

2002 Winter Circuit

US National Secretary Bill Welch and wife Sherry sent daily Circuit reports and photos. Below are excerpts from their daily postings.

Midwinters, Clearwater, FL

Sunday, March 10

Wow what a day!!! If you were not on the water in Clearwater, you missed it. Clear blue skies, light green emerald water, 65-75 degrees, with 10-15kts predicted.

They took us 1 1/2 miles off the beach to minimize the current effect coming from the north. But the waves were the story; no one had time to think about the current. The rides were incredible; 18kts (felt like 25) with swells of 3 feet and an occasional wave higher than the boom. You could not get off a plane even if you tried. The wind and waves built during the day with occasional puffs over 20kts. Several boats flipped, five went in, but the rest of us stayed out for three long races.

The real thrill was the ride in. The tide shifted before we came in so the current was going out at about 1/2 kt and the wind was from the Northwest at 18kts, creating a series of 5-6 foot standing waves at the breakwater. That was definitely an E-ticket ride. Making things more interesting was the 10,000 spring-breakers packed onto the beach, about 50 power boats cruising the beach in the inlet, rock bands trying to play reggae, and the para-sailors and fishing fleet all squeezed into the mix.

Monday, March 11

The wind built until the middle of the second race when the seabreeze (westerly) began to win out over the prevailing easterly, so the wind began to weaken for the third race. After all of the great wind yesterday this 6-8kts with holes was difficult. At the second leeward mark, the end of the fleet sat in a hole for a



1939 Midwinter start courtesy of Cookie Gilreath

few minutes, then set their poles with the new seabreeze (180 degree shift). The remarkable thing was that it took more than 15 min for the seabreeze to actually sweep over the entire course, and filled in earlier on the right than on the left. Bibi had been leading the whole race and remained in the lead even with the wind shift, as the RC shortened the course at the third windward (now leeward) mark.

Tue, March 12

No surprise George Szabo and Brian Janney continued their strong performance and won the Midwinters easily. Today the wind was from the South East as predicted but was variable in strength and direction making the tactics frustrating and more challenging. Frequently all crews were at full hike and depowering, then moments later powering-up and sitting in. The waves were small due to the direction of the wind and the short time that it had been blowing, so surfing was infrequent. Up-wind it was playing the shifts, and avoiding the holes. Six races had already been completed, so we only sailed one race today, then reached in to the dock and packed up to move to Miami. Hal Gilreath picked up his fifth place trophy from last year, and Bibi Juetz was awarded the Levinson Sportsmanship Award. It is on to Miami; it is still time to make it. Pack up the Snipe up, and head south.

Midwinters Results

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------|
| 1. | George Szabo/Brian Janney | USA 29672 | 1-1-3-1-1-(4)-1 | 6.75 |
| 2. | Rob/Bridget Hallawell | USA 29842 | 5-2-1-2-(7)-2-6 | 17.75 |
| 3. | Hal Gilreath/Hugh Hallawell | USA 29324 | 2-3-2-(8)-5-3-5 | 20 |
| 4. | Carol Cronin/Andrew Pimental | USA 29988 | 3-4-4-4-4-(6)-3 | 22 |
| 5. | Birger Janson/Cecilia deFaire | NOR 29940 | 4-5-5-6-3-(10)-2 | 25 |
| 6. | Peter/Shuehan Commette | USA 29114 | 8-6-(10)-5-8-5-4 | 36 |
| 7. | John MacRae/Linda Epstein | USA 29727 | (9)-8-9-3-2-8-8 | 38 |
| 8. | Bibi Juetz/Dane Bianchi | BRA 29143 | (dnf)-708-10-6-1-10 | 41.75 |
| 9. | Mike/Tim Blackwood | USA 27788 | 12-12-7-7-(13)-7-7 | 52 |
| 10. | Alex Pline/Nancy Gilreath | USA 29147 | 7-11-(13)-9-10-11-9 | 57 |
| 11. | Hans Birkholz/J. Williams | USA 29987 | 11-13-12-12-11-9-(dnc) | 68 |
| 12. | Gonzalo Diaz/Greg Saldana | USA 28814 | 13-9-dnf-11-14-15-(dnc) | 78 |
| 13. | Sherry Welch/Ed Sherman | USA 29955 | 14-(16)-11-15-15-12-15 | 82 |
| 14. | Bill Welch/Dee Schilling | USA 29400 | (16)-14-15-14-12-14-13 | 82 |
| 15. | Jan Persson/E. Sejlaub | DEN 30001 | 6-10-6-(dnc)-dnc-dnc-dnc | 82 |
| 16. | Halvour/Edel Poulsen | NOR 29673 | 15-17-(dnc)-19-9-13-11 | 84 |
| 17. | Dan Gautraud/Jayson Johnson | USA 28880 | (18)-dnf-14-17-17-17-14 | 97 |
| 18. | Ray Schmit/Taryn Pittman | USA 25659 | (dnf)-dnc-dnc-13-16-16-12 | 97 |
| 19. | John Hill/Diane | USA 28628 | 19-dnf-(dnc)-16-19-19-16 | 107 |
| 20. | Bob Foster/Karen Goforth | USA 26397 | 17-(dnc)-dnc-18-18-18-dnc | 111 |

Don Q, Miami, FL

Friday, March 15

The weather could not have been more perfect today in Miami: light SE breeze 10-14kts, light chop, 75-80 degrees, sunny, warm green-crystal-clear water. We had a leisurely morning, rigging and registering, and still had time to get two long windward-leeward races in.

