



Virginian Blake Kimbrough (15) leads David Watts (87), Paul-Jon Patin (17), and David Neff (89) downwind.

Flying Scot North American Championships

by
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“**T**he left end of the starting line is too favored, we’re going for that end. Four minutes to the start. Trim for speed.” We speed down the starting line among 48 other boats, passing within inches of each other. Three minutes. “We’ll go past the end then, turn around and come back to find a hole in the fleet to tack into.” One minute forty seconds. We pass the left end of the line heading back into the fleet on port tack. Every boat coming towards us is on starboard tack and therefore has the right of way. One minute. “They’re stacked up three deep; I can’t find a hole.” My skipper

is exasperated. We usually start very well in large fleets.

Slowly, painfully slowly, we keep moving into the pack, suffering from the lack of wind back in the fourth row of sails. Ten seconds – still no hole. “Expletive! There’s nowhere for us to go.”

Shut out from a front line start in the first race of the Flying Scot North American Championships, we licked our wounds and looked for clear wind, crossing the line in or very near dead last place. Nowhere to go but up from this point, we look for shifts and start trying to pick off competitors one at a time.

Thus began the first of six races conducted by the Toms River Yacht Club July 20-23. Sailing conditions were fantastic, with light winds of about five knots on day one, building on day two from 10 to 15 knots, and steady at 10-12 on the final day.

After finding clear air in that first race, we discovered that we had not yet used our full allotment of bad luck and bad decisions. We went to the left side of the course, expecting the wind to shift left. Like several others on the left-hand side, we ran aground in shallow water, found ourselves in seriously adverse current, and topped off our misery with a significant



Virginian Travis Weisleder and crew hiking hard to windward.

Toms River Yacht Club



windshift that went right, not left. Given that those right-side boats were over half a mile from us, that windshift made a huge difference in our position relative to them. Not having sailed together on the Flying Scot with my son, Blake, since the prior year's North American Championship, we had our heads too much inside the boat, paying attention to how to sail fast and high (close angles to the wind), and not enough out of the boat where the race was being won by those who better understood the current and wind patterns.

"We'll start in the middle on the second race, find a hole in the lineup and get a good, fast start." Blake's experience starting in large fleets is much better than mine, so my job is to shut up and do as told. Luff the sail. Trim it in. Luff. Trim. He maneuvered the boat to the edge of the

starting line, and we held our position to have clear air after the start. This time we succeeded, and we also used what we had learned in the first race about that right-side shift over by the south bank at the mouth of the Toms River. Our eighth-place finish out of 49 boats brought the fun back, and we joined the other participants for a wonderful dinner at the Seaside Park Yacht Club, established in 1899, a beautiful venue on the barrier island side of Barnegat Bay.

Toms River Yacht Club (est. 1871) spent 18 months planning this spectacular event that was successful through the tireless work of dozens of volunteers. The club is home to active fleets including Flying Scots, E-Scows, Tech Dinghies, and a variety of boats for junior sailors. Commodore Will Demand, who cut a

splendid figure in his white dress uniform, served as principal race officer for the event and did a fantastic job with all six races.

The town of Toms River, New Jersey, is located two miles west of Barnegat Bay on the Toms River itself. It is a charming riverside community with some spectacular waterfront properties. Within a 15-minute drive are the outer banks of New Jersey, which define Barnegat Bay's eastern border, featuring towns like Seaside Heights, Ortley Beach and other resort destinations.

Four teams from the Fishing Bay Yacht Club in Deltaville, Virginia, competed in this year's championships after hosting the 2007 event at Fishing Bay. The drive to the Barnegat Bay area is about six hours from Deltaville. The hospitality and meals

provided by Toms River Yacht Club were exceptional.

The second day of racing started with wind of about 10 knots, which increased during the day to 15-plus knots. "The only thing keeping us from going faster is your ability to hike harder," my merciless skipper reminds me. I'm in my 50s and have been training for this event since last year. Hiking straps for your feet are not allowed on the Flying Scot, though, and crew members must hike out to hold the boat flat in heavy wind by holding onto a rope with a knot in the end. How do you train your hands to hold onto a knot for three races? My hands were still stiff two weeks later.

"We'll round the mark behind that boat, you get the spinnaker pole up while

Starting line is tightly contested at the pin (note buoy at bottom right).





2008 North American Champion and Toms River native Allan Terhune, Jr. leads the fleet to the downwind mark.

we go to the offset mark.” I am prepared to spring into action, but we don’t have the momentum needed to make it around the mark and we hit it. The wind is howling, and as we bear off from the mark we quickly accelerate to high speed. “We’ll do our penalty turn now,” my captain shouts, so we do a quick 360 in the middle of the short 40-yard leg.

Everything moves in crash-and-burn bursts of activity. I’m panting like a dog in summer. Penalty finished, we pile back into the parade and set the spinnaker for a screaming run downwind.

With three races accomplished on day two, we had just a single race on day three to complete the six-race series. That

day we got our best finish, a seventh place, a good way to end the regatta and proof that, with a little time in the boat together, we could begin to get our heads outside the boat and into the patterns of windshifts.

The closing ceremony dinner was another delicious dining event, with award presentations to the top boats in both the Championship and Challenger fleets. Allan Terhune, a Toms River native who sailed with his wife, Katie, took top honors for the event. The three days left Blake and me hungry for more time sailing together and the promise of better results next time. The opportunity to spend four days with my son in heated competition – OK, yes, he did almost get a smart-aleck comeback when

he shouted, “Can we please just have one good tack, just one!” – is one of the reasons the sport of sailing is so magnificent.

Photographer Dan Neff can be reached at FlyingScotRacing.com

Lud Kimbrough has sailed for 40 years, taught Junior Sailing, and served Fishing Bay Yacht Club in various capacities including Commodore. When not sailing, Lud is a managing director at The Gladstone Companies, where he oversees the firm’s equity investment portfolio.