

Off Soundings fleet takes gun this morning

By VICKIE FULKERSON
Day Sports Writer

The amazing thing with the way the weather has been this spring is that 151 boats are even in the water, never mind racing in this weekend's Off Soundings Club Spring Series off Block Island.

"We lost a few to the weather this spring. We had one guy who races who just put his boat in the water this afternoon," said Off Soundings commodore Paul van Dyke of Mystic. "But all things considered we've been lucky. We've got the normal number of boats.

Van Dyke, in Valiant, will race in Class A-2, one of nine classes which will begin competition at 10 a.m. today and continue through Saturday. Today, the fleet will leave from Watch Hill and head for Block Island, where it will continue racing Saturday.

It is the 55th running of the Spring Series.

"We're looking forward to another streak of good weather. We need a few more good days like yesterday and today," said van Dyke, in his second year as commodore.

The largest category of boats is the Cruising Canvas Class, with 31 boats entered. The top-rated boat in that

See SOUNDINGS page C5

Soundings From C1

is Anthony Halsey's Patriot, followed by Errant, sailed by Lawrence Landry, and Bruce Lockwood's Arrow.

Boats are rated according to a handicapping system which takes boat length, keel and other factors into account. There is also a percentage penalty attached to the boats which have been highly successful in the past.

The highest penalty assessed this year will be to Bill Healy's Sirprize, which will operate in Class C-2 with a 30 percent penalty. Healy has the top-ranked boat of 17 in that class, followed by Glide, sailed by William Musser, and Jack Wills' Jet Stream.

Saphaendra, sailed by Queene Hooper Foster, will do battle with Jeffrey Stone's Neith at the front of

Class A-1, in which there are 14 boats. Class A-2 features Peter McFadden's Bamboo and John Orzech's Reveille at the top of the pack.

Among the 12 boats in Class B, Watercolors, sailed by Bill Drinkuth, is top-rated, followed by Gerry Keeler's Sanibel and John Saxe's Mandalay. Class C-1 includes Peter Brinkerhoff's Hooligan, Robert Audette's Jack Rose and Norman Gahm's Peregrine.

In Class C-3, George's Martin's Osprey drew top ranking of 16 boats and Keith Lovell's Aeria is second. Of the 16 boats in C-4, Jon Lathrop's Arabesque and Ron Walker's Wavewalker are slated to be at the top.

Maybe, sailed by Chris Field, is ranked first in Class C-5, with 16

boats.

Three classes, B, C-5 and Cruising Canvas, sail short courses, 18.35 miles today and 18.2 miles Saturday, while the other boats compete over 24.81 miles today and 22.9 miles Saturday.

Awards will be given to top finishers today and Saturday and for the combined, two-day competition. Spring results are combined with the results of September's two day's of racing off Shelter Island, N.Y., for the overall title.

Dick Roberts is this year's race secretary and Wes Maxwell is race committee chairman. Both are new to their posts this season. The Committee Boat is the 57-foot motor yacht Freedom. The Stake Boat is Nor'Easter and the auxiliary Race Committee Boat is Why Knot.

Sun. 6/14/92

Wind shows up for Off Soundings

An unusually ideal weekend for 55th annual spring series

By VICKIE FULKERSON
Day Sports Writer

Block Island — Bob Norton had heard all about the weather traditional of Off Soundings.

But seeing as he had sailed in the mist before — his boat, Orion, won last summer's Marion to Bermuda race, passing through a hurricane on the way — Norton, of Barrington, R.I., decided to try his hand at Off Soundings.

For rookies like Norton, who had previously only crewed during the series, the weather Friday and Saturday was perfect.

And for the veterans of the 55th Annual Spring Series, such as Saybrook's Ron Sternicki, sailing in his 21st Off Soundings?

The weather, was, well, perfect.

Norton and Orion, a white Pierson 36, finished

Saturday's 22.9-mile race, counter-clockwise around Block Island, in second place in Class C-4.

Combined with Friday's first place time, however, Orion was the top finisher in the class, beating out Bob Cunin and Al Fritzsche's American Maid, second, and Roger Beaudet's Fire Girl, third.

Ronald and David Walker's Wavewalker was first in Class C-4 Saturday in a corrected time of 242.32 minutes, but finished 11th Friday, good for sixth place overall.

Orion's combined time for the two days of racing was 505.35, followed by 512.08 for American Maid.

Saturday's stiff breeze carried all 139 boats across the finish line within an hour of each other.

First to finish at about 1:35 p.m., was Saphaedra, skippered by Queene Hooper Foster, the only woman skipper in the fleet. Saphaedra took the gun in Class A-1 both days, finishing fifth Saturday and third overall.

