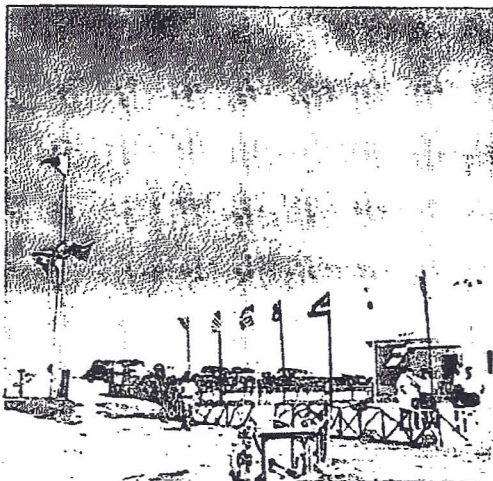


A DOUBLE TRIUMPH FOR BERMUDA

WINS FIRST TWO PLACES IN WESTERN HEMISPHERE CHAMPIONSHIP ----13 ENTRIES FROM 7 NATIONS COMPETE
By Terry Whittemore — 1954-54 Western Hemisphere Champion



THE BERMUDA WINNERS --Kneeling are the new Western Hemisphere Champions, Eugene Simmons (left) and his crew, John Shirley. Standing are the second place winners, Ronnie Strange (left) and his crew, George Brown.



VIEW OF THE SPANISH POINT BOAT CLUB



THE WINNERS ALSO HOLD THE BERMUDA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

A few hundred miles off the U.S. Carolina coast lies a happy jewel of an island known as Bermuda. As a matter of fact, so much enchantment is packed into its tiny area (22 square miles) that only a visit will verify the laudings heaped upon it by many who consider it the ONLY vacation resort. To describe even briefly the multitude of lovely beaches, coves, and harbors, the clear, blue, warm waters for swimming, fishing, and boating, the hospitality of the Bermudians themselves, and the wonderful variety of things to do would take pages. All I can say now is that it is all there -- and a great deal more to boot!

Fortunate indeed, therefore, were the top-ranking Snipe sailors from the Western Hemisphere countries of Argentina, Brazil, Bahamas, Canada, Cuba, and the USA who were invited to compete for one of the second highest honors in Snipedom (the other being the European Championship), The John T. Hayward Trophy, along with the best teams from Bermuda.

Experienced as the Bermudians are in holding famous sailing events, nevertheless, this was their first crack at holding an International Snipe Championship and, to say the least, they outdid themselves in an effort to sponsor a perfectly organized regatta which, in turn, helped justify the tremendous distances travelled --all at personal expense--by the contestants. The organizing body displayed a prime example of teamwork and cooperation, for not one Yacht Club sponsored the event, but THREE, and each

famous in its own right. From the membership of the three-- Spanish Point, Sandys, and St. George's-- another organization was formed called "The Bermuda Snipe Associates" and it is to this group under the competent direction of their Chairman, Commodore Reggie Tucker, and the Bermuda National Secretary, Commodore Ted White, that the success of the regatta and social functions can be attributed.

By the evening of October 14th, all of the contestants had managed to arrive, although not necessarily on schedule, thanks to a few hurricanes wandering around and about which managed to discombobulate an occasional airline schedule. In the traditional manner, our hosts invited the sailors and visiting spectators to the first of many delightful social events --this one being a cocktail party under the seven flags of the countries represented, followed by a delicious barbecued chicken dinner at the water's edge of Harrington Sound. To make the situation even more enjoyable, everyone was housed in one location, the Palmetto Bay Guest House and Cottages, ably managed by the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Stearns. Not only did everyone have a great deal more fun through this arrangement, but it served another very important purpose as well. Busses were provided to transport everyone to all the functions. A near miracle was performed every time everyone was aboard even remotely resembling the appointed time and if the bus had to make stops at

various places to pick up the group, well, I'll leave the results to your imagination.

