenty of them.

The Bacardi Cup was won by Lewis/Fisher, demonstrating great speed and smooth handling under the toughest circumstances. Jeff Lambart and crew Tom Devlin established a new record at a showing in St. Thomas that year.

The conditions for the Garment Memorial had somewhat moderated, and the five race series was won by Peter Cowran of the RC and Tom Davis with Lambart in second.

The social calendar was as full as usual, with BNSC barmaid Peter Fox filling in the voids with his hairstylist collection of cocktails. The waterfront nightspot was again the place for the young and want-to-be laid-back to hang out. With college spring break in full swing, it was amazing that everyone always was right on schedule.

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