Sternicki's boat, Strange, was second both Friday and Saturday, but first overall in 470.48, more than three minutes ahead of Reinhard Sarges

See SOUNDINGS page C8

Soundings From C3

in Salud, which was first Friday but fourth Saturday, for second place overall.

"This was just a great weekend. We had a lot of fun," said Norton. "We joined the club this spring and we just had a spectacular time."

Many of the racers ended up on the side of the Island without much wind, Norton said, but once they were past the final mark things picked up again.

Boats sailing the long course were in classes A-1, A-2, C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4. The short course, 18.2 miles, was sailed by classes B, C-5, and Cruising Canvas.

Awards were given to the top four boats in each of the nine classes which had the best two-day times.

"We had just come on a spinnaker reach and all of a sudden we were dead in the water on the back side," said Relentless skipper Len

Hubbard, who sailed to a second place overall finish in C-2, just .08 of a minute behind Barton J. Rapaport's Chute One in first place.

"So we just kept the chute up and we did O.K., but geez, eight one-hundredths of a minute? That could have been when one of my crew went and made a sandwich."

Chute One's two-day time was 5:44.37. Relentless, a red Tripp 37 out of East Greenwich, R.I., finished the two races in a combined 5:44.45.

David B. Wheeler's Nevis was first Saturday in C-2 in 2:67.02. Relentless was second, Chute One was third, and Robert T. Gibbs' Crossbow was third. Glide, sailed by William L. Musser, took the gun for the second straight day, but finished eighth on corrected time.

Boats are rated according to a handicapping system, which takes boat lengths, keel, and other fac-

tors into account. There is also a penalty percentage attached to the boats which have been highly successful in the past.

"The great thing about Off Soundings is that it brings people back year after year," Hubbard said. "These guys are all top notch sailors, but they're all nice people, too. People who really love the sport."

Other two-day winners were David Noyes in Elixir, Class A-1; Off Soundings Commodore Paul C. vanDyke's Invailiant, A-2; John R. Saxe in Mandalay, Class B; Dana Seniff and Dave Nickerson in Split Decision, C-1; T. Jack Rodgers in Wings, Class C-3; and Robert A. Edmands in Ferien, Cruising Canvas Class.

Dates for the Fall Series at Shelter Harbor, N.Y., have been set for Sept. 18-19. First Notice will be July 10.

Off Soundings finds perfection

Three days of sunshine and steady southwest breezes, no accidents, no serious gear failures and no protests made for "one of those perfect weekends" for the 151 boats competing in the 55th Off Soundings Spring Series regatta.

"It was fantastic, the best we've had in some time," said club spokesman Bob Nickerson, who crewed aboard Split Decision, a J/35 that came in first in its class.

The June 12 and 13 regatta started Friday morning off Watch Hill, R.I., with nine classes racing to Block Island, R.I., on two courses. The top six classes sailed a 24.8-mile course and the rest sailed an 18.4-mile course.

The wind picked up to nearly 25 knots by the afternoon, from 12 knots at the start, for an exciting finish with a few surprises.

Off Soundings commodore Paul van Dyke, sailing his Tartan 34, Valiant, used the fresh breeze to his advantage, overcoming a poor start to cross the line nearly 20 minutes ahead

of the rest of his class.

That comfortable margin and a close second on Saturday, when the fleet sailed around Block Island, left van Dyke with a combined first for the series.

The regatta was the first major competition for the new J/105, Jazz, from Johnstone Yachts. The boat with its retractable bowsprit and

SAILRACES

asymmetrical spinnaker, got rave reviews in field tests this spring, but came in last in its class with John Johnstone at the helm.

The boats were rated using the Performance Racing Handicap Fleet system. Boats that finished in the top three positions in three previous Off Soundings regattas carried cumulative penalties.

"It's a gesture to encourage competition," Nickerson said. "We want everybody to feel they've got a shot at it, rather than seeing the same boats win every year."

RESULTS:

• CLASS A1 — 1. ELIXIR, OHLSON 38, DAVID C. NOYES; 2. NEPENTHE, PEARSON 39, ROBERT W. REED; 3. SAPHAEDRA, NEILSEN 51, QUEENE HOOPER FOSTER.

• CLASS A2 — 1. VALIANT, TARTAN 34, PAUL C. VAN DYKE; 2. CHARMER, TARTAN 34, WILL PEASE; 3. REVEILLE, TARTAN 34, JOHN ORZECH.

• CLASS B — 1. MANDALAY, WANDERER 30, JOHN R. SAXE; 2. WATERCOLORS, MORGAN 28, BILL DRINKUTH; 3. JUST FRIENDS, DOLPHIN 24, ED PURCELL.