Monday was measuring in day followed by a practice race in the afternoon. Perfect sailing weather was on hand, and the Bermuda teams of Eugene Simmons and Shirley, Ronnie Strange and Brown, made clear their intention as to where they wanted the Hayward Trophy to make its home for the next two years by crossing the finish line one-two in the above mentioned order. I might say that they made good on their intentions by winding up the regatta in exactly those positions.

On Tuesday, the official races began. The day was beautiful and clear, and the wind a rather rugged 16-knot average--rugged that is for the two skippers who brought female crews along. (What am I talking about--I mean rugged on the crews!). Aimee Bento of Brazil took one look at the white-caps and said, "Quien, Yo? De repente estoy cansada!"

Helen O'Leary, crewing for Harry Allen of the U.S., decided to give it a try anyway and astounded everyone by sticking through three such tough races before she was forced to say Uncle.

A full 7-mile triangular course was set up for the first race, and after a delay to replace a broken rudder, the race got underway. The Allen-O'Leary combination took a long port tack hitch shortly after the start and, after coming about, crossed the entire fleet three quarters of the way to the windward mark before the going finally began to take its toll on them. Thereafter, it was a battle royal between the Thompson brothers (US), Laszlo (Brazil), with a Bermuda chap crewing in place of Aimee), Eugene Simmons of Bermuda, and Godfrey Lightbourn (Bahamas). This quartette staged an exciting duel with a dramatic finish of 6 seconds between the first and second boat and only 44 seconds for all four. Thompson had the lead at the only time it counted and the first race ended in the above order.

The second race was a clear victory for Simmons, who lead at every mark and crossed the finish line with plenty to spare ahead of Cuba's Jorge Mantilla and Carlos Sela, runners-up in the World Championships last year in Spain. Thompson got the 3rd spot and thus tied Simmons for the top spot after these two of the 6 races scheduled.

Consequently, both boys wanted the number one slot in the next race the worst sort of a way and a spectacular battle for the honor ensued. The lead changed hands grudgingly several times, yet neither could work out more than a few lengths over the other at any time. Simmons had the edge on speed and pointing while going to windward, while Thompson was definitely sailing his boat faster off the wind. Just short of the line, Simmons lost his main, clinching the victory for Thompson. However, he still had enough lead over Strange to get across the line in front of him for a second place.

Gabriel Gonzalez of Brazil was finally able to show his superb sailing ability in the 4th race which he won with ridiculous ease when, for once, he drew a good boat which didn't break down on him. He won with over a minute and a half to spare, which was the largest margin of victory achieved in any of the races. Thompson broke a tiller when he was second at the half-way mark, replaced it with a spare which he carried (either by luck or foresight) while 7 boats passed him, and then recouped all the boats that had passed him on the next windward leg. But in the process, he pressed his luck a little too far on the port tack and a DSQ resulted and, as it turned out, also ended his chances of winning the title. Strange thus got the second place and his consistency was now beginning to show up on the tally sheet, for in the total point score, he was now in second place behind Simmons. Also, in this race, Simmons drew one of the BOBO Snipes and was fortunate to finish 7th, his worst race of the series.

By the start of the 5th race, the winds were really beginning to howl with gusts hitting over 30 knots. Godfrey Kelly of Bahamas sailed a most beautiful race to victory. Gabriel Gonzalez of Brazil was right in there with him until his rudder snapped shortly after turning into the final run for the finish. Gonzalez finished the race anyway by steering with his paddle amidst cheers from all the spectator boats, as it was no mean feat considering the high wind and seas. Strange was on hand to move into 2nd place after this mishap, with Lightbourn 3rd. Thompson finished 7th and Simmons 5th. Since the weather was getting no better, the final 6th race was postponed to the next day. When the weather proved just as turbulent that morning, the series

was abandoned and the totals were based on the best four out of five races.

