

Upon Further Review... Hesse Takes 2011 New England Regional #1

Sailing a strong and consistent regatta, Dan Hesse of New York claimed the first of two New England Regional Championships in 2011 in controversial fashion. Many sailors left the Barrington (RI) Yacht Club on June 5 following racing thinking that defending North American and New England Champ Bill Brangiforte had managed to pull out another victory, as Hesse and Andy David had been disqualified for being over the starting line early in the last of the 9 races.

But Hesse successfully appealed the OCS ruling and was granted 2nd place in the final race, pushing him ahead of Brangiforte. Kevin Buruchian, Alan Beckwith and Eric Woodman rounded out the top 1 five.

Hesse, who was universally recognized as the top sailor of the weekend, was adamant that he was not over early in the final race. And he was vindicated more than 1.5 hours after the final race ended, when photos of racing were put up on a slide projector at the Yacht Club. Hesse spotted a photo of the final start which appeared to show that he was below the line at the gun. The photo showed a view of the starting flag being lowered and a clear line of sight down the line from a few feet behind the orange flag on the committee boat.

As competitors and the race committee huddled around the monitor showing the photos, Hesse's boat was zoomed in on, clearly showing the buoy on the pin to the windward side of Hesse's boat. The flag attached to that buoy was behind Hesses' boat, but it's the buoy that matters. Hesse filed for redress.

Judge George Crocker was summoned from home – he had left for the day after no protests were filed following racing – and heard the request for redress. Calling no witnesses other than Hesse and the race committee, Crocker concluded that the photo was enough evidence to overturn the OCS, meaning the angle of the shot was conclusive and the starting flag being lowered proved the shot was taken at the start (or immediately thereafter).

Recalling the final start, both David and Hesse said the two became engaged in a luffing match at the pin shortly before the start. Both sailors felt that they had managed to bear off before the start and get below the line. David crossed the finish line first in that race while Hesse was second.

The same photo showed David was clearly over the line. David finished 6th for the regatta but would have been 4th had he not been ruled over early. David had left for the day by the time the photo review took place.

Once the photo in question is sent to me, I will post it on the New England Class blog home page:

<http://www.sunfishclass.org/newengland/blog/>

The Barrington Yacht Club were excellent hosts for the 40-somethingth year in a row and will host the Sunfish North Americans in July.