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Acton *Action*



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Ah, the Serenity of Acton Lake...

Two Sundays ago, this was what it looked like. It was easy to pose and snap photos since little else was happening. The Y-Flyer start was about as slow as a dead man on a drum ... molasses in February? Snails in peanut butter? Teenagers going up to clean their room? We can't find a comparison to match the crawl. Now, turn the page. Hello Jekyll and Hyde.

Bottom left: Jim Mossman and Karen Thompson; at bottom right: Charlie DeArmon and Marie Toon; Top right: four boats sitting on a lake with big white things hanging on them.



That's Jerry Brewster at right just before his rudder cheeks broke. At left, it is Pete Peters and Yours Truly upwind in the 20+ mph winds in race one. Collisions, capsizes, and calamity on the high seas. And so much fun.

Yahoooooooooooooooooooo!

Sunfish Race in Gale Force Wind; Get Blown Awaaaay!

The catamarans were the first to say no. Then the Y-Flyers thought better of it. But for some reason, the Sunfish thought this would be a good idea. Six of them. They had to be little nuts.

In marked contrast to the previous week when the wind couldn't even mess up your grandma's hair, when the water seemed as if it was on tranquilizers and Ambien, Acton Lake became a turgid, unnerved, and agitated psychopathic mess. And we loved it.

The unwritten rule about not going out in wind over 15 mph was violated as launch ramp wind speed was well over that by 12:30. Only Joe and Kelly Buchert, after going through all the trouble to rig the Nacra 16, and six Sunfish dared to put themselves and their rigs in harm's way.

By the time we all reached the course,

Joe and Kelly had sailed to the beach to unrig there rather than risk a return upwind to the docks and the concrete to fiberglass risks.

The Sunfish stayed the course even though there was a broken rudder, a capsize, and a collision even before the first gun. Was there more care spent avoiding one another on the start line than in gaining a tactical advantage? Maybe. Over early? Both races.

It was the sort of day when you starting yelling "starboard" well in advance of the crossing. You needed to be heard. You needed lots of room. Junior Kevin DeArmon flew to a early lead in race one only to suffer the loss of his mainsheet at the windward mark.

For others, it was a constant fight to keep your boat out of irons on tacks, a common problem in high wind. No one escaped that fate at least once. (More on the next page.)

Sunfish Battle Wind; Staying Up Takes Priority Over Covering Up

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At times it seemed as if Mother Nature resented us being out there and was trying her best to blow us back home. If so, it was met with defiance. There was no such thing as being close hauled much of the day, though. We were often reaching just to keep upright.

Even the downwind legs were a battle to stay anywhere near the rhumb line. Each gust brought a wicked weather helm that you could not control as it sucked you away to windward, hull planing and you sitting nearer the bridle than the mainsheet cleat.

Sunfish often sail directly to the mark downwind and only jibe when the wind takes a sudden turn. Sunday, you were forced to jibe after blasts of air took you where you didn't want to go. I have never seen Sunfish sail a reach or a run like a catamaran until Sunday.

Before a jibe, you had to be hiking on the new weather side before it became the new weather side. Sailing by the lee? Ha! Only if you dared, and sometimes because the fear of jibing was worse than the fear of sailing by the lee.

Strangely enough, whenever we got close enough to one another to see a face, the expressions changed from intense concentration to communal exhilaration. We laughed. Then



dove back into the fight.

Soaking wet, chilled, and every muscle tight, we stretched out along the two lap triangle to starboard in race one, not knowing what was happening to others and only able to focus on the immediate vicinity.

Pete and Yours Truly were surprisingly close until the final windward leg before a little separation finally gave one the advantage.

In race two, Laura Beebe, the lone woman on the lake in a sailboat, took off for a commanding lead leaving behind all her male competitors.

The young but seasoned racing veteran and former member of Miami's sailing team, put her considerable skills to work and managed a half leg advantage in the one lap second race. (Probably the only time a race has been shortened for a reason other than slow wind)

But after the leeward mark rounding and with Yours Truly and dad Pete having closed the gap, she tacked into irons and watched her lead disappear. By this time, there were only three boats still in it.

Still stuck in irons and with the finish line in sight, Beebe saw her dad pass her and then capsize. She would finish in 3rd place, but she had beaten the wind.

“No one had a Jens rig in their sail. There has probably been no time before where it was more in need. None us of probably even know how to rig it. Most of us wish we had.”

The Results

Wind speed readings: 18, 22, 19, and 22 (Weather channels reported gusts to 40 mph)

Mike Stratton	1	1	1.5
Kevin DeArmon	3	2	5
Pete Peters	2	DNF	8
Laura Beebe	DNF	3	9
Ryan Servizzi	4	DNS	10
Jerry Brewster	DNF	DNS	12



At left, one of several capsizes, while the sailor at right continues unaware of what just happened. It was that kind of day. You were either over or on your ear the whole time.

+ The Collision

By Jerry Brewster

I arrived at the race course shortly after Kevin and just ahead of Laura. I made it there on a run and most of that was done on plane. I recalled having no problem leaving the ramps. The really difficult part was battling the severe downwind weather helm.

It seemed like I got to the starting line in record time. At the line, I began to survey the lake and the course. I decided to check direction of the wind on the line. A little apprehensive in the heavy air, I found myself tacking too slowly and getting caught in irons.

At one point, I stopped right in the middle of the line. I looked to starboard to see Kevin passing the committee boat a good distance away but coming toward me at top speed. I figured that I'd wait for him to pass before I attempted to get out of irons. As I waited, for him to go by, it became apparent that he wasn't going to give me much clearance, if any. I shouted "Don't hit me!", but it was too

late. I'm not sure where he hit me, but I do recall my mainsheet and bridle being pulled by his boat until my boat was on its side and I was in the water. "Sorry, I couldn't steer!" was all I could hear him say.

