



Cedar Point Yacht Club

Sailboat Racing at its Best



Fall 2006 Frostbiting Week 10 Report by daily winner Blake Marriner

Another Fall season concludes with spectacular conditions. We were blessed once again with sunny skies and mild air temps, and one other ingredient we haven't seen much of this fall, plenty of wind. It was a little deceiving as we rigged up, being protected by land, but once we got out to the course, it was clear this was going to be a day where doing well would be determined in part by how hard you hiked and how fit you were. Being on the heavy side of the ideal Laser weight might not be too bad either (or so I told myself).

Out on the race course, the current was flooding all day and the wind was out of the West at 13-18. The first race was a W/L. Pin end was favored, and that's where I started. Matt Goettling and I drag raced out to the left side, tacked onto port and rounded 1-2. I managed to hold him off downwind, by looking behind and seeing Paul Craine and a good portion of the fleet sailing in a big puff on the inshore left side. The remaining six races were triangles and a couple of Harry's.

After race one, Phil Hood and the rest of the race committee adjusted the course, squaring up the line. I felt my upwind speed was good enough that I did not need to win an end, just be in the upper 1/3 of the line with clear air. I worked hard for the first minute or two after the start, focusing on hiking and putting the bow down for speed when I needed to drive over the top of a boat to leeward. I have to admit, it felt good after having the same thing done to me in a number of the light air races this season. Payback time! In race two, I again rounded the windward mark in first, but had a serious case of the slows on the second reach. Matt, Paul and Charles Stanley sailed passed me like I had an anchor out. I talked to Paul after the race to see what he thought and he said that vang tension was key for him. I had been sailing with mine too tight it wasn't until the last 100 yards of that race that I finally found the sweet spot.

Race 3 was a carbon copy – I blasted off the line, rounded the windward mark first and Matt and Paul passed me on the second reach. The good news was I could still read their sail #'s at the leeward mark so I was felt like I was improving and just needed one more piece of the puzzle to solve the second reach.

Sailing upwind in Race 4, for the last minute or so I was trying to recall Marc Jacobi and Andrew Scrivan's tips on reaching and remembered Andrew talking about letting the boat heel to leeward to help get the boat planing. Wow, the boat came alive and hopped on plane much easier. I managed to win this race, with Mike Matan in second. Race 5 was a Harry and the tight second reach was just what I needed, tight enough that I was able to hike off the back of the strap, fully powered up and just blasting. At one point I was wave hopping and I could see from the front of the daggerboard to the bow completely out of the water. It was one of those moments that you etch into the memory bank.

By race 6, I was starting to feel a little tired. I had some serious ab cramps on my right side on race 5 and they came back on the left side for the beat on race 6. Matt and Paul came out of the left side on the first beat and led the rest of the way. I was pretty sure I was going to call it a day after this race, but after some stretching and complete relaxing (I think I fell asleep for at least 5 minutes!) I was ready to go for one more. The wind actually came down in velocity for the final race of the day. Charles passed me on the first reach, but by the second reach the wind was down enough that we weren't planing any more, just surfing waves. Charles claimed the bullet, I held off Matt for second and Alistair Duke finished fourth.

Obviously, sailing the last race was the right thing for me to do, as Matt and I ended up tied at the end of the day, but I had one more bullet and won the day, with Paul squeezing out Charles by a point for third. While I felt good about my performance for the day, I'd like to tip my hat to Amnon Gitelson, Tim Millhiser, Halsey Bullen, Hans Johannsen and especially Ed Rickard. You guys are truly an inspiration to us all.

I can tell you my sail settings, but unless you weigh 220, they are just going to cause you pain. I had my outhaul about 8-9" deep in the center of the boom, I had moderate tension on the cunningham and carried my vang just slightly eased from two blocked. The only time I tightened my vang beyond two blocked was when I wanted to power over the top of someone to leeward or had overstood the windward mark. There were only a few puffs that I had to sheet in and out for. If I was weighing 180 or less, I would have had near max cunningham (ring down near the boom) and the vang on so that the boom was barely rising when sheeted out. I would be playing the sheet, easing out when overpowered and when I had to put the bow down to steer around waves or a competitor. I would carry the outhaul approx 6-7" off the center off the boom.

I've been sailing with an adjustable hiking strap the past couple of years, rarely get to use it, but it was great on the reaches we had. Tighten it so the strap is bone tight and it helps you stay connected to the boat. As I approached the windward mark, at approx 5 boat lengths I would ease my vang to the approx setting for the reach. I do this by sheeting out so the blocks are anywhere from 10-18" apart, uncleat and re-cleat the vang. At one boat length, I blow off the cunningham. (I was leaving the outhaul alone except for the last race when the breeze lightened). Easing the vang is one of the three keys in a nice fast turn at the windward mark, the other two are to sail the boat flat thru the turn and make sure you ease plenty of mainsheet. (I will spend the time between easing the vang and cunningham making sure my mainsheet is free to run, pulling out at least 10-15 feet and laying it on my thighs or the deck)

Reaching, the board needs to be up 8-10" inches and the vang setting is going to have the top batten somewhere between parallel with the boom (more wind or flat water) to twisted off 10-20 degrees from the boom. My slowness in race one was specifically due to having the vang too tight. We were doing quite a bit of steering to find the path of least resistance thru the waves and a looser vang allows the sail to power up and avoids stalling with the course changes and corresponding sheeting in and out. If you are fast on the reaches, make sure you get into the passing lanes and avoid trying to sail below a slower boat unless you are within 10 boat lengths of the gybe mark and want to be inside.

Hope to see you at the Hangover Bowl.

Blake Marriner