

Lassies Sweep Rainbow Regatta
By Linda Kammire Tiffan, 1st Officer

One of the biggest racing events of the year was held in April...the Florida Women's Sailing Association (FWSA) Rainbow Regatta. This competition is open to all 11 sailing clubs that make up the membership of the FWSA. This year the regatta was hosted by the Salty Sisters of the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. The race was held in St. Pete. The Luffing Lassies fielded the largest group of competitors – one Pram team composed of 4 team members and 12 individual Sunfish sailors. Several Pram and Sunfish sailors also competed in their class Master's division for sailors who are over the age of 60.

Both Sunfish and Pram sailors prepared for the regatta for weeks in advance. We held coaching sessions and equipment sessions to ensure that our sailing skills and our boats were in tip-top shape. Boats and equipment were transported to St. Pete in advance of the regatta. Competitors booked hotel rooms in St. Pete for the night before the event in order to be fresh for a 7:30 am check-in on race day.

Our official contingency consisted of:

Pram team: Jane Owens, Gail Seidman, Jacki Booker, Kimberly Duplissey

Sunfish: Linda Schwartz, Nanette Reuss, Jib Browning, Robin Wall, Ursula Olson, Loretta Garber, Lisa Dodds, Rita Steele, Dottie Schell, Michelle Lee, Pat Comstock, Jo Dzina

Officials: Linda Tiffan – Sunfish Race Committee, in charge of flags
Fran Mericle – Pram/Opti Race Committee, in charge of flags

Support Team: Suzy Conover, Julie Burnett, Rachel Harvey, Robin Callahan, Joan Johnson, Christine Brown, Linda Tiffan, Fran Mericle, Carrol Dzina, Willy Dodds and Frank Girardin.

As luck would have it, the weather forecast for race day was for high winds, possible tornados and heavy rain. Therefore, the regatta was postponed until the next day. This resulted in lots of logistical maneuvering – everything from boat deliveries to hotel reservations. Despite this, the Luffing Lassies were ready to sail on Wednesday, August 6th.

Although the skies were clearer than the day before, big challenges remained in terms of it being a good sailing day. All our girls shined in some really harrowing conditions and that is an understatement. Tampa Bay was a washing machine!!! We had NE winds from 10 to 20 mph and, combined with the current and breaker wall, we had 4 to 5 foot seas. Everyone has some harrowing tales to tell – of survival, bravery, skill and near disaster. Only the Sunfish fleet completed a race and therefore the regatta. It was all decided on one wild race in which plenty of screaming and curse words were heard and several sailors ended up in the drink.

Eighteen boats started the Sunfish race and only seven finished. Under extremely adverse conditions, the Luffing Lassies swept the Sunfish awards by crossing the finishing line in the following order (with no capsizes):

1st: Rita Steele
2nd: Ursula Olson
3rd: Nanette Reuss

In the eyes of the judges, however, everyone deserved a trophy for simply being out on the race course. That makes this year's winners all the more deserving of kudos. And speaking of kudos, Ursula Olson and Linda Schwartz arrived at the Rainbow Regatta fresh from the Mount Dora Regatta, April 2nd and 3rd. Mount Dora is lake sailing and it included 12 classes of boats. Ursula won five out of six races and placed first overall in the Sunfish class. Linda placed third in two Sunfish races and she was fourth overall.

Back to the Rainbow Regatta: Both the Pram and Opti races were aborted due to the high seas and dangerous conditions. Several Pram and Opti racers capsized before the race even started. The Luffing Lassies Pram team looked awesome out there and managed to stay upright for the duration. Big congratulations to all of you for riding that Bronco.

Thanks a million to our support group that came out to load and unload boats and provide moral support. The Luffing Lassies had the largest group there. As always, we are grateful to our "Starboard Studs" for their back breaking work!! Our official photographer Rachel Harvey took some amazing photos of the action. You can view the photos on her website: <http://ThatsMe.zenfolio.com/rainbow>.

The stories and celebrations will continue for weeks to come as a result of this sailing adventure. If you know anyone who sailed in this year's Rainbow Regatta, ask them about their experience, but be prepared for a long and colorful response.

Photos: Rachel Harvey is sending you Rainbow Regatta photos to accompany this article.



