

75th Snipe Southwestern Championship

White Rock Lake, Dallas Texas

May 28-29, 2011

Results

We enjoyed a week of great snipe sailing activities leading up to the 75th Snipe Southwestern Championship over the weekend. Austin Kana pulled into town with the traveling snipe fleet and pulled off the best clinics we have experienced with enthusiasm and experience. Austin's knowledge of sailing and his abilities to help attendees from basic sailing to fine tuning their snipes created excitement that will last a season. Snipe fleet 001 thanks Austin for all he did this week.

Saturday was a day of wait and see if the wind would drop down from the high 20-30 mph range. Late in the day the races were called and we relaxed at the club in the evening. The fleet provided a great pot luck dinner with Margaritas, Rum punch and more. We enjoyed music and a fun time socializing.

Sunday the wind dropped 1-2 mph and we went out for a day of surfing on White Rock Lake. We were able to sail three hotly contested races in the morning. As Austin put it "Who says sailing is not a physical sport". What a blast this weekend turned out to be. Don't miss the fun next year.

Congratulations to the 75th Edition Champions: Hal Gilreath and Max Hardage

1. Hal Gilreath & Max Hardage
2. Laura Stamets & Dan Dalgleish
3. Mike Wilson & Austin Kana
4. Mark Williams & Cris Molina
5. John Beal & Herb Stouffer
6. Michael Lipari & Cameron Adams
7. Michael Papp & Cathy O'Neal
8. Jack McGrael & Jim Stillson
9. Gene Soltero & Karen Soltero tie with Martin Bebb & Gretchen Bebb
10. 75th Snipe Southwestern - May 28th, 29th 2011 - Newbie Snipe Sailor Report

Newbie Snipe Report from Cathy O'Neal:

Saturday dawned with the usual weather pattern of late. Beautiful, windy, and not a cloud in the sky. The tops of the trees waved frantically from dawn to dusk and sometimes all night long. Springtime in Texas can be volatile and tornado sightings had occurred several days earlier. We were lucky that only minor flooding occurred at the boat clubs and there was no hail or wind damage at all.

Cameron and I have owned our Snipe for less than a year and had heard about the Southwestern for months. The first chartered Snipe fleet (#1) originated at White Rock Lake in 1934, the first Southwestern soon followed. We had heard of starting lines all the way across the lake with up to a hundred Snipes participating in this regatta and we were excited about the prospect of sailing our Snipe "City of Light". She had sailed in the Southwestern before, but that was many years ago.

We worried for several days that the winds would be too high for our experience level and as the time drew near, the weather report confirmed this. We completely abandoned the idea of sailing our own Snipe, which left us available as crew for more experienced Skippers. On Friday, Cameron was selected to crew for Michael Lipari, leaving me on stand-by.

On Saturday, the races were to begin at 1:00pm so the sailors would not collide with the rowers who were having the White Rock Rowing Sprint Championships on the same day as the Southwestern. By 1:00pm the wind was ferocious, with many "white horses" dancing across the water. 20mph - 30mph range is just too high. We were delayed until 3:30pm, then 4:30pm, then 5:30pm. Living nearby it was easier for me than some and I rode my bike around the lake for a different perspective on the wind. The sailors with frustrated, though friendly faces waited around the clubhouse. Finally a few experts went out to practice and judge the conditions, managing pretty well, but by then it was around 6:00pm - party time. That was enjoyable, though not the reason we had gathered. It was decided we would meet earlier the next day to try again.

On Sunday, Cameron and I awoke at 6:00am with trepidation. The first thing we noticed was the wind howling through the treetops. Oh no. We headed to the Skipper's meeting, planned at 7:00am. Much to our surprise, determined sailors were already rigging their boats. Meeting time was over and the Southwestern tradition would continue for another year. The breeze had settled just enough to allow some morning sailing and I got my chance to crew for Michael Papp. I warned him of my inexperience, which might have been an understatement. However, we managed to stay upright and in those winds, that is half the battle.

The first race started reasonably well and out of 10 Snipes only about 8 were able to finish. Martin and Gretchen Bebb had some equipment failure - a broken halyard. Gene and Karen Soltero capsized at the jibe mark and got stuck in the mud which informed others of the squirrely wind and shallowness of that area. I personally had the ride of my life and have the bruises to show for it. Planing across White Rock Lake is an awesome experience I will never forget. Blue skies with fluffy clouds at daybreak, more "white horses", and amazing amounts of spray kept things wet and wooly. Michael and I managed to finish 4th in the 1st race, then while waiting for the 2nd race we all found a quiet place on the leeward side of Jackson Point. There it seemed possible we had only imagined the heavy air until a glance across the lake reminded us of the peril that lurked beyond our sanctuary.

For the second race, I thought everyone had a very competitive start, but with an increase of the winds to 27mph at 9:30am and my lack of experience and strength, Michael decided it was time to

fold. Sometimes you just have to cut your losses though it's difficult when you are from out of town and have driven all this way for what turns out to be just one, windy race.

For the third race, Cameron and Michael Lipari also decided to cut their losses and seek the club's shelter. From 10 boats on the first race, it dwindled to 7 or so in the second race, then only 5 for the final race. As a drop-out I could watch the races from the deck and take pictures. It was wonderful to see everyone flying over the lake. Amazing.

The winners, Hal Gilreath and Max Hardage, did a great job of staying ahead of everyone although Laura did overtake them for a spell. Michael Papp had even commented earlier to me, "How does Hal point so high?"

Laura Stamets and Dan Dagleish finished second overall. Austin, the (AWESOME) traveling Snipe coach, had admired Laura's sailing earlier. We had also noticed during practice that Laura and Dan were roll-tacking and we were so jealous. Maybe someday we will get there, but not anytime soon so it's wonderful to watch and learn from others.

Michael Wilson, who usually races a Catamaran, skippered one of the traveling fleet boats to a third place finish with Austin Kana as crew. Since Michael has not sailed a Snipe more than a few times this is pretty damn good. And having Austin here was a boon to us all. We kept him busy before the Southwestern, tuning-up all the Snipe fleet's boats and sailors.

Mark Williams and Cris Molina sailed by with big smiles on their faces, placing 4th, while John Beal and Herb Stouffer managed to place 5th after recovering from a capsize in the 2nd race. Legendary Jack McGrael skippered with Jim Stillson as crew, placing 6th. As the oldest sailor in the mix, Jack has forgotten more than most of us will ever know.

All of the Snipers did an amazing job just staying upright for the most part. It was very easy to capsize and many reported close calls. Some sailed in survival mode vs. racing, while a few excelled at managing the gustiness and squirrely wind patterns that typify White Rock Lake on a warm spring day. I managed to capture most as they flew by after the final race. A picture is worth a thousand words and there were many sincere thumbs up as they rushed by for a final landing.

Awards were presented with a sigh of relief that we had managed three races. Special thanks also to the awesome race committee as they waited patiently for the sailing to begin, than managed to always be at the right place at the right time, despite the high winds. I'm already looking forward to next year hoping to have both more experience and less wind. Maybe that will be the year that *City of Light* gets her chance to revisit the Southwestern.