It was an unfortunate ending for a series that had started with tight struggles for supremacy, but weather was one factor the host country organizers could not control. It was also a series in which bad luck affected several contestants, particularly the Latin American sailors and one that produced a typical sporting gesture when Jorge Mantilla disqualified himself in the 4th race for touching the weather mark when only he was aware of it.

Above all, it was a triumph for local sailors and the icing on the cake for the 3 clubs forming the Bermuda Snipe Associates-- St. George's, Sandys, and Spanish Point--which organized and ran a record event in a manner that caused Ted Wells, a veteran of many championships, to say, "Other countries could take note of the way this series has been handled by Bermuda."

They Finished in This Order

Final standings based on the best four of five races:

Skipper	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1. E. Simmons, Ber.	1444	1600	1521	1225	1296	5986
2. R. Strange, Ber.	1024	1163	1444	1521	1521	5673
3. G. Lightbourn, Bah.	1369	981	1156	1444	1444	5413
4. J. Thompson, U.S.A.	1600	1444	1600	729	1156	5373
5. G. Kelly, Bah.	1225	900	1225	1156	1600	5206
6. G. Diaz, Cuba	1296	1369	1089	1296	1089	5059
7. G. Gonzalez, Brazil	961	1225	784	1600	1225	5011
8. L. Orella, Argentina	1089	1089	1369	784	1369	4916
9. J. Mantilla, Cuba	1156	1521	1296	784	784	4737
10. C. Laszlo, Brazil	1521	1024	1024	1089	1024	4658
11. H. Allen, U.S.A.	900	1296	841	1024	784	4061
12. H. Henderson, Can.	841	841	961	1369	784	4012
13. S. Forsey, Can.	784	784	900	961	961	3606

* Required to count fourth race.

Although brilliant sailing was demonstrated occasionally by nearly all of the contestants, bad luck in the form of equipment breakdown (see Wells' Wanderings December 1956) plagued many of them. These sailors were familiar with keen regatta competition and certainly knew how to push and coax the maximum out of the boat they drew. Perhaps part of the breakdowns could be attributed to this fact, as they certainly sailed their boats hard every inch of the way. The number of breakdowns was discouragingly high, which leads me to believe that other factors entered the picture, but if anyone felt disappointed about anything, this was the only item one could pick on, and I know the Bermudians felt ten times worse about it than any of the contestants despite the fact that no one was to blame.

This was the largest turn-out to date for a Western Hemisphere regatta what with an entry from Argentina. A team from Uruguay had hoped to come, but finally were unable to make it. This, also, was the Canadians first stab at leaving their home waters, and from their very enthusiasm I know we will be seeing a great deal of them in the future.

Enough can't be said in behalf of the smooth functioning committees, particularly those whose work kept them behind the scenes. Their presence was most evident, however, by the precision with which everything moved. Our hosts gave us a complete tour of their lovely island, including a visit with the Governor of Bermuda and his charming wife. The races were held in the Great Sound off the Spanish Point Yacht Club where we also spent a most enjoyable evening as guests of the membership. St. George's and Sandys opened their doors to entertain the visitors, too, while on the last night, the prize awarding dinner at the Elbow Beach Surf Club was a fitting climax. None other than Mr. Rod Williams, Mayor of Bermuda, and a world famous sailor in the ocean racing classes presented the many fine prizes along with the Hayward Trophy to Eugene Simmons, the new Western Hemisphere Champion.

If space permitted, I would like to tell of the hilarious bus rides returning from some of the evening festivities and of the wild motorcycle races held on the Stearns front lawn by most of the group in their spare time, but the details of that belong to another story.

Many thanks are due the Bermudians for the wonderful hospitality extended to contestants and visiting spectators alike, and in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Snipe sailors and their crews the world over, Best Wishes and Good Luck for the New Year!

Pictures of the regatta have been received from the Bermuda News Bureau, Bermuda Sports magazine, Gonzalo Melendez, etc. They were too late for this issue, but will appear in Feb.