Andrew Pimental and Carol Cronin were cranked up and going fast; they remarked that they never stayed with their 'game plan' but it worked better than expected. The wind shifted more with velocity than direction, with a few holes mixed in, making the tactics challenging.

Saturday, March 16

The weather forecasters are getting better; it was another spectacular day on Biscayne Bay. The wind was a gentle 8-12 knots out of the east all day until we came in, and then it picked up on schedule to 15kts giving us an enjoyable plane into the club.

The scheduled start was for noon, and everyone was out early enjoying the perfect conditions for sailing. Another windward-leeward course was signaled and the obligatory general recall was completed, then we got down to racing under the Z flag. About five minutes into the race, just enough time to get the fleet spread out widely across the course, a monster 30 degree LEFT shift came in with pressure. This caught the series leader Szabo/Jamney way to the right, with Diaz/Wirth also on the wrong side. This shift proved to be a persistent shift, lasting until most of the fleet reached the windward mark. George fought back to 11th and Augi to 13th from a position of probably 28-30 after the shift. That is a skill that all of us can admire, since most of us find ourselves on the wrong side of the shift frequently and can never get back any boats much less over half the fleet. George explained that once he realized that it was a persistent shift he used every excuse that he could find to move towards the pressure. He tacked on any little shift and made ground against the leaders 10 foot at a time. Andrew Pimental cleared the tactics into overly simple terms, as "two distinct games": when you are in the lead and in front with clean air, you always move towards the middle between the rest of the fleet and the mark. When you are buried with no chance of clean air, the trick is to find a clear lane with pressure moving you towards clean air and the favored side; usually the clean air takes precedence over the favored side.

By the time the second race was started today, the chop was also confused with multiple power boats zipping around, some actually spectating, and a few PHRF boats practicing. Everyone was fighting so vigorously to get to the left many did not realize that the shift had arrived, tacked very late, and ended up reaching for the mark.

When we got in from this unusually long day the Don-Q drinks met us at the dock, the Cuban dinner was served buffet-family style and was wonderful.

Sunday, March 17

The weather was magnificent today for the final race of the Don Q. Early in the AM there was only a whisper on the bay, but we were promised 10-15kts by the weather service, and they were right. Again the wind was near



easterly, but we had a lot more chop today particularly at the windward mark. Just like the last two days, the left shift appeared on Q, and those that took the left early gained. George Szabo and Andrew Pimental arrived next to each other at the windward mark and match raced for several legs until George finally got a few boats between them, winning the race but not giving Andrew enough points to take the regatta.

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|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Andrew Pimental/Carol Cronin | 15.5 |
| 2. George Szabo/Brian Janney | 17.25 |
| 3. Angie Diaz/Gus Wirth | 23 |
| 4. Birger Jansen/Cecilia de Faire | 29 |
| 5. Peter/Shochan Commette | 31 |
| 6. Jimmie/Jody Lowe | 36 |
| 7. Jim Richter/Watt Duffy | 45 |
| 8. Gonzo Diaz/Michael Abadin | 47 |
| 9. Bibi Juetz/Dante Bianchi | 49 |
| 10. Carr Moody/Rick Jarchow | 51 |
| 11. John MacRae/Linda Epstein | 62 |
| 12. Gonzalo Diaz/Martin Hermida | 65 |
| 13. Ernesto Rodriguez/Robert Ramirez | 66 |
| 14. Eric Reinke/Kim Couranz | 70 |
| 15. Hal Gilreath/Hugh Hallawell | 72 |
| 16. Jerry Thompson/Lynn Fitzpatrick | 73 |
| 17. Michael Kaim/Aaron Miller | 81 |
| 18. Bill/Sherry Welch | 82 |
| 19. Woody Norwood/Diane Fowler | 87 |
| 20. Hans Birkholz/Josie Williams | 100 |
| 21. Robin Baker/Janet Plitt | 100 |
| 22. Gordon Flemming/Patty Maloney | 101 |
| 23. James Janda/Daniel Weberndorfer | 101 |
| 24. Ray Schmit/Taryn Pittman | 107 |
| 25. Greg Saldana/John Kehoe | 130 |
| 26. Tak Uchino/Yvonne Blackstone | 131 |
| 27. Halvor/Edel Poulsen | 133 |
| 28. Jay Chen/Jock Kolbas | 143 |
| 29. Sharon Crockett/Bonnie Unsworth | 145 |
| 30. Bergie Montarroyos/Luis Agudelo | 150 |
| 31. John Hill/David Hernandez | 152 |
| 32. Christian Vilate/Pablo Vilate | 154 |