I righted the boat, got myself back onboard, and straightened out the lines. In the distance, I could see one of my water bottles floating away towards the dam. I looked around to make sure that Kevin wasn't coming at me from the other direction.

After all, I was shaken and cold, but still a contender in the day's contest. I looked back to where I saw my water bottle just a few seconds earlier. It was no longer there, nor could I see it anywhere downstream.

In the cockpit, floating in 4 inches of water, was my second water bottle. I decided that I needed to do three things: 1) forget about the first bottle, which would shortly be stranded with Gilligan and Maryann, 2) survey the windward leg and 3) warn Laura of Kevin's desperate measures to win the day. ☺

+ The Equipment Failure

"I quickly scrambled to the back of the boat to see what was wrong with my rudder. It looked fine now. Only 10-15 seconds behind the starting gun, I decided to jump back into the race. I crossed the starting line and headed toward the windward mark with nearly the entire fleet in front of me. The wind was still howling and gusting. I was careful to hike hard and not to cleat. When I got within 100 feet of the first mark, I noticed that a couple of boats were struggling to get to the mark and Kevin was now floundering with his main sheet completely detached from the bridle. Although no longer a threat, I decided to give Kevin plenty of space. It was then that I recalled that even after 6 years in Junior camp, a Junior title or two to his name, countless race days (on Sunfish, Hobies, and Ys), and a couple of adult trophies, Kevin still does not know how to tie a bowline. Hmm ... wasn't it he who incredulously asked his sister Megan just 30 minutes ago on shore, "Don't you know how to tie a bowline???" Perhaps he was trying to coax her into attaching his mainsheet for him" 😊

Jerry Brewster



+ Of Fish Heads and Rudder Cheeks



Many thanks to Karen Thompson for supplying several photos for this issue. Well done!

Above left, in a scene right out of the Godfather, a severed head appears on the deck of a boat, post race. It isn't the head of a horse but the message was clear. Above middle, Jerry Brewster bemoans his broken blade cheeks; Top right, the wind is about to whip the sail but all was good. The wind was a steady 15-25 as forecast with wind shifts you would not believe. In the photo at left, John Shipley helps Laura Beebe get ready for launch.



More OktoberFast Prep: Eduardo Cordero

The seven time Sunfish World Champion tells you how to reach and run.

Eduardo, where were you Sunday?

2) REACHING

2.1 Light air

- Outhaul and Cunningham loose for maximum power.
- Boom-vang tension > Wind strength will dictate tension, when in doubt, keep the leach open.
- Trim mainsheet according to wind angle; (use tell tales)
- Heel the boat to leeward when the rudder stalls; Sit forward to keep the stern out of the water (no dragging).

2.2 Medium air

- Cunningham loose for maximum power; Do not over ease the outhaul; this closes the leach and reduces exposed area as wind increases (check wrinkles along the boom).
- Boom-vang tension > Wind strength will dictate tension; keep the leach tight when it opens.
- Trim mainsheet according to wind angle; (use tell tales)
- Keep the boat flat; Slide your weight back as the boat starts planning in the puffs. Move forward in the lulls.

2.3 Heavy air

- Outhaul and Cunningham: If you weight more than 160, always power the sail. (I normally ease the Cunningham and keep some tension in the outhaul. Lighter sailors could keep both controls tensioned for depowering.
- Boom-vang tension > keeps the leach tight.
- Trim mainsheet according to wind angle; (use tell tales) Lighter sailors should feather the sail when overpower.
- Keep the boat flat; Sit in the back of the cockpit.

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3) RUNNING

Powering up

- ALWAYS loose sail controls (outhaul-cunningham) before rounding the windward mark depending on your approach.

Sailing/trimming Technique:

- Sailing on starboard tack is faster most of the time because the sail is fuller.
- Starboard tack running allows you to sail at a wider range of angles (“by the lee” or broad reach) in most conditions.
- In light air be careful when sailing by the lee on port tack, It can be slower than starboard tack. (There’s a disturbance in the sail, created by the little triangle between the mast and the upper spar.)
- Tell tales or a wind indicator on top of the upper spar will be effective to determine which way the wind flows on the sail.
- Heel the boat to weather in light air, decreasing weather helm; less required as the wind increases.
- It is very important to keep the stern out of the water in light air>>sit forward (close to the centerboard trunk). As the wind increases and waves get bigger you must move your body aft. Your own weight will dictate how far back you need to sit. In most cases when the boat is planning, sitting behind the rear edge of the cockpit is faster. Remember to do the opposite as the wind and waves diminish.
- When surfing waves always focus forward on the wave pattern immediately to the right and left of the bow. Anticipate the best angle and intersection between waves. Head up for speed and look to anticipate the next wave or puff to accelerate downhill and sail by the lee. Learn how to synchronize mainsheet tension, helm and heeling angle. This is a difficult task but sure way to improve your boatspeed.

Vang control:

- The flexible spars make leech control tension challenging.
- Tighten the boom-vang to stabilize the boat on Runs (as the wind increases.)
- The boat is more responsive when balanced with the vang; for steering and when adjusting the mainsheet.

+ Gale Gallery



Top left: a tow and an unfortunate DNF. Middle left, barrel racing; lower left: even the ride out of the “harbor” was very fast; above: Joe and Kelly slide the Nacra onto the beach, a move Joe would later describe as something that messed with his head a bit. Still, he went on to say, better than slamming into a concrete dock. Another Hobie guy, Ryan Servizzi., jumped into a ‘Fish’ and joined action. Way to go, Ryan!