

AUGUST 2018

Spindrift

Houston Sailing Association's Race Report



AuGusto! The Light Air Musical Blows Audiences Away

Were you sailing the AuGusto! Sunfish Regatta last weekend? Frustrated by the light air and the dramatic shifts in wind direction? Yes, so were we all. Our Sunday wind serving is feast or famine but light air happens and it pays to be prepared.

We hope to present each week after racing, a few comments from those who did well so that the rest of us can measure our own decisions against what those at or near the front did. I have included my thinking, even though I finished 11th in the last race, just to help us get started. If I do it again, it will be because I actually did well!

I did finish 11th in race three but it wasn't because I chose the wrong end of the line, it was because on the way to the windward mark, I fell off the edge of the earth. (For new racers, the lake is divided into six sections for placing marks. Marks or buoys 1,3 and 5 are on the left side of the lake going toward the dam. Marks 2,4, and 6 are on the right.) The course for race one on Sunday was 1, 3, 2 with all being rounded on the starboard side of your boat. For races 2 and 3, the course was 3,1 2 rounded to port.

What Is This?

Spindrift is a new publication that we hope you will find useful. It is a weekly discussion that will occur after a race Sunday in which different competitors will talk about the tactics and strategy that led to success. The Acton Action will continue in its usual unpredictable publication schedule.

Too often we leave the lake after racing wondering what went wrong and wishing there was someone to explain how things might have been better.

Maybe this will help. Each week we will ask those who did well, how did you do that? The result, we hope, will be that the learning curve will get just a little less steep and long.

In this inaugural issue we have comments from the RC chair, Roger Henthorn; the regatta winner, Laura Beebe; the challenger, Bill Molleran; and the guy who finished 11th in race 3.



The View from the Chair

Roger Henthorn

First, I changed the course 3 times between the half-hour gun and the actual start, which was postponed. I had 4 marks surrounding the R/C boat so I could just alter the starting line and not move marks.

Race 1, at the last minute, switched to a starboard rounding. Seemed to work fine for most of the race. But at times the windward and leeward marks were pointing in opposite directions.

Race 2 saw the wind change 90 degrees to a port rounding course. With a slight increase in the breeze right before the starting horn, about 3 boats at the pin went OCS with 10 seconds to go. A few more boats joined them before the horn prompting the General Recall. I couldn't see the pin and would guess half the fleet was over early. The restart had everyone hanging back.

Race 3 the wind changed again 90 degrees but we didn't reset the course. Since the wind was switching so much during the races, a proper course couldn't have been set.

Wind readings were from 1 to 4.2. The R/C boat turned 270 during the 3 races. Those lucky enough to find a puff made out. Those who didn't - lost.

The View from the Winner - Laura Beebe on Strategy

On Sunday, the wind was inconsistent in both speed and direction. On those days, my main concern is keeping my boat moving and having clear air, while also watching what other boats are doing. I also know the starts are key on days like this, because there is less of a chance to move up if the wind dies. So getting out front early is important. (continued next page)





(Laura Beebe - continued from previous page)

When it came to the starts, I like to sail a reach back and forth on the starting line so I don't have to beat to the line. However, this weekend I found that due to the shifting winds, I instead had to almost beat from the committee boat to get up to the pin flag.

With this in mind, I knew that starboard start was not going to be ideal, and that port tack at the pin end was favored. I also knew that if I was struggling to get to the pin end, then so would other boats, which would give me a more clear line on port tack without having to fear being called to starboard.

This worked well the first 2 races, but the last race was tight (and I mean, a super tight squeeze) to get by on port tack. That is why timing and being right on the start line is so

important. From there, I am always trying to point a little higher than the mark in case I get headed, because then I have a little room to fall off without losing too much ground.

In light air days, anything can happen, so I never count myself out if I get behind - one fluke shift or hole can cause great opportunities.

Otherwise, it is about patience and when the wind dies, having your sail set to where you think the wind will fill in from (where has it typically filled in from) so that I can be ready when the wind does come back to be able to take off again.

Race Results

1. Laura Beebe	2 4 1	7
2. Jim Richter	1 1 6	8
3. Bill Molleran	3 3 2	8
4. Mike Stratton	5 2 11	18
5. Pete Peters	8 6 4	18
6. Kevin DeArmon	7 10 3	20
7. Rose Schultz	4 8 8	20
8. Charlie DeArmon	10 7 5	22
9. Julie Molleran	9 9 7	25
10. Mark Costandi	6 5 DNS	26
11. Jonah Reid	11 11 9	31
12. Dominiek Everaet	13 12 10	35
13. Grace Reid	12 13 12	37
14. Susan Reid	DNS DNS 13	43



The View from the Challenger - Bill Molleran on Tactics

The last downwind leg of the day, I was able to come from behind, establish the inside position at the leeward mark and get the first place position away from Laura. The wind had been filling in from the left, but the boats sailing the downwind course were screwing up the air on the left, so I chose to make a little distance to the right before tacking. Therefore, instead of tacking at the mark, I just hardened up. (Stayed on port tack and went to the right.)

Laura did the same. She was behind me, but in a position that kept me from tacking, so she was in control. In the end she got to the left of me and when a puff from the left came along, she cashed in. If I had tacked at the mark and she followed, I think I would have had a little better lead on the rounding and been in control. If I had tacked and she didn't, I would have been to the left and may have been in a better position to capitalize on the puff. Its hard to say if that would have worked or not. but that one decision may have been the difference between 3rd and 1st.

The View from the Back - Mike Stratton on Drugs

I wasn't very prepared Sunday, but I usually start making plans for the racing on the way out from the ramps to the course, after I get around the corner, that is. Sunday, it was apparent that the wind was going to keep moving from the north (the forecast direction) to the east and back again. I was making mental notes about those shifts as I slowly moved toward the committee boat.

Once there, I noted that either mark 1, the one closest to the cove or ramp end of the lake, or 3, the one directly across the lake from the committee boat, would make good windward marks, depending on what happened to the wind at the gun. It was pretty obvious that the wind was not going to go left much if buoy 1 was the windward mark, making a starboard tack start near the pin a good choice. (The start and the triangle were unusual since the committee boat is almost always on the starboard end of the line and we round marks to port. Neither was true for race one.)

I was over early in race one but I was where I wanted to be - at the pin (starboard end) and the wind was coming from buoy 3 directly to the east. Even after restarting, I was in the right place and it only took one short tack to get to the windward mark, buoy one. The starboard end was so favored that even though I had to restart, I was able to catch several boats which had started down near the committee boat or in the middle of the line.

In races two and three, the course went back to a more typical port rounding of marks and the committee moved the pin so that the line was perpendicular to the new weather mark (buoy 3), even though the wind had shifted back to the left (north) and buoy one by the starting signal. That meant that port tack at

the pin end was heavily favored and a boat on port tack, if there was room, could cross the starboard tack fleet coming down the line and be headed for the windward mark almost on the lay line. Being on the layline means that you can go all the way to the mark without tacking, as long as the wind holds. The rest of the racing it seemed to pay off going to the left side of the course on subsequent windward and downwind legs (with buoy 3 as the windward mark) because the wind seldom came back from the right (the southeast, as from the lodge) but rather, from the left, as from north end of the lake (where the ramps are).