Nassau, Bahamas

Wed, March 20 - Bacardi Cup

It is hard to describe how beautiful this place is to sail. The water is crystal clear, warm, and the wind is always blowing. It was very impressive this morning with 15-20kts from the east with a moderate chop. The committee boat could not hold it's anchor and we waited for about an hour before we got underway. I have to admit it is hard to concentrate on racing when the water is so beautiful. On starboard tack in the morning the sun was at just the right angle so that you could see your entire boat shadow on the bottom, masthead to daggerboard. WOW!! The fleet got off to a clean start, first attempt, without any individual recalls. The fleet tactics were predominantly "FG" (follow George) since he punched out early and fast taking all of us to the right corner for a single tack beat (but still a long 1 1/4 mile windward leg). Then downwind the "FG" mode continued as he sailed low and fast, by-the-lee, extending his lead. Spray was flying; this was exciting racing. A few shifts suckered some of us to the left, but it appeared the right corner was the ticket. As is the custom around here, we all sailed in to the club for lunch. This gave us a moment to dry out and repair anything lost or broken during the first race. It also requires extreme discipline to put the soggy boots back on and go out and do another race in the afternoon. The wind dramatically changed for this afternoon's race (as all of the old salts whispered to us earlier today, "the wind will die when the tide changes"), only 10-12kts, with a few holes but about the same direction. Once or twice, just to see if we were paying attention, a 20-degree left shift, and a 30-degree right shift came through mixing up the fleet. The "FG" method did not work this race since he was 5 of 6 deep most of the race, and we were forced to chase Robert Dunkley who lead at every mark. Great racing.

This evening is the Bacardi Party with terrific rum drinks and Eddie's homemade snacks (the conch fritters were to-die-for). So life is tough on the winter circuit, somehow we will manage to get up tomorrow and do it again.

Thurs, March 21 - Bacardi Cup/ Gamblin

This regatta just keeps getting better. While everyone else is freezing with this huge cold front pushing down through the country, we are having a great time sailing in 80 degrees with 15kts from the south. The problem is the direction. For all of you who know Nassau harbor, the wind coming from the south comes over the island, and therefore is highly irregular. It was common to have 30-degree lifts and 30 degree headers only moments apart, and velocity changes of 5-8kts without warning. Those that made out were successfully able to manage the current, sail rapidly through holes, change gears every two minutes, and tack about thirty times each weather leg. The runs were almost as bad with great gains to be had with properly timed jibes. Birger Jansen hit the first shift and never looked back; however he was pursued by George and Augie. The three of them worked away from the rest of the fleet, finishing in that order to wind up the Bacardi series. George Szabo and Bryan Janney win the Bacardi Cup again. -

Friday, March 21 - Gamblin Day 2

Just another beautiful day on Montagu Bay. The wind switched around to the west today as predicted, and it was warm and beautiful; break out the sun block. No wet suits required.

The RC set a windward leeward course in the morning in 8-10kts. Today the wind was much more steady and even across the course, however the current was much, so tactics were limited to: get-a-good-start....then go left. Jerry Thompson had a great start and hit all the minor shifts and got to the windward mark first. George was close behind

him but could not pass him until the second windward mark. Augie found himself deep at the first mark. He still managed to pass boats on every leg finishing a remarkable 8 after rounding 15 at the first windward mark.

As the sequence began the wind started dying. The current had switched and was now pushing us across the line, and we had our first recall, and then a Z-flag. The fleet went right in tight formation with several tacking away with minor shifts. The squall line behind us dwindled, and the frontal boundary in front of us dissipated taking all of the wind with it. We drifted towards the windward mark spread out so that each of us had some fresh air, then a giant 40 right shift just before the mark turned the fleet sideways burying Robert Dunkley who was looking great wide to the left. George Szabo and Augie Diaz led the fleet around the windward mark and then we crawled to the jibe mark. Woody Norwood felt right at home and loved the drifter, but it was painful for the rest of us. The wind started filling in, so that we were able to hike a little by the time we reached the leeward mark. Then we had two short windward legs to the Northeast to test the fleet on the relative importance of current or wind pressure. George and Augie hit the hard right corner and made out the first time up, but on the second and last windward leg, Augie separated from George early in the leg moving to the left. Two-thirds up the wind went left about 15 degrees and that allowed Augie to close the distance; George was sweating. On the cross, George was still ahead. Great racing.

Saturday, March 22 - Gamblin Day 3

20kts from the Northeast today. This was flat-out-fun sailing, heavy air with only a moderate chop. The RC set triangle courses which gave us screaming reaches. It was hard to concentrate since everything was so beautiful.

The first weather leg was tight