

Top J/105 Wins “Black Seal Cup” at Southern Bay Race Week

By Rich Payne

As the major regional regatta in Region IV of the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association, Southern Bay Race Week continues to grow. In the 2008 edition of the regatta, there were two separate racing venues, with five separate fleets on each course, and a total of 82 boats participating. On the North Course, in addition to the PHRF C, Non-spinnaker A, Non-spinnaker B, and Cruising fleets, the J/24 One-Design fleet was designated as a feeder event for the J/24 national championship. On the South Course, in addition to the PHRF A1, A2, B1, and B2 fleets, the regatta featured a J/105 One-Design Fleet for the first time in its history.

Although six boats were registered, one skipper was forced to drop out at the last minute due to a family emergency, and five J/105s were on the line for Day 1 of the regatta: Annapolis Yacht Club’s “Tenacious” (Carl and Scott Gitchell), Fishing Bay Yacht Club’s “Blade Runner” (Brad Davis), “Corryvreckan” (David Clark), and “Inevitable” (Mike Karn), and Hampton Yacht Club’s “Flying Colors” (Rich Payne). All boats were tied up at Hampton Yacht Club or a neighboring marina by the time of the skippers’ welcome reception on Thursday, 29 May.

The regatta organizers were blessed with good weather for all three days of the event, although Mother Nature “rang all the changes” on the wind. On Day 1 (Friday, 30 May), an anemic southwesterly breeze petered out halfway through the abandoned first race, and the competitors spent much of the day waiting for the sea breeze to fill in (which it did - twice and from different directions each time). The patience of the Race Committee ultimately paid off, allowing completion of two short races in 8-10 knots of wind. On Day 2 (Saturday, 31 May), the west wind was 18-20 knots, with gusts of 28, although the offshore wind direction kept wave conditions low. These conditions allowed for the conduct of three races in less time than the racers spent on the course Friday. On Day 3 (Sunday, 1 June), the wind was a more moderate 10-12, but it was beginning to peter out by the end of the second race of the day (and final race of the regatta). With seven races completed over the span of three days, most of the competitors had about as much fun as they could stand.

“Inevitable” (Mike Karn) took second place overall, and “Corryvreckan” (David Clark) third, but by the end of the regatta, the outcome of the J/105 competition was not in doubt. Fleet 3’s “Team Tenacious” took first place in all seven races, and on Day 2, gave the other competitors a clinic on heavy weather sailing. The performance of the Annapolis boat was so dominating that in the final awards ceremony at the end of the regatta, the J/105 champion was awarded the coveted “Black Seal Cup” as the outstanding boat of the regatta. With the renewal of the Annapolis to Hampton “Down the Bay Race” scheduled for Memorial Day Weekend 2009, it is hoped that more Fleet 3 boats will join us for Southern Bay Race Week next year. We’re looking for at least 10-12 boats on the line. Detailed regatta results and Fleet 15 One-Design Series Standings are posted on the Results page of the Fleet 15 website.