

Winners Chalk Talk: Blake Marriner - Posted on Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Week 7 put the frost in frostbiting. Driving down towards the club, knowing how cold it was, I was secretly hoping that I wouldn't see any sails up, but as I turned the corner, I counted at least 7 sails up already. OK, put away those thoughts and put on the game face (and game fleece, hat, pants – you get the picture) How cold was it ? Well, I stepped my mast and was trying to figure out why the normal wear spot on my mast at the deck level was 4" above the deck. D'oh , guess who left fresh water in their mast step from a couple weeks ago...

I always try to watch the forecasts (both NOAA and Sailflow) starting on Friday and see if they change radically or just get fine tuned when Sunday comes. This time they were mainly fine tuned between Friday and Sunday, so my game plan as I sailed out was to look for the breeze to slowly back, and because of that, work the left side. That's my plan and I'm sticking to it. For all of a NY minute, as I'm sailing out, I reach the committee boat end of the start line with 10 seconds to go for race 1. Sheet in, tack onto to port for a bit and end up working the right side of the course. After race 1, I quickly modified my game plan for the actual conditions we were sailing in – For lack of a better description, it's what I've come to call the “usual Cedar Point NW'er” Velocity from 7-17, frequent shifts and easily spotted puffs coming down the course. Recalling as much info as I can remember from all the winner's words of the past couple of years, I tried to sail the rest of the races as follows:

1. Frequent checking of the start line up to 1 minute to make sure I was on the correct end of the line at the start.
2. Start in a position where you are free to tack a minute after the start on the first header – that meant avoiding starting at the pin, unless the pin was hugely favored – thanks to the good RC work by Ched Proctor and his team, it really wasn't.
3. Sail towards the puffs, trying to connect them when possible, tacking on the obvious headers.
4. Look back for puffs when sailing downwind and maximize time spent in the puffs.
5. Avoid getting rolled on the reaches (It's a heavy weight thing) which means trying to stay on a tow from the person in front of you as long as possible.
6. Avoid the big wreck. Short course races are a bit like the NASCAR super speedway races, where everyone is at max speed on each other bumpers, and one little mistake causes a huge pileup. As the day wears on, and everyone gets tired, this becomes more important, as boat handling skills decrease.

I've found that working on avoiding getting tired during that last hour in hiking breeze pays big dividends for those last 2 or 3 races. It's not just the effect of tired legs that don't hike as hard, it's also the effect on the mind and your ability to think clearly and make the

right decisions. To that end, I try to get in 3-4 sessions a week of aerobic work usually on a bike, riding for at least 50% longer than the normal race (if the race is 30 mins long, I'll ride for 45 mins). Along with 5-10 minutes of core work, I've found that helps keep my results somewhat consistent from the first race to the last. There are obviously other ways to achieve your fitness goals, the key is finding what works best for you and then just doing it.

Wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and looking forward to seeing you on the water on Sunday

Blake Marriner