

June 1, 2016

START OF THE 2016 SAILBOAT RACING SEASON ON DEEP CREEK LAKE

The Steiding Cup and the Becker Regatta

By Dan Muss

Our season starts with a tune-up race called the Steiding Cup. Any sailboat can compete and there is only one winner. The second race of the day is the first race of a 4-race regatta for the Becker Cup, followed by two on Sunday and one on Monday, Memorial Day.

The wind on Saturday was very light and variable and the Steiding Cup race had competitors all over the lake. Darrell Van Hutten, with his wife Kris up, won the Steiding Cup; here is their story:

“As the first race of the season the Steiding Cup is often an opportunity to shake out the bugs from the off-season. As an example our tiller extension broke en route to the starting area. This required steering the old fashioned way with just the tiller - something I had not done in over 40 years. Thank goodness for light air.

At race time, what wind there was coming from the south. As we assessed the wind conditions, it looked like the wind might be better on the right side of the lake, so we set up to start mid-way down the starting line, hoping to tack to port immediately after the start. The winds were so light, we actually tacked to port about 30 seconds before the start just to get up to the line. After the start, several boats also tacked off to port to head for the right side. A larger number of boats went left. For a while it looked like the right side would pay off. Then the boats on the left got a streak of wind off Turkey Neck, and took off. Those of us on the right side could only watch.

By the time we got to the weather mark, almost all the boats had already gone around the mark. As there were Lasers in the race, Flying Scots were not permitted to fly their spinnakers. We moved to the right side going downwind. As we passed the moorings off Turkey Neck, I looked back and saw only one Laser and one Flying Scot behind us. As I looked to other boats nearby, I saw two recent

past Steiding race winners nearby.

As we approached the jibe mark the boats had gotten bunched up and many were going around at the same time. We slowed down so we might have a hole in get around...which happened. We slipped in and passed a bunch of boats at the mark. After the mark rounding, we saw the boats in front had gone left, and more were headed that way. I decided to go right and try and keep my air clear. By going right, we wound up in great position for some new wind that came up from the east. We got the new wind first, and went from way back to catching up to the lead boat as we approached the leeward mark. After getting around the leeward mark right behind the lead boat, they went high. We chose to head straight for the finish line and focus on making the boat go as fast as the wind conditions permitted. Boats behind us also went high, and they were all trying to climb higher and higher. Meanwhile, we had clear air and focused on trying to go fast. We managed to pass the lead boat and won the race.

For us, the race was a great example of never giving up, constantly looking for subtle changes that one can use. And some luck that paid off...with "luck" being where preparation meets opportunity.”

After lunch the PRO (Principle Race Officer), Charles Buffington, called the boats out into the “slot” between 1000acres and Turkey Neck. It looked so “urpy” that the Masters decided unanimously to stay on shore. It was a mistake, the wind came up in the slot and we missed out.

The forecast for Sunday was again not promising...cloudy, cooler, rain later in the afternoon with wind around 4 knots. And that’s what we had. But the PRO called the fleets out and all of them got off. First were the Lasers, then the Gold, Silver and Masters in order in a very light breeze that held throughout the race.

We got a very good start in our Masters fleet but were in third place behind Silverman and Anderson rounding the windward mark. On the downwind leg, with spinnakers flying, we caught them at the jibe mark. Jibing twice more we were in first rounding the leeward mark. We thought we had it but Silverman nipped us at the finish; it was as good as racing gets and a second place is...a second place.

The weather on Monday, Memorial Day, was a continuation of the previous days but there was a breeze at race time. We got off to a reasonable start but found ourselves in the middle of the pack for most of the race. After rounding the leeward mark for the beat to the finish the wind died but old, wily Dick Gregory crept along the 1000acre shore to win.

Notable news: Alan and Lyn Silverman won the Masters Becker cup...the first time they've ever won a regatta!

