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For qualifiers, the windier the better

NEW YORK DOWNSTATE REGIONAL SUNFISH CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Bob Liepa

In advance of this past weekend's New York Downstate Regional Sunfish Championships, John Condon checked out the weather forecast. When he read a National Weather Service forecast that issued a gale warning, it was enough to put a smile on his face.

"I said, 'All right!' " he recalled.

Far from shying away from rough waters, Condon welcomes them. When the wind is gusting and the water is choppy, as it was this past weekend at the regatta hosted by the Mattituck Yacht Club, Condon loves it.

"I've seen it worse," Condon said, "but sailing in it, I haven't seen it that way in a long time."

Both Saturday and Sunday saw some rain, but Saturday's conditions were especially challenging, with boats being turned over in Peconic Bay's unusually rough waters. Many of the boats sustained damage, and at one point as many as five crash boats were kept busy, coming to the aid of sailors who needed assistance.

In Condon's view, it was a wonderful weekend for sailing. The 31-year-old Mattituck Yacht Club member was one of the two sailors who qualified for the 2007 World Championships, which will be held in the fall of 2007 at a site to be announced. Condon finished second to the other qualifier, Brian McGinnis of the Wet Pants Sailing Association.

Four races were contested each day, with each sailor's top seven race performances counted toward his total score. McGinnis, with five first-place finishes, two seconds and a third, won with nine points, well ahead of Condon's 38.

As it turns out, McGinnis is also fond of windy conditions. "I tend to do pretty decent in that stuff," said the 33-year-old Remsenburg man who has won two other regional titles in other states, but never before in New York.

Ted Cremer, representing both the Sayville Yacht Club and the Wet Pants Sailing Association, finished third with 38 points. Rounding out the top 10 were: Bobby Boger of the Southold Yacht Club (42), Jim Koehler of Narrasketuck (49), Adam Friedman of Mattituck (50), Bart Hale of Southold (54), Lee Montes of the Wet Pants Sailing Association (83), Hansen Johnson of Westhampton (118), and Joe Turchiano of the Old Cove Yacht Club (126).

Altogether, 41 boats competed in the regatta, which was hosted by the Mattituck Yacht Club for the first time.

Although thunderstorms, which had also been forecast, stayed away, the rain didn't. A heavy downpour on Saturday was followed by on-and-off showers. The following day there was a little rain, but not as much.

"We just got a little rain, but a lot of wind," the Mattituck Yacht Club commodore, Jim Peterson, said. "They had their hands full."



Sailors navigated rough waters under an overcast sky in the New York Downstate Regional Sunfish Championships that were hosted by the Mattituck Yacht Club this past weekend. News-Review photo courtesy of Ronald Coons

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While the sailors tried to work through 25-to-30-knot southerly winds on Saturday, many sustained damage to their boats, including Condon, who lost a mast and an upper boom when his boat flipped over while he was leading the fourth race on Saturday. Only two sailors successfully completed that race, McGinnis and Friedman.

"Saturday was more survival," Condon said. "Those are the things you go through."

One person who managed to keep his boat afloat was McGinnis. "I enjoyed hanging on for the ride," he said.

McGinnis is an accomplished sailor. He competed in the world championships two years ago and will do so again this October in Charleston, S.C. In the early 1990's he competed nationally in a couple of classes.

Condon, who turned in his best performance at a regional regatta, was motivated by the fact that it was held in virtually his own backyard.

"It's great to have your best finish ever at your home club," the Mattituck resident said. "That's what keeps you going. I was really fired up on Saturday."

Other local sailors who competed in the event were: Joe Sullivan Jr. of Southold (11th with 130 points), Geoffrey Loffredo of Southold (13th with 141), Jack Hale of Southold (14th with 145), Meghan Pillai of Mattituck (15th with 145), Julia Oak of Southold (17th with 169), Craig D'Urso of Mattituck (21st with 185), Douglas Schantz of Mattituck (22nd with 195), Angela Smith of Mattituck (23rd with 196), Claire Smith of Mattituck (24th with 204), Sebastian Head of Southold (27th with 211), Michael Spicer of Southold (31st with 226), Allison Hoeltzel of Mattituck (34th with 234), Gerard Hoeltzel of Mattituck (35th of 236), and Sarah Pillai of Mattituck (36th with 249).

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