• CLASS C1 — 1. SPLIT DECISION, J/35, DALE SENIFF AND DON NICKERSON; 2. SETTLER, PETERSON 42, JAMES RICH JR. AND JAMES RICH III; 3. WHITE FIRE, J/35, JOE BARDENHEIER.

• CLASS C2 — 1. CHUTE ONE, TAYLOR 38, BARTON J. RAPAPORT; 2. RELENTLESS, TRIPP 37, LEN HUBBARD; 3. NEVIS, NELSON/MAREK 38, DAVID B. WHEELER.

• CLASS C3 — 1. WINGS, SOVEREL 30, T. JACK RODGERS; 2. PURSUIT, S2 9.1, CARL FAST; 3. MELTEMI, X-99, GENE FESTA.

• CLASS C4 — 1. ORION, PEARSON 38, ROBERT G. NORTON; 2. AMERICAN MAID, J/30, BOB CUNIN AND AL FRITZSCHE; 3. FIRE GIRL, TARTAN 30, ROGER BEAUDET.

• CLASS C5 — 1. STRANGE, PEARSON 30, RONALD A. STERNICKI; 2. SALUD, PEARSON 30, REINHARD SARGES; 3. FAST FORWARD, J/24, DAVID LEVENTHAL.

• CRUISING CANVAS — 1. FERIE, LUDERS 36, ROBERT A. EDMANDS; 2. ARROW, J/36, BRUCE LOCKWOOD; 3. MANANTHIAL, HUNTER 34, WILLIAM SCHMIDT.

— *Ebba Hierta*



EBBA HIERTA/SOUNDINGS

Robert W. Reed's Nepenthe, right, a Pearson 39, was first off the line on the first day of racing during the Off Soundings Spring Series, but with a 10 percent penalty, the boat finished second on corrected time.

Weather makes Off Soundings 'the best fun day' on the East Coast

By VICKIE FULKERSON
Day Sports Writer

Block Island — Fifty-five years of wind and rain, barging toward the favored end of the starting line and many, many protests.

Those seem to be the components of Off Soundings most overlooked. And with this year's bright, sunny skies and fair wind, previous years spent in the foul weather were all but forgotten.

Despite a somewhat harried start for Saturday's race around Block Island, there were no protests for the second day in a row.

And those are the things the people keep coming back for.

The Off Soundings Club, believed to be the second oldest club in the country, was founded Nov. 7, 1933, by a man named Edward Southworth, who drew his friends to form a club "interested in sailing and sailing only."

Bill Ames of Gravel Street in Mystic, the club's historian since 1986, has been a member of Off Soundings since 1957. Since then he has served as measurer (1960-70), vice commodore (1970), commodore (1971-72) and race secretary (1980-85).

Likewise, Jack English, 74, of Vineyard Point in Guilford, has served as secretary (1957-65), rear commodore (1966), vice commodore (1967-68) and commodore (1969-70) since joining the club in 1948.

"I think this is the best fun day on the

East Coast," said English, who sailed Whimbrel, a 47-foot, dark blue Yawl to a ninth-place overall finish in this year's Friday-Saturday Spring Series.

"These men are serious, but you don't get drummed out of the corps if you lose. That's part of what makes it so much fun."

Ames, serving on the Race Committee, also is a member of Ram Island Yacht Club, where his 33-foot Black Arrow is moored. He has not sailed in Off Soundings since joining the Race Committee six years ago, but prior to that had not missed a race in 32 years.

At Saturday's Rendezvous he read the results of his old racing class, A-2. "I don't like to miss Off Soundings," he said.

Then there are those who travel to Off

Soundings, such as 26-year Race Committee member George Mettler, the committee's official timer who resides in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Mettler, who is the rear commodore of a club on Corpus Christi Bay, travels to Off Soundings each spring and fall. "This is my vacation," he says. He is originally from New Haven.

Like Mettler, JoAnne Engelbracht also had a ways to go to assist the Race Committee. She flew in Thursday night from West Palm Beach, Fla., where she serves as branch manager for IBM United States.

Engelbracht, Saturday, became the first woman in the 55-year history of the club to announce race results, when she read out Saturday's finishes in Class A-1.

"I come here every spring and every fall," said John R. Saxe of Islip, N.Y., who sails the 100 miles to Watch Hill twice a year for the start of Off Soundings. "Getting here is half the fun."

She got the gun

Queene Hooper Foster, the only woman skipper in this weekend's fleet, became the first woman ever to get the gun in her class both days.

Hooper, of New York City, was the first member of the 139-boat fleet to finish Saturday's race in Saphaedra, a white, 51-foot Yawl.

"I've had her for seven years and we're trying to get her to go fast enough to look

See SOUNDINGS page D8