Ray Gauthier filed this report from the Gold Fleet:

“With me being so busy in my preparations for the new racing season, I had neglected to find a willing crew to sail with me. At the last minute The Bennett family offered up whoever in their family drew the short straw. That poor person would have to sail with me.

As I stood there boat rigged, sails hoisted and ready with my sun screen slathered on, I wondered just who I would have on board for the weekend and would they get there on time. Katherine Bennett, newly sixteen years young, strolled up the dock and jumped aboard. So now I knew I did have a crew...or so I thought.

Katherine has been sailing on Deep Creek since 2001, and being sweet sixteen means she has sailed on Deep Creek for her whole life... So Katherine jumped aboard and slid right into the skippers spot and looked up at me. ‘Ok, I’m ready to go, you push us off’. Sheesh! I didn’t even get the chance to offer the skipper position to her... she just expected it! Of course internally I was thrilled to have her take the helm. So I pushed off.

We sailed out to the race course... since Katherine and I have sailed together before, it was all business... ‘put up the spinnaker, shift it over into the port turtle, no wait-you have the boom vang too tight, is the centerboard all the way down?’ Yes, we are a well-oiled machine.. Katherine talks and I scurry around trying to keep up with her “suggestions”!

While maneuvering around the starting area Katherine asked ‘we are sailing in the Silver Fleet, right?’ I pointed to the gold streamer and said “Katherine, that is a Gold Fleet streamer, we’re sailing in the Gold Championship Fleet. ‘Hmmm’ she replied ‘I don’t think I am up to Skippering in Gold Fleet yet’. Sure you are I announced, and so she did.

On Sunday, the second day of racing, Katherine sailed to first place! She had a photo finish with Jill and Jessica Bennett. Katherine beat them by a foot, after a two mile long race. And then, in the next race, Katherine again sailed into first place! It would come down to Monday’s race. Jill and Jessica, John and Lisa Meredith and Katherine, all in a three way tie for first place in the Championship Fleet.

The weekend racing went by fast. We had two drifter races... that is where you sit and sweat and bob and shake and slowly drift around the lake... but we also had three races with nice breeze. All in all we enjoyed great races, especially considering we were battling snow just three weeks ago! ”

The most amazing sailing story of the weekend was that of Chase and Meredith Hillyer who managed to score a fourth in the Gold Fleet under very unusual circumstances: They had their 2 year-old son James with them. Now James, being 2 years old of course, would not sit on the sailboat seat. He had to be on either Meredith's or Chase's lap. So this remarkable feat of placing fourth in the Gold Fleet, our most advanced racers on the lake, with their kid on one of their laps. That meant that raising, lowering and jibing their spinnaker had to be done passing this 2 year-old between them!

Sailing is a sport like no other; you're out in a boat with no engine. The only sound the boat makes is the water rushing by and the wind in the rigging. The only way one maneuvers among many other racing sails with, sometimes, inches to spare is through your own skill and experience and that of your crew's. How does one learn how to sail? One goes to school.

Garrett County has one of the finest sailing schools in our country; and it's not too late to sign up. There are still openings available. Private lessons are also available in Flying Scot Sailboats on weekdays at reasonable prices. Log onto “dclsasailingschool.com” and get the complete skinny.

Race Results [skipper/crew(s)]

Steiding Cup – Darrell/Kris Van Hutten

Becker Cup Regatta

Gold Fleet: 1 John/Lisa Meredith, 2 Katherine Bennett/Ray Gauthier, 3 Jill/Jessica Bennett, 4 Meredith/Chase Hillyer.

Silver Fleet: 1 Keith Spinnenweber/Crew, 2 Greg/Cheryl Shafer, 3 Spenser/Marie Deakin, 4 Mike Geller/Crew.

Masters Fleet: 1 Alan/Lyn Silverman, 2 Larry/Debbie Anderson, 3 Dan/Carol Muss, 4 Dick/Doug Gregory.

Laser Open: 1 Peter Frey, 2 Charles Graham, 3 Tami Graham, 4 Kyrie Graham.

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