

Keith Dodson Wins North American Championship

Local boy makes good with "consistently good starts and beautifully tuned boat."



Start of Third Race: Winner Keith Dodson (bow just showing) and Mark Reynolds (25732) take the pin early. (Frank LaHorgue photo)

by Frank LaHorgue

(Long Beach, CA) They were ill winds that blew September 7, 8 and 9. A 41-boat fleet of Snipes had gathered for the 1984 North American Championship; Alamitos Bay Yacht Club was host.

Propelled by tropical storm Marie off Baja California, steamy dank air engulfed Long Beach with light, fluky, unpredictable winds. Race chairman Langdon Parrill chewed nails while the locals scratched heads over the unusual conditions.

And the rock stars arrived in force; past world champs Dave Chapin and Jeff Lenhart. Mark Reynolds and Doug DeSouza

had won Nationals in the past. Jerry Thompson was a previous North American regatta winner.

The seven-race, one-throwout series began on Friday in light air. By the end of that two-race day, Alamitos Bay Yacht Club sailor Keith Dodson had set a tough pace with a first and a second place finish.

Three races were slated for Saturday, a day that set some sort of record for radical wind shifts. Forty and 50-degree swings bounced across the Long Beach Harbor course, and with no cyclical pattern like they talk about in the text books.

Dodson consolidated his lead position with another bullet, a third and a 24th place finish that had throwout written all over it. Reynolds, starting the day in a position to threaten, was tanked twice with an 18th and a 29th.

"Dodson is sailing very fast," said past winner Jerry Thompson. "His boat is beautifully tuned, and he's getting consistently good starts."

"The shifts and the holes were unreal out there today," Thompson went on after Saturday's racing. "In that last race, I rounded the last leeward mark with Dave Chapin well behind me. I thought I had him put away. He went right and I went into a hole. Dave finished third and I was ninth."

Marie was acting petulant on Sunday; 25

to 30-knot southerlies with rain and lightning expected according to the weather service. Cruisers scurried home early from Catalina Island and heavy weather snipe sailors hoped for an edge to move up in the fleet.

By the last day, Dodson's lead seemed unbeatable. Counting likely throwouts, Dodson had only 6½ points. Dave Chapin was the closest challenger with 22 points.

The series was tight for the rest of the trophies; only eight points separated the next six boats.

Marie's predicted tantrum proved a hollow threat; Sunday became a rear copy of Saturday. Dodson drove home his series win with a first place finish in the last race. His score card read 14¼ points.

Scores for the top ten of 41 boats were: 1. Keith Dodson/Claudia O'Brien, 2-1-3-1-7-1, 14¼; 2. Chris Raab/David Swain, 4-4-16-4-1-3, 31½; 3. Jerry Thompson/David Gales, 5-5-11-9-3-10, 43; 4. Jeff Lenhart/Tom Devlin-Peggy Lenhart, 11-4-2-12-4-12, 45; 5. Mike Segerblom/Ron Rosenberg, 9-12-3-6-2-16, 48; 6. Robin Gales/Scott Lindley, 3-11-12-5-10-8, 49; 7. Peter Newbre/Dwayne Bora, 16-3-8-7-7-13, 54; 8. Brian Kent/Bridget Kent, 7-14-6-11-9-7, 54; 9. Dave Chapin/Eric Krebs, 20-9-6-4-3-13, 55; Mark Reynolds/Deanne Wright, 1-8-18-5-6-18, 55½.

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Trophy Winners: The six top skippers, standing, and crews, seated, in order from left to right. See results for names. (Peter Gales photo)



Winning Skipper Keith Dodson and crew Claudia O'Brien with newly won hardware at Snipe Class North American Championship. The silver tray is the W. Birney Mills Memorial Trophy. (Peter Gales photo)



Dave Chapin tacks at the starboard layline. (Frank LaFargue photo)



Third place winner Jerry Thompson. (Frank LaFargue photo)

New Boat: Skipper Mike Segerblom and crew Ron Rosenberg relax between races. The pair first launched their new Phoenix Snipe the day of the first race and placed fifth for the series. (Frank LaFargue photo)

