

## **Fleet 15 Kicks Off Southern Chesapeake Bay One-Design Series** **By Rich Payne**

After a congenial welcome party in the Gosling's Rum tent the night before, some eighty race boats motored out of Hampton Yacht Club and other local marinas on Friday, June 1, to begin three days of two-a-day racing at Southern Bay Race Week. The day began with the United States Navy providing a certain amount of local color. As the large fleet prepared to cross the busy ship channel at the mouth of Hampton Roads, many boats found that they had to alter course to make way for the aircraft carrier USS ENTERPRISE (CVN-65), which was returning to Naval Station Norfolk after conducting flight operations training off the North Carolina Outer Banks.



**Photo by David Gibbings**

Throughout most of the morning, the Navy continued to provide atmosphere with the remainder of the ENTERPRISE Strike Group, as a parade of destroyers, cruisers, and at least one submarine transited the ship channel between the Thimble Shoals Light and the Venue 1 race course off the Ocean View Fishing Pier.

Unfortunately, as the first fleet in Venue 1 prepared for its ten o'clock first signal, the 8-10 knot southwesterly breeze that had provided a nice spinnaker run out to the course began to fade, and veteran Chesapeake Bay sailors suspected what was coming next. Because Fleet 15 failed to get the requisite five boats for a separate one-design start, the J/105s were included in the PHRF A Fleet, and the presence of a scratch boat with a PHRF of 6 meant that the Race Committee was unable to shorten the course. The result was that 11 of the 18 boats in the A Fleet (including both J/105s) failed to complete the race within the time limit, as the breeze steadily dwindled into the mid-day lull that

precedes the arrival of the sea breeze. Once the sea breeze had settled in at a steady 8 to 10 out of the northeast, the Race Committee re-set the course, and Race 2 became a spirited match race, which “Corryvreckan” appeared to win handily over “Flying Colors.” Unfortunately, when the results were posted, it was learned that “Corryvreckan” had been called over early at the start, had failed to restart, and was scored “OCS” for the race. Day 1, by default, to “Flying Colors.”

Day 2 began with the promise of more wind, as the fleet sailed out to the course in 12-15 knots of breeze, again out of the southwest. Although the wind held for a wild and wooly start of Race 3, it began to fade about halfway down the first leg, and the pattern of Day 1 was repeated. This wasted a dramatic piece of luck by “Flying Colors,” which gained ten places in the fleet by being on the right side of major wind shift on the second downwind leg. Race 3 ended as the time limit again expired, with both J/105s wallowing in the pre-sea breeze lull a half mile from the finish line. When the sea breeze again set in at a steady 8-10 knots, Race 4 was a hotly-contested match race, with the lead changing several times, but “Flying Colors” took the lead about halfway through the six mile course, and held on by a margin of just over a minute.

By the time racing ended on Day 2, the brilliant blue skies that had characterized the first two days of racing had yielded to high clouds which appeared to be the precursor of serious weather to come. As predicted, the remnants of Tropical Storm “Barry” arrived overnight, and Day 3 dawned with 25-knot winds and soaking rain. Although it was probably do-able, it would clearly have been no fun, and a cheer went up from the assembled racers in the Hampton Yacht Club lounge at eight AM Sunday, when the Race Committee announced that racing on Day 3 of the regatta was abandoned. Since four of the scheduled six races were abandoned (for purposes of one-design scoring), the outcome of the Southern Chesapeake Bay One-Design Series is pretty much wide open. We look for a better turnout, and more decisive results, at the Southern Chesapeake Bay Leukemia Cup Regatta in Deltaville right after the Fourth of July. See you there!