

Southern Bay Race Week 2008 to be First Event of “J/105 Chesapeake Bay Challenge”

By Rich Payne

Under the sponsorship of Gosling's Black Seal Bermuda Rum, Southern Bay Race Week in Hampton, VA, has evolved into the biggest sailboat racing event in CBYRA Region IV. Sailors from Fishing Bay Yacht Club and other Region IV North organizations on the York and Rappahannock Rivers bring their boats to Hampton Roads to indulge in three days of two-a-day racing, followed by partying in the Gosling Rum hospitality tent outside Hampton Yacht Club.

Although traditionally dominated by PHRF classes, Southern Bay Race Week has also seen a number of one-design classes, and the newly-formed Fleet 15 of the J/105 Class Association (now in its sophomore season) is sponsoring a J/105 one-design class at Southern Bay Race Week 2008. Not only is this event part of Fleet 15's three-regatta Southern Chesapeake Bay One-Design Series, but for 2008, Southern Bay Race Week will be the lead event for the “J/105 Chesapeake Bay Challenge.”

J/105 racing in the Chesapeake Bay is dominated by Fleet 3 in Annapolis, most of whose members do not even have a PHRF certificate and race one-design all the time. In an effort to entice some of our seasoned competitors to the North down to Region IV, Fleet 15 issued a challenge to Fleet 3 back in December. This will be a “home and home” competition involving Southern Bay Race Week in Hampton and Screwpile Light Challenge in Solomons, MD: The top two Fleet 3 boats against the top two Fleet 15 boats for “bragging rights” in the Bay. On the face of it, this seems akin to the Pittsburgh safety who talked trash to the Patriots last year, but we'll see.

Despite the humiliation likely to be visited on Fleet 15 by the visitors, the challenge has done its job in one respect. As of the “Early Bird Registration” deadline, two Fleet 3 boats, Carl Gitchell's “Tenacious” and Eddie Hornick's “Veloce,” have registered for the event (both boats sailing out of Annapolis). They will be competing against Fleet 15's “Corryvreckan” (David Clark), “Blade Runner” (Brad Davis), “Inevitable” (Mike Karn), and “Flying Colors” (Rich Payne).

It's not too late to sign up for Southern Bay Race Week, if you're a J/105 owner and are interested in joining the fray. To learn more, visit the Southern Bay Race Week web site at <http://www.blacksealcup.com/> .